Tools for More Effective Database Searching

GENERAL DATABASE SEARCH TIPS

1. Boolean Operators
   AND
   • Narrows the search
   • Retrieves citations containing all search terms
   OR
   • Broadens the search
   • Retrieves citations containing at least one of the search terms
   NOT
   • Narrows the search
   • Retrieves only the specified word and excludes the other

2. Nesting ( )
   • Use parentheses to develop complex search statements [“order of operations” from math]

Examples:

   luther AND calvin AND zwingli
   luther NOT (calvin OR zwingli)
   luther OR calvin OR zwingli
   (luther OR calvin) NOT zwingli

3. Phrase Searching “ ” [generally not case sensitive]
   • Use quotation marks around words to find the exact phrase
   Example: “reformation in geneva”
   Retrieve: The Reformation in Geneva was not of the Lutheran type

   Compare (without using quotation marks): reformation in geneva
   Retrieve: Reformation Wall reviews and photos from real travelers and locals in Geneva.

4. Wildcard and Truncation Searching *
   • Use an asterisk to search for different forms of a word
   • Some databases also use ? or # instead of the *
   Examples:
     reform* – reform, reformation, reformed
     wom*n – woman, women
Tools for More Effective Database Searching

JSTOR SPECIFIC SEARCH TIPS

To find plurals of a word: &
Example: reform&
Retrieves: reform, reforms

To find a word and its variant spellings: ~ placed at the end of a word
Example: spirituality~
Retrieves: spirituality, spiritualité, Spiritualith, spiritualitas, spiritualism

To group combined search terms: ( )
Example: (germany OR “holy roman empire”) AND reform
Retrieves:
- Piety, Power, and the Purse: Religious Economies Theory and Urban Reform in the Holy Roman Empire
- Incentive Structures for Professors in Germany and the United States: Implications for Cross-National Borrowing in Higher Education Reform

Proximity Searching: “ ”~[a number]
Example: “church reform”~10
- searches for “church” and “reform” within 10 words of each other
Retrieves:
- Pope Adrian VI (1522-23) and church reform
- reform of the late medieval church began not in capite but with personal reform

Boosting Term Relevance: ^10
- Enter a term followed by ^ and a number, such as 10, designating the rise in relevance
Example: spiritual^10 church
- Searches for entries where “spiritual” is ten times more important than the word church

For more JSTOR Advanced Search Tips, visit:
http://about.jstor.org/sites/default/files/misc/Search_Documentation.pdf

For more resources to find articles and book reviews, visit the course resource page:
http://blogs.nd.edu/western-european-history-at-und/?p=3371