Search Box Basics – Field Searching

When bibliographic records are added to a database, each piece of information is assigned to a particular field. For example, the author's name goes into the Author field, the journal title goes into the Journal Title field, etc. Unlike Keyword searching which searches for terms in multiple fields of a bibliographic record, field searching allows you to search for specific terms or bits of information in a specific field of a bibliographic record. This type of searching can be used perform certain types of searches more efficiently, and to increase the relevance of items retrieved by searching for terms in fields where they are most likely to have special significance.

Fields vary from database to database depending on the type of document being indexed or the intended use of the database. How you perform a field search is also database specific even though the general principle is the same. Following is a brief overview of field searching is a few of the Library’s major databases. More detailed instructions are available in the class handouts for each of these databases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Field Search</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ovid (MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, PsycINFO) | • Use the Author, Title, or Journal icons to search or browse these fields. OR Select the Search Fields icon to choose from the complete list.  
• Type the field code for the search field directly into the search box. | The final format for each of these will look the same:  
  Michaels A.au. (Author)  
  JAMA.jn. (Journal Name) |
| PubMed       | • Go to the Limits feature, and select a field from the All Fields drop down menu.  
• Type the field code for the search field directly into the search box. | Michaels[AU] (Author)  
Pathology[MH] (MeSH) |
| MEDCat       | • Each of the major search types - Journal Title, Author, Title, Call Number, Subject, and Standard Number - is a field search.  
• To combine field searches use a Keyword search, and the appropriate field code. | A:Michaels (Author)  
T:Pathology (Title)  
S:Pathology (Subject) |
| Web of Science | • Select Advanced Search to use field searching. | TS=Pathology (Topic)  
SO=Neurotoxicology (Source) |

Uses:

The simplest use of field searching is to create a list of items meeting a particular criterion. 

Ex. In PsycINFO, “Freud Sigmund.au.” will retrieve article by Sigmund Freud as an author. “Freud Sigmund.hw.” retrieves articles of which Freud is a subject (hw = (subject) heading word). Note that this is more effective than a keyword search for Freud, which will retrieve the items in both of the above sets as well as records where Freud occurs in another field that is included in the database defined keyword search.

In most databases, field searches can be combined to retrieve records meeting multiple criteria. One of the most common examples of this type of use is to complete a citation.

  Martin S. Younger physicians, specialists use Internet more.  CMAJ. 2004 Jun 8;170(12):1780.

Field searching can also be used to increase the relevance of searches on a topic by searching for terms in fields where they are most likely to have the meaning that you intend. Words in the same field of a bibliographic record are more likely to be related. This can be particularly useful when subject headings are not available for a topic, and keyword search sets are too large and unfocused.

Ex. In Web of Science, “(TI=mri OR TI=imaging) AND TI=memory” retrieves citations that use these terms in the article title. Presumably, if this combination occurs in the title, which usually contains the most important concepts of the article, then there is an increased likelihood that the article is relevant.