



Enhance Searching in Electronic Resources

TRUNCATION

Truncation searching is a technique that allows you to search for multiple forms of a word root. In most databases, the * is the truncation symbol. However, in the library catalog a question mark is used to indicate truncation. Many Internet search services (Google, Yahoo, etc.) use one or both of these symbols.

FOR EXAMPLE: math or math*

- A keyword search for *math* will result in only the records that have the word math in them. Records may include other forms of the word, but *math* must be present.
- A keyword search for *math** will result in all the records that have any string of letters that begins with math, including mathematics, mathematical.
- Records with math as a personal or place name will also be included in the results.

BOOLEAN LOGIC

Boolean logic searching consists of individual terms or phrases connected with AND, OR and NOT. These allow a search to broaden or narrow depending on the term used. NOT should be used very carefully since it can exclude items you might find interesting.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Television and violence—AND searches narrow results

Color or colour (variant spelling)—OR searches expand results

TRUNCATION AND BOOLEAN SEARCHING CAN BE COMBINED IN ANY SEARCH STATEMENT

CONTROLLED VOCABULARY

Library catalogs and many indexes and abstracting services have a list of official subject headings or descriptors. We use the Library of Congress Subject Headings. Using these headings will result in more focused searches than keyword searches. One of the best search techniques is to combine keyword searches with controlled vocabulary searches.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- A keyword search for *television and violence* in the library catalog results in several hundred entries, some having nothing to do with television violence. The words *television* and *violence* were simply somewhere in the entry.
- Inspecting the subject headings in a handful of entries will reveal that the following subject headings had been assigned to titles in the results list
 - Violence in mass media
 - Violence on television
 - Mass Media, etc.
- Redo the search with words from the subject headings and the results will include entries that did not appear in the keyword search. In the catalog it isn't possible to directly combine subject headings in a "subject beginning with" search, but words and phrases from those headings (for example mass media) can be combined in a "keyword in subject" search.