Vocabulary: Key to Searching for the Works of Others

Articulate the subject you want to investigate

Is academic performance impacted for commuter students?

Identify the words/phrases that constitute the main topics

Is *academic performance* impacted for *commuter students*?

Consider using two different types of search tools

Traditional academic database Search using structured vocabulary (thesaurus) e.g., *PsycINFO, ERIC, CINAHL,* *ProQuest PowerSearch*	Discovery database Search using whatever text is used by item authors e.g., EMU's *Esearch, Google Scholar*

Searching in a traditional academic database: *ProQuest PowerSearch*

- In many traditional academic databases all items are examined by human indexers, who assign subject terms to each item that characterize the content of the item. The subject terms come from a disciplinary thesaurus developed by each database producer.

- In traditional academic databases seek out the subject headings that are used by the database that are synonymous with the topics you are investigating. How?

- Start searching using your own vocabulary for your topics:

  "academic performance" AND "commuter students"

- Reviewing the result list, you see the subject terms used in *ProQuest PowerSearch*

  "academic performance" [your term]   "commuter students" [your term]
       "academic achievement"   "commuting students"
        "grade point average"

- Redo your search combining your terms and all the database subject terms you found:

  "academic performance" or "academic achievement" or "grade point average" AND "commuter students" or "commuting students"

Searching in discovery databases: EMU's Esearch and Google Scholar

- The items in discovery databases are not individually examined by humans and no standard vocabulary is applied to describe the contents of the database

- When searching discovery databases, you are responsible for being alert and attentive to the vocabulary used by others to describe the topics you are investigating

- If you started by searching in a traditional academic database, make a list of the database subject vocabulary used to describe your topic, as well as any other synonymous words/phrases you saw being used by the authors of the items in the database results list

  "academic performance" [your term]   "commuter students" [your term]
      "academic achievement"   "commuting students"
        "grade point average"

- If the discovery database offers an Advanced search screen similar to those found in traditional academic databases, as does EMU's *Esearch*, use that screen to enter your search as you would in a traditional academic database. [NOTE 1: Esearch requires that the OR connector used to separate synonyms in the same search box must be capitalized]

- If you use a discovery database basic single search box, such as in *Google Scholar* or *Google*, follow a different search-term entry strategy: pick one word or phrase for EACH of your main topics and type them into the single search box of the discovery tool, one following the other, without any additional punctuation (however, put quotes around **multi-word phrases**, as below):

  "academic performance" "commuter students"

- If you found enough material to answer your question, you are done

- If you did not find enough, replace one topical word/phrase at a time in the search box and review the result list after each change:

  "academic performance" "commuting students"
  "academic achievement" "commuter students"
  "academic achievement" "commuting students"
  "grade point average" "commuter students"
  "grade point average" "commuting students"