Database searching – Key points

Access -  http://lib.bue.edu.eg/buecms/index.php/Online_Databases

On campus access:  no password required
Off campus = BUE username and password

Most important thing in searching is the keywords that form part of your search strategy.

Define your individual topics in terms of words or short groups of words which you can input into databases - these are known as your keywords or search terms. You need to take the following issues into account:

Variable terminology:  think of words that may be used as alternatives for your topic e.g. addiction or substance abuse/misuse, teenager or adolescent or young people. Often the databases will suggest related subject terms but it is worth entering all of the alternatives you can think of.

Different spellings:  there are differences in spellings and terminology between, for example, English and American English, e.g. colour/color, organisation/organization. Terms and names can also change over time, e.g. tuberculosis/consumption, Beijing/Peking, Mumbai/Bombay.

Always look for the Help function in the database. It will help you to navigate the site and give you tips on searching.

It is worth setting up a personal account if it’s offered because that way you will be able to save your searches (this means you don’t have to repeat the search next time but can continue from where you left off).

Also you can often set up an Alert service. This means that if you are doing ongoing research, you can register your fields of interests. Then, when new articles are added to the database related to your subject, you will receive an email alert.

Other useful search techniques are:

The truncation symbol * stands for any number of characters, e.g. disarm* will find disarm, disarmaments, disarmed, disarming, disarmer.

The wildcard symbol ? stands for one or more characters, e.g. lab?r will retrieve labour and labor; globali?ation will retrieve globalisation and globalization.

Words can also be linked by the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT. These must be in capitals.

Typing Sudan AND Libya will find items that refer to both Sudan and Libya.

Sudan NOT Libya will find items containing Sudan but not Libya.

Typing Sudan OR Libya will find items containing either Sudan or Libya.

If you use a particular phrase to search, it can also help to narrow your search, e.g. if you type united nations into a Search box, the search engine will retrieve all records with the words united AND nations. However, if you type in “united nations”, with inverted commas around the words, the search engine will only retrieve records where the words united nations appear together, so this would be essential if you want to search specifically for the organisation, the United Nations.