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:

How has the disposal of plastic impacted the marine environment?

- Pull out main points out of the research question to find the search terms:

disposal, plastic, impact, marine environment

- Look up other related words e.g. phrases or synonyms:

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

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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