



Library & Historic Collections

Looking for information – Planning a search

Slide 2: Introduction

Slide notes: Hello. Welcome to one of a series of "How to" vodcast tutorials from Aberdeen University Library. This short vodcast looks at how to plan a search...

Slide 3: What do you do?

Slide notes: So, what do you do when you are given an assignment similar to one of these? How do you go about looking for information on trends in Scottish and Irish contemporary art or any other such topic? From an information planning point of view you sit back and take a few minutes to think about what information you need to look for...

Slide 4: First things first

Slide notes: Plan your search terms. it doesn't take long and it will save you time over the course of your project. You need to analyse your topic - try writing your search terms down on a sheet of paper, or type them into a word document if you prefer to keep an electronic record!

Slide 5: Search terms

Slide notes: You'll need to think about your topic and break it down into individual or separate ideas or concepts. You can do this by selecting keywords or phrases to describe each separate concept. Later we'll look at the importance of the words and phrases that you use e.g. don't rely just on the words used in the title of your assignment. And we'll look at how to link your keywords together with Boolean terms to get the best results.

Slide 6: Search table 1

Slide notes: Noting your keywords and phrases in a table such as this can be useful when you start to carry out your search across different sources such as the library catalogue or databases. In this table we have a row for each separate concept or idea. Look at the title or description of your assignment to select your first set of keywords...

Slide 7: Search table 2

Slide notes: From the title of this assignment looking at the role of diet in chronic fatigue syndrome we can see that there are 2 distinct concepts to the assignment. The first is diet and the second is chronic fatigue syndrome...

Slide 8: Search table 3

Slide notes: However, as the advice is never to rely just on the words in the title of your assignment, you should think about alternative keywords or phrases that might be used to describe that concept. In this example we've added the word "nutrition" as an alternative keyword to the diet concept - diet or nutrition, we don't mind which word may have been used in the items we are looking for. We're happy to either or any of these terms...

Slide 9: Search table 4

Slide notes: If we do the same for "chronic fatigue syndrome" we could add the abbreviation "cfs"...

Slide 10: Search table 5

Slide notes: ...and the more specialised term "fibromyalgia" to the search list. We've now identified the main keywords or phrases that we intend to use in our search for information on the role diet plays in chronic fatigue syndrome

Slide 11: Search terms 2

Slide notes: But before we use the terms just check the actual words - are they spelled correctly, could there be different endings to the word? Would the author of a paper or book only use the word "diet", is it possible that they may have used the word diets or even dietary?

Slide 12: Words

Slide notes: Many databases and catalogues only look for what you type in - so if there is a possibility that different forms of the word could have been used you should tell the database this. This is done by a truncation symbol towards the end of the word. Most databases, but not all, use a * (asterisk) for this. Let's revise our table to take this into account...

Slide 13: Search table 6

Slide notes: Asterisks, or truncation symbols, have been added to some words to indicate that we are happy to take any word that starts with these letters. Nutrition with the asterisk will give us nutrition or the word nutritional. Note the placement of the truncation symbol in fibromyalgia - it is placed to pick up fibromyalgia, or the word fibromyalgic. Our keywords are now almost ready...

Slide 14: Search terms 3

Slide notes: Before going off to carry out your search in the catalogue or a database you should just check that your keywords are properly linked together. If not, you might not find the information you really need.

Slide 15: Linking words - Boolean

Slide notes: Linking words are known as Boolean operators. The main ones are OR and AND. Use OR to link different words for the same concept - use it between the alternative words for the same idea: diet or nutrition. Use AND to link different concepts: diet and cfs

Slide 16: Boolean more

Slide notes: OR gives you more hits. AND gives you fewer hits. Use them correctly and you will create an effective search strategy for your assignment

Slide 17: Help and advice

Slide notes: If you need any assistance with planning search terms just ask for help. If you have difficulties ask to speak with one of our subject specialist staff in the library who can help you plan difficult keyword searches - just ask for help if you need it.

Slide 18: Next vodcast

Slide notes: This is the end of the vodcast on how to plan a search using keywords. For further information on using your search terms in the library catalogue or other databases look at one of our "How to: Use your search terms" vodcasts.