Search & Research: Mastering the Library Databases Outline

1. Essential Question
   a. During the workshop, consider:

   How can not getting an easy or direct answer be a good thing when researching?

2. Overview
   a. Keyword & Boolean Searching
   b. Choosing the best database for your topic
   c. Repetitive nature of research

3. More about Shapiro Library Virtual Research Workshop Series
   a. Be a Research Skeptic, Navigating Your Library
   b. Find them here bit.ly/SNHUsearch

4. For more help
   a. 24/7 Chat with a Librarian (on the library website)
   b. Research Help via email: ask@snhu.libanswers.com
   c. Research Help via phone: 844.684.0456

Library Website Tour

5. Where to find additional resources for learning how to research
   a. Research guides

   Guides created by librarians to offer research skills/tips and helpful resources or databases for a specific class, topic, or subject.

   b. Chat / Reference Services
   Contact information to get additional research assistance. Head to the upper right hand corner of the website.

   c. FAQs: Searchable Frequently asked questions and their answers

6. Where to find resources/databases of sources
   a. Periodical Finder: A searchable tool for tracking down journal and magazine articles. Great when you have a citation and want to know if the library has the full text. Search for the publication name i.e. Popular Mechanic, Nature, etc.

   b. (later) A-Z Database List: A searchable and browseable list of all of Shapiro’s databases

   c. (later) Multi-Search: One search that searches many, but not all, of Shapiro’s databases.

Searching Techniques

7. Keyword Searching
   a. Keywords tell database what to look for
      i. Databases match all words searched to words in item records
      ii. Lots of search terms all at once isn’t better

   b. Choose Key or Important Terms
      i. Leave out connecting words

   c. Library database search algorithms are not as sophisticated as web search engines students may be used to.
i. Even in sophisticated web search engines, keyword searching can improve your searches.

8. You Try: Keyword Searching
   a. Consider the research question: What is the relationship between cell phone use and anxiety for teenagers?
   b. Which words from our research question make good keywords?
      i. What
      ii. Is
      iii. the
      iv. Relationship
      v. Between
      vi. Cell phone use
      vii. And
      viii. Anxiety
      ix. for
      x. teenagers
   c. When narrowing it can be helpful to ask: Who? What? Why? When?

9. Boolean Operators
   a. Boolean operators tell databases how to search for your keywords
      i. Combine keywords with the Boolean operators AND, OR, NOT (Boolean operators are used in all-caps)
   b. AND
      i. Tells database all relevant results must include both terms (ex Orange Juice AND tooth decay)
      ii. Narrows Results
   c. OR
      i. Tells database all relevant results can include either term (ex. Tooth Decay OR cavity)
      ii. Broadens Results
   d. NOT
      i. Tells database that results for a search on one keyword are only relevant when a second word is absent from the item record. Often used when your search returns results that meet the definition of your search, but aren’t actually relevant. Librarians call these false drops. (ex. Root NOT tooth).
      ii. Narrows results
   e. Example Boolean search: After school program AND (academic success OR SAT OR Grades) AND middle school.
10. Brainstorming Alternate Keywords
   a. Important to think about alternate keywords
      i. There can be a variety of ways to talk about the same topics
      ii. Keywords can include different levels of specificity or relevance in a discipline.
   b. What alternate keywords can you think of for:
      i. Cell phone use
      ii. Anxiety
      iii. Teenagers
   c. What Boolean searches using the OR operator can you think of?
   d. The AND operator?

11. Research is a process

12. It’s unlikely you’ll do your best search on your first try
   a. That’s okay
   b. Learn from what doesn’t work and adjust
   c. Ask for help before you get frustrated
   d. Researchers learn from the process of searching
      i. May even adjust topic or research question based on what they learn.

Let’s Try Our Searches in the Databases

13. Multi-Search
   a. A tool that searches multiple databases at once. Librarians call this a Search aggregator. Multi-search searches many, but not all Shapiro databases
   b. Great for
      i. Getting started with your research
      ii. Searching for a specific title
   c. Don’t stop here. There are plenty more resources in A-Z database list
   d. do example search: phone use AND Anxiety
   e. Truncation searches
      i. Shorten word to root and use an asterisk. Anxi* database will fill in multiple endings, anxiety, anxious, etc.
   f. Phrase searches
i. Include two or more words in quotation marks and only results where the words are together and in that order will be returned by your search. “phone use” great with names, phrases. Not best used with words that might appear in a variety of configurations.

g. Relevance: Do the titles of your search results seem related to your research question? If not, what other keywords can you try?

h. Total results: How many results did your search bring back?

i. If it’s multiple hundreds or thousands- you’ll never look at that many. Think about ways you can narrow your search

1. Limit by Date. Try using the date limiter on the left side to look for results that are current in the context of your topic. The last ten years is a good place to start.

2. Limit by Source type. What kind of resources do you need for your research project? For academic papers, it’s often academic or scholarly articles.

ii. If it’s a small number, consider ways you can broaden your search

1. OR operator. Do you have any alternate keywords you can add to your search with OR?

i. Full-text options: Each result will give you options for accessing the full-text of the source. Often this is in .pdf or html format. Sometimes, you’ll be prompted to find the resource in another database, or request it through Interlibrary Loan. If you don’t have time to find the source elsewhere, you can limit to only full-text results.


a. Shapiro Library Databases contain a wide variety of resources- most of them unavailable to you elsewhere.

i. The library pays for access to this content

ii. it isn’t indexed by search engines and is therefore not always on the visible web

iii. Another resource (not Shapiro specific) is Google Scholar. Can be helpful, but has its limitations

1. Google Scholar can only search the visible web (so there’s stuff in library databases you’ll never see in Google Scholar).

2. Google Scholar isn’t perfect at telling you what you have access to through Shapiro Library, when it does find it. Learn about how to connect the two here libanswers.snhu.edu/faq/70698
3. Google Scholar isn’t perfect at only finding academic articles, either (be on the lookout for websites, blogs, etc)

4. Use the periodical finder to find full-text.
  
  b. Remember our research question? What is the relationship between cell phone use and anxiety for teenagers? We know we want journal articles because our assignment asks for them. For our research question, we should look for databases that include articles on which subject?
    i. Limit A-Z database by resource type: scholarly articles, and subject to see the best databases for your research.
  
  c. Choose a database and try your search
    i. Looks different than Multi-search, but includes many of the same options
    ii. Looking at our results now, what is one area for improvement?
    iii. What can we do to improve our search?

Let’s Talk About Your Topics
15. What are you researching?
  
  a. What is your topic:
  
  b. Which databases should you search?
  
  c. Which keywords should you use?
  
  d. What might your searches look like?

Essential Question
16. How can not getting an easy or direct answer be a good thing when researching?
  
  a. What do you think?

Wrap Up
17. Questions?
  
  a. You can ask them now
  
  b. ask@snhu.libanswers.com
  
  c. 844.684.0456
  
  d. Chat 24/7 With a Librarian