Activity #1: Find the Author (or not)
(I’ve used David Walker as my example below, but you can use this activity for any author!)

- Once you’re in the database, you have several options.
  - Choose “Browse Publications” for a list of every newspaper in the database. You can sort this list by date in order to find a newspaper that fits the date range you’re looking for.
  - You can also choose a particular newspaper from the list on the Archival Expert assignment sheet and, from this same screen, start typing it into the search box. The newspaper will appear, along with a list of years published.
  - You can also choose “Advanced search” and search by keyword, name, and a range of dates.
- As you play around with these options, try searching for David Walker in different ways. You can search by his name; you can search “Walker’s Appeal” (in quotation marks); and you can search by date range. 1828 is the year Walker published his Appeal, but people were discussing it for several years afterward. So, you could try 1827-1835 to be safe.
- If you want to supplement your search, you can also try it in the “America’s Historical Newspapers” database, also in the A-Z databases list. (This database contains all kinds of newspapers, not just those edited by African American editors. For example, abolitionist newspapers like the Liberator, the longest-running antislavery newspaper, are often excellent sources of information about many African American writers.)
- Another database you can try is Accessible Archives, also available on the library’s databases page.
- When you try some of these searches, what do you find? Where and how did you find it? What do you learn about Walker that you didn’t know before?
- Notice when you get frustrated and can’t find anything. How can you search differently?
- Notice when you still can’t find anything. Archival research is full of dead ends! Consider what you can look at, instead of what you’re looking for. What are the newspaper’s concerns? What does the absence of your author in the newspaper’s pages tell you?