Building Search Queries

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Building Search Queries

Choosing keywords - how am I going to find the information?

**KEYWORD** - a word used to indicate the content of a document.
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How to identify your keywords?

• Identify the key concepts in your research topic:
  \textit{How has the disposal of plastic impacted the marine environment?}

• Pull out main points out of the research question to find the search terms:
  \textit{disposal, plastic, impact, marine environment}

• Look up other related words e.g. phrases or synonyms:
  \textit{Disposal = clearance, disposition, dumping; Impact = influence, burden; Marine environment = marine habitat; sea; water}
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How to start?

• Run a search using several relevant keywords
• Browse the results and choose 2 or 3 that are relevant
• Look at the keywords that were used by authors to describe the content of the article
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• Reading general articles about your topic will give you ideas for more keywords that you could use
• Use subject headings provided by the database to narrow down your results
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How to build a search query?

**Boolean Operators**
The three basic Boolean operators are: **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT**

**AND**
Use **AND** to retrieve all of your search terms

**OR**
Use **OR** to broaden your search by connecting two or more synonyms

**NOT**
Use **NOT** to exclude a term(s) from your search results
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How to build a search query?

**Phrases**

To search for an exact phrase, you need to type quotation marks around the phrase. You can combine both words and phrases in your search.
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How to build a search query?

**Truncations**
Truncation is a technique that broadens your search to include various word endings and spellings.

? – enter a question mark to perform a single character wildcard search.

**Example:** wom?n; colo?r

* – enter the root of a word and put the * at the end.

**Example:** cultur* = culture, cultural, culturally
Thank you for your attention!

For further information you are welcome to contact us by calling on 2340 2541 or by e-mail library@um.edu.mt