

Research Strategies Handout – 03/05/2025

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Academic Resources

Databases are collections of journals and articles combined to allow users the ability to search multiple resources all at once. EBSCO is one of the biggest companies the Learning Commons has a subscription to, which provides access to so many journals and thousands of articles on a wide range of topics.

The **online catalog** is another great tool for conducting research. Users can log in to their catalog account and request items from college and university libraries all across Illinois to be shipped to a more convenient pickup location. The catalog is home to thousands of resources in a variety of formats including:

- Physical Books and eBooks (electronic books)
- Online Journals and articles
- CDs
- Videos and DVDS
- And so much more

The links to these two resources, and additional academic databases, are available on the Learning Commons webpage (<https://iecc.libguides.com/IECCLibrary>), or through your [MyIECC](#) student account under the “Learning Commons” tab.

Subject Terms

A **subject term** is a word or phrase that can be used to describe the main points of a resource. Every item listed in the online catalog and databases are assigned subject terms, which are supposed to help hone in on relevant information based on your research topic. However, subject terms can be tricky to use.

In the EBSCO database, you can utilize the “Index”, or “Subject Headings” tool to help you broaden or narrow your search. Click on the “Advanced Search” on the EBSCO home page. Select Subjects, input your term, and hit the Enter key. Click on a result you’d like to view, and it will show you a list of related terms you can use in research. You can also click on the subject terms listed on a record to help you find more relevant sources.

For example:

These are the subject terms listed with an article from the EBSCO database titled:

“Liberty and Equality Under the First Amendment: Scrutinizing Book Bans Through an Equal Protection Framework”

Subject Terms

- *[PUBLIC schools](#)
- *[RACISM](#)
- *[LGBTQ+ identity](#)
- *[CENSORSHIP](#)

What are Boolean Operators?

Boolean operators allow users to narrow or broaden their search results to find more relevant information about a topic. There are many types of operators to choose from, however this introductory workshop only focuses on AND, OR and NOT.

AND

The **AND operator** tells the database that all search terms need to be present in the resulting resources. This helps to narrow your results to only those relevant to your topic.

Example: Mental health AND college students AND academic performance

The results of this example search will yield articles that specifically feature information on mental health, college students, and academic performance.

Searching: [All databases \(22\)](#)

mental health AND college students AND academic performance

OR

The **OR operator** tells the database to find articles that use any of the search terms. This helps to broaden your results.

Example: ai OR artificial intelligence OR machine learning OR algorithms OR robots

The results from this example search will yield articles that feature any of these related terms.

Searching: [All databases \(22\)](#)

ai OR artificial intelligence OR machine learning OR algorithms OR robots

NOT

The **NOT operator** tells the database to exclude certain search terms. This helps to narrow your results to only those relevant to your topic.

Example: fake advertising NOT social media

The results from this example search will yield articles that discuss fake advertising but exclude mentions of social media.

Searching: [All databases \(22\)](#)

fake advertising NOT social media