



Online Search Strategies

KEYWORD SEARCHING

The catalog and every online database in the library allow the use of keyword searching. In a keyword search, the database searches fields such as title, author, abstract (summary), and subject terms. Note that the full text of the book or article is not searched.

A single search term, such as *marriage*, or a phrase such as *gay marriage* can be used. The use of " " marks is not supported in all databases but often the database will recognize two words next to each other as a phrase.

Keyword searches tend to be broad and often generate many results. Some results will be applicable to the topic and some might be unrelated.

<p>Keyword search</p> <p><i>Academic Search Premier</i></p>	<p>Results for: gay marriage</p> <p>Find: <input type="text" value="gay marriage"/> in <input type="text" value="Select a Field (optional)"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/></p>
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REFINING THE SEARCH

- Use of “**and**” and “**or**” allows one to refine keyword searches for more targeted results.
 - **Get more results with “or”** this broadens a search by including similar terms, example:

gay marriage or same-sex marriage
 - **Get fewer results with “and”** this narrows a search by introducing another concept, example:

gay marriage and legislation

<p>Boolean search</p> <p>using or</p> <p><i>Academic Search Premier</i></p>	<p>Results for: gay marriage OR same-sex marriage</p> <p>Find: <input type="text" value="gay marriage"/> in <input type="text" value="Select a Field (optional)"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/></p> <p>or <input type="text" value="same-sex marriage"/> in <input type="text" value="Select a Field (optional)"/></p>
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- **Search specific fields:** Each individual record is composed of a group of fields. The title field contains only the item’s title, the subject field contains subject terms assigned to that item, etc. In a **keyword search** the term may be found anywhere in the record. In a **specific field search** the term must be found in the specified field – subject, title, abstract, etc.

- **Use the Subject Headings** which are assigned to books in the library catalog and to periodical articles in the library's online databases. They indicate what a book or article is about. The Library Catalog and each database have their own list of specific terms that may be used as subject headings. This is called "controlled vocabulary." For example:

Common usage

Controlled Subject Heading

gay marriage

same-sex marriage

<p>Subject search <i>Academic Search Premier</i></p>	<p>Find: <input type="text" value="gay marriage"/> in <input type="text" value="SU Subject Terms"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/></p> <p>No results were found.</p>
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<p>Subject search <i>Academic Search Premier</i></p>	<p>Results for: SU same-sex marriage</p> <p>Find: <input type="text" value="same-sex marriage"/> in <input type="text" value="SU Subject Terms"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/></p> <hr/> <p>1-10 of 3397 Page: 1 2 3 4 5 Next</p>
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- Subject headings are usually a link. If you click on them, the computer will bring up all the items that have been assigned that exact subject heading.
- Take note of the subject headings assigned to any item which is especially useful. These heading may be used to as search terms in the subject field to find additional books and articles.

• **Combine strategies in various ways**

<p>Combination search <i>Academic Search Premier</i></p>	<p>Results for: SU same-sex marriage AND SU (law OR legislation) AND (united states OR u.s.)</p> <p>Find: <input type="text" value="same-sex marriage"/> in <input type="text" value="SU Subject Terms"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/></p> <p>and <input type="text" value="law or legislation"/> in <input type="text" value="SU Subject Terms"/></p> <p>and <input type="text" value="united states or u.s."/> in <input type="text" value="Select a Field (optional)"/></p> <hr/> <p>1-10 of 952 Page: 1 2 3 4 5 Next</p>
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Successful searching requires some creativity and patience on your part. Generally no one strategy will find everything you need. Think of synonyms for terms. Think of different ways to say the same thing. Combine your search terms in different ways. Being creative and trying a variety of search strategies will increase the possibility of your finding the most appropriate sources for your research.