


Principles for Library Database Searching . . . *just a few really critical things . . .*

- ☞ These databases do not work like Google. Don't approach them the same way.
- ☞ Start your research in one of the interdisciplinary databases:
 - Social Sciences Fulltext for psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, etc.
 - Humanities Fulltext for religion, philosophy, literature, art, music, etc.
 - General Science Fulltext for biology, chemistry, environmental sciences, medicine, etc.
- ☞ You ARE an Advanced searcher. The Advanced Search mode of these databases simply gives you more options. Many of these function as clues to help you search better.
- ☞ Spend a few minutes looking at the search screen. Look at all your choices & options.
- ☞ Think in terms of one IDEA per line in the standard 3-search box grid. You don't have to have 3 though.
- ☞ Individual words are more powerful than phrases. Don't use a phrase when a word will do, as in *media* vs *mass media*. OSCAR and the 3 interdisciplinary databases mentioned above require quotation marks around phrases like "high schools" or "Cold War."
- ☞ Most databases assume *American* or *United States*, so using those words really makes a mess of your search results in many databases. The word *American* is really problematic. If geography DOES turn out to matter, use *United States* or look around the search screen for some other option to LIMIT your search geographically.
- ☞ If at first you don't succeed, and get nothing, simplify your search.
- ☞ If at first you don't succeed, and get way too much, search in the SUBJECT (*sometimes called* DESCRIPTOR) field, usually in a pulldown menu next to the search boxes.
- ☞ YOUR language may not be the database's language, and YOU need to change yours.
- ☞ The  really is in the details, the details of the complete RECORD in the database, especially the words & phrases in the Subject/Descriptor field. If you find something good, look at the words in that field that are used to describe the relevant items.
- ☞ Punctuation can be risky. Punctuation is sometimes ignored or means something, but not necessarily what you think it means!
- ☞ If you have tried several different searches for your topic in one database, maybe you need to try a different database.
- ☞ Never, ever, ever use the browser navigation keys (like BACK) or File-Print function when you are INSIDE a database. Use the database's own function keys and buttons.
- ☞ If really strange things start happening, close the browser you are using and start over.
- ☞ Very few library databases work well with the Safari browser. Use Firefox. A few business databases only work with Internet Explorer.
- ☞ Be prepared to read at least 100 abstracts. This IS the information age! The best stuff may be 2 or 3 screens in.
- ☞ Look for the Find it at SCU button to search for the fulltext of journal articles.
- ☞ Don't be afraid to use PRINT journals. The ARS will get it for you.
- ☞ If you get stuck, don't go back to Google, get help from a librarian! There's a link on the library homepage to HELP 24/7. Use it.