SEARCH STRATEGY WORKSHEET

Step 1. Expressing your "Information Need"

The ability to express your topic in a researchable way is the first step in developing a successful search strategy. Simply stating "I need information about privacy on the Web." is not enough; it is analogous to saying, "I'm hungry" in a restaurant. Just as important to your topic is information about your project: which sources you will use, how much information you need, and when the project is due. Don't worry about being grammatical. **BE SPECIFIC AND COMPLETE**.

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Step 2. Key Concepts and Search Terms

A. From your sentences above select those terms that specifically defines your topic. These "Keywords" are the terms you will use to begin searching library databases. Write your keywords in the top spaces in this table. **BE SELECTIVE, THINK SPECIFIC WORDS OR PHRASES** (you may have more or fewer keywords than the four spaces supplied below)

B. Different resources use different terms to identify a topic. You may have to try several alternative words to find the accepted terms in a database. List your alternatives under each keyword term. **BE CREATIVE**. (you may have more or fewer synonyms, alternate or related terms than the spaces supplied below)

A. Keywords

_____ AND _____ AND _____ AND _____

OR   OR   OR   OR

B. Synonyms, Alternate or Related Terms

_____ AND _____ AND _____ AND _____

OR   OR   OR   OR

_____ AND _____ AND _____ AND _____

Step 3. Using Your Terms To Search For Information

How you use the terms above to search for information will differ from database to database. Some require connecting words like AND between your keywords . Some require quotation marks to group words to be searched together as a phrase, others may not. With this worksheet filled out completely library staff can suggest WHAT databases to search and HOW best to search them.

An example of a completed Search Strategy Worksheet is available on the back

SEARCH STRATEGY WORKSHEET EXAMPLE

Information Need

I'm writing a 5-page paper on the ***ethical issues*** with ***companies*** using information about people. ***Privacy*** is more difficult to maintain because of computers. Some dot.com companies on the ***web*** sell information about their customers. I have to use scholarly books and articles, and one Website. I can use Wikipedia only for background information.

Keywords	**ethical issues**	AND	**companies**	AND	**privacy**	AND	**web**
	OR		OR		OR		OR
Synonyms, Alternate or Related Terms	**ethics**	AND	**businesses**	AND	**confidentiality**	AND	**internet**
	OR		OR		OR		OR
	morals	AND	**corporations**	AND	**security**	AND	**electronic commerce**
			OR				OR
		AND	**mail order**				**e-commerce**

Search Statements

You will use many combinations of your keywords terms when you search online databases. Databases apply computing principles to find resources, but **HOW** they are applied differs from database to database. These are examples of search statements that work in the NOVA Libraries Keyword Anywhere search option.

> **"ethical issues" and compan? and priva? and web**

>> The **?** is instruction for the computer to find all the possible word endings. It's called Truncation

> **ethic? and priva? and internet**

> **(ethic? or moral?) and internet**

>> When using synonyms/alternate keywords, use parenthesis to tell the computer to search these first. Otherwise you will get unacceptable results. It's called Nesting