USING BOOLEAN TO SEARCH LIBRARY CATALOGS AND ELECTRONIC DATABASES BY KEYWORD

An important feature of online catalogs and electronic databases is keyword searching. Keyword searching allows you to search for a single word, a phrase, or a combination of words and phrases.

*Examples:*
- drug abuse
- drug abuse AND athletes

**Boolean logic**—a query strategy for searching electronic databases. Boolean searches allow you to combine two or more search terms using the operators “AND,” “OR,” “NOT,” and sometimes “NEAR.” **Boolean operators** allow you to expand or restrict your search by specifying the relationship of terms being searched. The parentheses make it possible to group 2 or more search terms into a set, so that the resulting set can then be combined with another search term or set of terms.

◆ **AND**—requires all terms appear in each source found in the search results list. Use AND to narrow your search.

**Narrows**
- Shakespeare AND tragedy  —finds sources with both Shakespeare and tragedy anywhere in the same record.
- Dallas Cowboys AND coaches  —finds sources containing both the phrase Dallas Cowboys and the word coaches.
- rainforests AND Brazil AND environment  —finds sources that contain all 3 terms: rainforests, Brazil, and information about the environment.

◆ **OR**—finds records with either term. Use the Boolean operator OR to broaden your search.

**Broadens**
- gun* OR firearm  —finds sources that contains either term.
- Dallas Cowboys OR Miami Dolphins  —finds sources containing either team.

◆ **NOT** (Note: The DCCCD Library Catalog and some databases use “AND NOT.”)—excludes terms and finds sources when the first term is desired but not the second term. Use NOT to exclude a word or phrase from your search.

**Excludes**
- computers NOT software  —finds all sources in which the term computers appears but not any sources in which the term software appears.
- education NOT distance  —finds sources about education but excludes any sources about distance education.
- cowboy* NOT football NOT Dallas  —finds sources on the horse-riding variety of cowboys instead of the football team or players.
**Truncation**—gives you the ability to enter the first part of a keyword, insert a symbol (usually an *) and find any variant spellings or word endings. Using a *truncation symbol* allows you to shorten, or truncate, your search term in order to find all words that begin with this root that have different endings.

**Examples:**
- femini* — finds feminine, feminism, feminist, etc.
- athlet* — finds athlete, athletes, or athletics.
- shake* — finds Shakespeare, Shakespearean, Shakespeare’s, Shaker, Shakers, etc.
- theat* — finds theater or theatre (alternative spellings)

**Phrase** — more than one keyword, searched exactly as keyed (all terms required to be in sources, in the order keyed). Sometimes a phrase is called a “character string.”

*(Note: Some search tools require that phrases be enclosed in quotation marks.)*

**Examples:**
- college students financial aid seasonal affective disorder

**Nesting**— using parenthesis as a way of organizing your search terms (keywords and phrases) by placing them in parentheses. The parentheses make it possible to group 2 or more search terms into a set, so that the resulting set can then be combined with another search term or set of terms.

**Examples:**
- Dallas AND (football OR basketball) — finds sources on either sport in Dallas.
- (rain forest* OR rainforest*) AND (Mexico OR Brazil) — finds sources on the rainforests (spelled either way) of either country.
- (television AND violen*) AND (children OR youth OR adolescene* OR teen*) — finds sources related to the effects of violent television on those under 21.
- (ADD OR attention deficit disorder) AND adult* — finds sources concerning adults with attention deficit disorder.
- television AND (children OR youth) — finds sources on the effects of television on children or youth.
- (Vietnam OR Vietnamese) NOT war — finds sources on Vietnam but not the war.
- college students AND (financial aid OR scholarships) — finds sources on either financial aid or scholarships for college students.
- (aids OR hiv) AND (college students OR youth) NOT high school students — finds sources on college students with aids or hiv, but will exclude material on high school students.
- (multicultural OR intercultural OR diversity) AND education — finds sources on multicultural education.
- (seasonal affective disorder OR winter blues) AND (mood OR depression) — finds sources on how seasons affect mood.

**Proximity searching**—a way specifying that your search terms be found within a certain distance of each other. Use **NEAR** to indicate a proximity search.

**Examples:**
- Woods NEAR Tiger — finds sources on either Tiger Woods or Woods, Tiger.
- art NEAR history — finds sources on either art history or the history of art.