Techniques for Database and Internet searching

Boolean Logic
This method uses logical connectors to define the relationship or connection between words. The words **AND**, **OR** and **NOT** are often referred to as Boolean operators. These operators can be used when searching library catalogues, magazine and newspaper databases and when using a search engine to find web sites.

**AND operator**
All search terms must be present in the list of results. In the search

Food **AND** Marketing

the results must include both words. In the diagram this is represented by the shaded area.

**OR operator**
This operator is used to **expand** the results by using alternative keywords that describe the subject. Results will contain at least one search term. In this example, searching for

Education **OR** Training

must retrieve records that contain **either** word. In the diagram, the section where the circles overlap indicate results where **both** search terms could be found.

**NOT operator**
This operator is used to **exclude** records that contain a specific word. In the example:

Pollution **NOT** water **NOT** air

the results will find records containing the word **pollution** but will not contain records which include the words air and water.
Truncation
Search results can also be expanded by truncating search terms. Truncation is used to search for words with common suffixes such as:  -es, -ers, -ed, - ised, - ing

The base of a word is entered followed by a symbol, usually an *

For example:  cultur*

will find records with words such as:  culture, cultural or culturally

Wildcards
A question mark can be used to replace letters within words. An example is the word organisation where the words organisation or organization will be found in the results.

Top ten searching tips

1. Use nouns and objects as query keywords. Verbs and adjectives are too variable to be useful.

2. Use more rather than less keywords. The more keywords used reduce irrelevant matches.

3. Link concepts with AND (some search engines use a + symbol).

4. Use the NOT operator before a term to be excluded (some search engines use a minus sign -).

5. Use synonyms with the OR operator to cover different ways a concept may be described.

6. Combine keywords into “phrases” (enclosed by inverted commas) which restricts the results to the exact match of the phrase.

7. Truncate words to pick up variable and plural versions.

8. Use wildcards to pick up alternative spellings of words.

9. Use Capitalisation of the first letter of each name to search for a person.

   Julia Gillard or place names eg. Port Phillip Bay

10. Combine 2 to 3 concepts in a query. Often referred to as ‘nesting’

   (sport or exercise) AND children

Order concepts with the main subject first. Order of keywords is important. More emphasis is placed on the first word and subsequent words in order from left to right.