Introduction to Databases and Search Strategies
HUMN 101W   September 6, 2007
Mary Jackson-mjackson@milligan.edu

Step 1—Identify key concepts in your research question

Step 2—Brainstorm synonyms and related terms for your key concepts

Step 3—Develop your search strategy

- **Boolean operator: "OR"—**to expand your search

- **Boolean operator: "AND"—**to limit your search

- **Boolean operator: "NOT"—**use sparingly

- **" " (quotation marks) to do phrase searching**-In many search strategies, some words just have to be searched as a phrase to be successful.

- **Truncation**—to expand your search, * used at the end of a word to find all words starting with the same root. Example—educat* finds education, educates, educator, etc.

- **Nesting--using () to group items** and let the computer know the proper order for searching terms. If you are using both "and" and "or" in the same search, you MUST put the "or" phrase in ()

      EXAMPLE: Example: ("death penalty" or "capital punishment") and (juveniles or adolescents or teen*)

- **Other ways to limit** (not all options are available in all databases)—some of the limiters include: by periodical type, to full-text, and to scholarly (peer-reviewed)

How do I get into the databases?

Go to the Milligan Library homepage: http://www.milligan.edu/library/index.htm

Click on *Online databases*

For you HUMN 101W assignment, you **must** use *Academic OneFILE.* It is the first database listed under General or Multidisciplinary, click on it. In future assignments we will be learning about other databases.

If you are off campus, you will be prompted for passwords, it is your name and barcode number on your Milligan College ID.

Step 4—Revise and retry your search

Too few results?

- Check your spelling.
- Look at your results list for synonyms and related terms that you can use in an OR search
- Try truncation

Too many results?

- Did you use all the terms from your research question?
- Can you add an additional AND term to make the search more specific?
- Can you limit the search by gender, age, geographical region, time period or some other way?
- Is there a more narrow term that you should be using instead of a broad term? (preschoolers instead of children)

Be flexible and open to changing your search as you learn new information. Remember that research is a circular process and frequently good researchers change or modify their research questions as they gain new information. Your first search strategy is just the starting point.