**Searching Concepts**

**Basic Keyword Searching**
You are probably familiar with this search concept. In basic keyword searches, you simply enter a series of words that should appear in the articles or books you are looking for, and the system attempts to find records with as many of them as possible. Results from this kind of search are usually presented in order of most relevant (that is, records that contain the highest number of the desired words) to least relevant. Most basic keyword searches assume an “AND” (see below) between each word.

**Boolean Searching**
“Boolean” searching uses the words AND, OR, and NOT, which are used to combine terms in different ways. The operator AND requires that both terms used appear in the result. For example, if you were searching for information on basketball injuries, you might use the search:

basketball AND injury

Using AND always narrows the search, because you are requiring that two words appear together.

The operator OR requires that *either* term appear in the result. So if you were looking for information on jobs, you might use the search:

career OR occupation

Using OR always broadens the search, since you will get all results that contain the word career or contain the word occupation, or both.

The operator NOT requires that a term does not appear in the final result. So if you wanted to find books on Martin Luther (founder of Lutheranism) but *not* books on Martin Luther King Jr., you might use the search (the parentheses, like in math, mean “do this part first”):

(Martin AND Luther) NOT King

Using NOT is always risky because it eliminates everything containing the “NOT-ed” term, which can easily knock out useful stuff. It’s best used when you have a lot of irrelevant results that all have the same terms.

**Phrase searching**
This technique allows you to search for an exact phrase to appear just as you entered it in the search field. Many databases allow this; some even do it by default unless you specify not to use phrase searching. Syntax varies from database to database, but probably the most familiar way to indicate it is to enclose the phrase in quotes:

“toxic waste disposal”

The above search (assuming the database uses quotes for phrase searching) will search for the exact phrase indicated. This is useful when you know of a particular article but can only remember a title, or a snippet from the abstract. However, if the phrase you enter differs even minutely from the one in the record, many databases will return no results.
Searching Concepts

Field-Limited Searches

The sections of a record—the title, author, volume, abstract, and so forth—are called fields. Many databases allow you to limit your search to within specific fields, such as when you want to search for certain words that only appear within the title of an article, or when you want to search for a specific author.

Field searches can be very powerful, since they allow you to zero in on words in specific locations within a record. Typically, a database has certain “tags” used to indicate each field, like “TI” for title, or “AU” for author. Every database has its own set of fields that can be used, and handles them a bit differently from other databases, so it pays to read the FAQ or Help section. Some example field searches (from EBSCO’s Academic Search Complete database):

**Title Searches:**

TI “toxic waste”

**Author Searches:**

AU “Mitchell, Ross”

**Subject Searches:**

DE “elementary schools”

**NOTE:** In the above example, DE is short for “descriptor,” which is a term many databases use for subject (although some use both, for different things).

**Date-limited Search:** limits results to those published within a certain range of dates; in EBSCO, this is done using drop-down boxes on the search page, so for example, you could search for articles on toxic waste, limiting the search to only those articles published between the years 2000 and 2005.

**Publication Type Search:** since some databases include many different types of publications, it is sometimes useful to restrict the results to only a certain type of publication. For example, you may be looking specifically for newspaper articles about school prayer. Many databases will let you specify that you want only newspaper articles to be returned by the search. In EBSCO, this is usually done by using a drop-down box to indicate what type of publication you want.

**Other Useful Limiters**

Beyond the limiters specified above (and there are many, many more possibilities, depending on how exactly you wish to create a search), there are a couple very useful ones.

**Full Text:** limits the results to only those articles that are available in electronic full text (so you can download them, print them, or email them right from the computer)

**IUP Holdings Only:** limits the results to only those results that are available at the IUP Libraries, so that you do not have to use an interlibrary loan to acquire them.