SEARCH TIPS

1. Search the Web VS Databases, what’s the difference?
2. Using Boolean Operators to refine searches.
3. Too many or too few results? Try these tips to narrow or broaden your search.
4. Advanced search tips for databases
### 1. Searching the Web VS Databases, what’s the difference?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WEB</th>
<th>DATABASES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
<td>Difficult to verify. Lack of regulation and often published without evaluation.</td>
<td>Authority and content credibility is guaranteed by subject experts and publishers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access</strong></td>
<td>Free (with internet subscription/free wifi)</td>
<td>Paid for through tuition and provincial taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td>Search may include many irrelevant results. Information may not have been updated in years.</td>
<td>Subject, medium and/or geographic focus weeds out a lot of irrelevant information. Updated regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Hits</strong></td>
<td>Can be in the 100’s and millions, duplicates included.</td>
<td>More manageable number of results), duplicates can be filtered out.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Search Features</strong></td>
<td>Mostly reliant on keywords (and some symbols) and lacks filters to refine searching. Using fuzzy logic, search engines in some ways, could be considered “smarter” than database searches, often searching misspelt words or making suggestions for alternative keywords or phrases. To make your search more accurate, use common Boolean operators (i.e. and, or, not).</td>
<td>Many filters available to narrow and refine searches including ability to limit by publication type, date, language, and scholarly/peer-reviewed status. Generally searches only EXACTLY what is input. Ex. if your keyword is misspelt, your search will likely be unsuccessful. When searching multiple keywords simultaneously, separate them with Boolean operators (i.e. and, or, not) to increase search accuracy.</td>
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Here’s a short clip from the Monroe Community College Library Services on Library Databases vs Google, discussing the difference between researching on the Internet and databases. Return to Top Menu.
2. Using Boolean Operators, truncation and wildcards to refine searches:

When searching the library catalogue and databases, try using specific search terms like boolean operators, truncation and wildcards to refine your keyword searches. These techniques can also be used when searching the Internet to increase search accuracy.

**SEARCH TERMS**

*using Boolean Operators to improve your searches*

- **AND**
  - Use **AND** to connect search terms and get results that include *all* of your search terms.
  - This search will give you results that include both "environmental" AND "art".

- **OR**
  - Use **OR** to get results that include either one OR both of your search terms. Using **OR** can be useful when searching multiple synonyms simultaneously.
  - This search will include all results with either "consumption" OR "consumerism" OR both.

- **NOT**
  - Use **NOT** to narrow your search. Search specifically for one term, but NOT another.
  - Using **NOT** can be useful when a term has many applications or associations.
  - This search will include all results for "watercolour" but NOT those titles which also have "technique" as a searchable term.

**WILDCARD SEARCH**

*also known as truncation*

- Use symbols at the end of root words **OR** to replace letters in order to search multiple forms and spellings simultaneously.

**Different library catalogues and databases** (Oxford Art Online, JSTOR, Artsource...) **use different wildcard symbols**. Although the most common wildcards are * (asterisk) and ? (question mark), always check the catalogue or database Help sections to determine what wildcards to use.
3. Too many or too few results? Try these tips to narrow or broaden your search in the library catalogue:

**Narrow your search**

Too many results? If your search retrieved too many titles, try to:

1. Narrow your search type.
   - In the Quick Search box, instead of hitting return (default to search or press enter) select the title button or subject button. Use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase, for example “sustainable design”.

2. Use the Boolean Operators (and, not) to make your search more specific.
   - sustainable (77) vs. sustainable and design (15)
   - self portraits (60) vs. self portraits not painting (0)
   - indigenous and art (386) vs. indigenous and art and performance (18)

3. Do an Advanced Search (instead of a Quick Search) and search a combination of terms, including item type and publication year.
   - Ex. glass (subject search = 533) vs. glass and sculptures (subject search Enamed by item-type and publication dates = 68)

4. Check the catalogue record (click on the title to go to Item Details)
   - The catalogue record lists terms which may help to refine your search or think of alternative search terms.

**Broaden your search**

Too few results? If your search didn’t come up with much, try to:

1. Use “or” between similar search terms to broaden your search.
   - Ex. activism (29) vs. activism or protest (49) vs. activism or protest or social change (83)

2. Do a wildcard search.
   - Use the * (asterisk) to search for multiple forms or spellings.
   - Ex. envi* will retrieve: environment, environmental, environmentally, environmentalist...

3. Check the catalogue record for other search terms.

4. Consider the historical and social context as well as broader movements or trends which may impact your topic.
   - Ex. Judith Scott (6) vs. subject searches for: art, amaranth (21), naive art (29), outsider (47), outsider art (69), women and sculpture (103),

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4. Advanced search tips for databases

Searching databases is very similar to searching the library catalogue. It’s a good idea to use Boolean logic, truncation and wildcards as well as all the additional filters databases offers to refine searches.

