Getting Started: Tips for Beginning your Research Process

**Figure out WHAT kind of resource you would like to search and find (to determine WHERE to do your search)**

- Do you want to find BOOKS at CUNY? ➔ Search our CUNY Catalog
- Do you want to find any and all BOOKS that are available through the universe of libraries? ➔ Try a search in WorldCat.
  - Request items through Interlibrary Loan
  - Or use WorldCat to see what nearby libraries hold an item you are interested in (and then visit in person with a Metro Pass or your MaRLI card as needed)
- Do you want to find ARTICLES on a given topic, but don’t know the exact thing you need yet? ➔ The first step is to choose a Database (see more tips about this below)
- Are you interested to visit an ARCHIVE, or to find one online? ➔ Archive Grid is a great website to use to find an archival collection, and many digital collections are also discoverable through web search engines
- Have an exact CITATION for something that you would like to find?
  - Check the Catalog for CUNY books, or WorldCat
  - Use the Journal Title Search to see if we have access to the journal by date of publication

**Tips on choosing what article database to search within**

- Take a look at the GC Library’s Research Guides by discipline to find what databases are recommended for a particular area (usually under the “Articles” tab is a list of recommended databases)
- Try a selection from our full A-Z list (you can’t open too many tabs!)
- Test the new OneSearch multiple database tool
- Ask a librarian, professors, and your advisor for suggestions or their favorites

**Not finding what you want?**

- Think critically about your search terms and keywords—experiment with different words that could be used to describe a similar topic
  - See the other side of this sheet for more search tips
- Try another database, catalog, or search tool
- Talk to a librarian!
  - MALs librarian Alycia Sellie’s contact information is above
  - Our Reference Desk on the 2nd Floor of the Library is another way to ask a question on the fly
  - We also have a 24/7 online chat service through the GC Library Website
“Phrase searching” uses quotation marks and links multiple words in an exact order.

- “Graduate Center”—this will only search for Graduate Center as a phrase, not as individual words: not just the word Graduate anywhere or Center on its own.
- “For Whom the Bell Tolls”
- “Mass Media”

**Truncation** allows you to search for plural and singular terms at once—or any words that share the same beginning, or stem.

- *Librar* (for library, libraries, librarianship, etc.)
- *Teen* (for teen, teens, teenager, teenagers, etc.)
- There is also this tricky kind of search:
  - *Wom*n (for woman or women)

**Boolean Searching** controls how your search terms are combined:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AND</th>
<th>OR (equals more!)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zombies AND vampires</td>
<td>zombies OR vampires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives the NARROWEST search results, and perhaps the most specific information to our topic.</td>
<td>Gives the BROADEST search results, and results may pertain to only one of our topics or keywords.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results: 28</td>
<td>Results: 1202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOT</th>
<th>You can think of search strings like math equations: (if that is helpful for you)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zombies NOT vampires</td>
<td>(zombies) AND (mummies) NOT (vampires) (A) + (B) – (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results: 594</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can think of search strings like math equations: (if that is helpful for you)

(zombies) AND (mummies) NOT (vampires)

(A) + (B) – (C)