Different databases use different symbols for wildcards (the AUArts Library uses $ as a wildcard, but others may use the * or the ! for example). Different databases may also interpret searches with some slight variation. For example, some databases search words typed next to each other as phrases, others automatically default to the Boolean AND between keywords.

Access databases through the Library E-Resources and take a look at advanced search tips in the Help sections for three of our most popular databases:

• **Oxford Art Online**: art reference which include works cited, useful for finding background and general information on artists, movements, art theory and historical context. Follow this link for a guided tour.

   Oxford Art Online also offers [Oxford Art Subject Guides](https://www.oxfordartonline.com) on a variety of topics (ex. Roman Art and Architecture, Dada and Surrealism, Asian Art, Women in Visual Arts). Each guide introduces the subject, links to key essays, biographies and external resources.

• **Artsource**: offers full-text articles, indexing and abstracts for a broad range of subjects from fine, decorative and commercial art to architecture and design. You can search for articles, limit your search to full-text results to read immediately online, organize articles into folders, email or print out copies and create journal alerts so that you are notified by email of new issues and their table of contents. Follow this link for an [Advanced Searching Tutorial for Artsource and other EBSCO databases](https://www.ebscohost.com/)

• **JSTOR**: full-text articles in the humanities and social sciences, including art, art history, history, sociology and political science. Follow this link for a brief [video about advanced searching in JSTOR](https://www.jstor.org/)

   JSTOR also produces [JSTOR Daily](https://www.jstor.org/), an online publication that provides scholarly context for current events.

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Boolean Operators are related terms that either narrow or broaden your results. The most useful Boolean Operators are: **AND**, **OR** and **NOT**.

**AND**

Use **AND** to connect search terms and get results that include all of your search terms.

This search will give you results that include both “environmental” **AND** “art”.

**OR**

Use **OR** to get results that include *either one OR both* of your search terms. Using **OR** can be useful when searching multiple synonyms simultaneously.

This search will include all results with either “consumption” **OR** “consumerism” **OR** both.

**NOT**

Use **NOT** to narrow your search. Search specifically for *one* term, but **NOT** another. Using **NOT** can be useful when a term has many applications or associations.

This search will include all results for “watercolour” but **NOT** those titles which also have “technique” as a searcheable term.
The Luke Lindoe Library Online Catalogue uses $ (dollar sign) as a wildcard to search for multiple forms or spellings.

**modern$**
Will bring up results for:
modern
modernity
modernism

**sustain$**
Will bring up results for:
sustain
sustainable
sustainability

**wom$n**
Will bring up results for:
woman
women
womyn

**col$r**
Will bring up results for:
color
Colour
collar

**NOTE:** wildcards CANNOT be used at the beginning of a search word. Ex. $modern is NOT a valid search.

Different library catalogues and databases (Oxford Art Online, JSTOR, Artsource...) use different wildcard symbols. Although the most common wildcards are * (asterisk) and ? (question mark), always check the catalogue or database Help sections to determine what wildcards to use.
Too many results? If your search retrieved too many titles, try to:

1. **Narrow your search type.**
   In the Quick Search box, instead of hitting return (defaults to words or phrase) select the title button or subject button. Use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase, for example “sustainable design”.

2. **Use the Boolean Operators (and, not) to make your search more specific.**
   - sustainable (77) vs. sustainable and design (58)
   - self portraits (85) vs. self portraits not painting (57)
   - indigenous and art (306) vs. indigenous and art and performance (18)

3. **Do an Advanced Search** (instead of a Quick Search) and search a combination of terms, including item type and publication year range.
   Ex. glass (subject search = 515) vs. glass and sculpture (subject search limited by item type and publication dates = 48)

4. **Check the catalogue record** (click on the title to go to Item Details)
   The catalogue record lists terms which may help to refine your search or think of alternative search words.
Too few results? If your search didn’t come up with much, try to:

1. Use “or” between similar search terms to broaden your search.
   Ex. activism (29) vs activism or protest (49) vs activism or protest or social change (83)

2. Do a wildcard search.
   Use the $ as a wildcard to search for multiple forms or spellings.
   Ex. enviro$ will retrieve: environment, environmental, environmentally, environmentalism, environmentalist…

3. Check the catalogue record for other search terms.

4. Consider the historical and social context as well as broader movements or trends which may impact your topic.
   Ex. Judith Scott (6) vs subject searches for: art, amateur (21), naïve art (26), art brut (47), outsider art (69), women and sculpture (103),