LITERATURE SEARCHING – ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Think carefully about your search strategy, it can make all the difference to your research. There are some common techniques that will be useful in any search but you will need look out for differences between databases – your librarians are happy to share their expertise so just ask!

Go to Databases A-Z - select the subject 'Sociology' – locate ASSIA Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (Proquest)

- Search for social exclusion. Notice the number of results. This database defaults to doing a Boolean AND search. Some databases will do other things e.g. presume you are searching for a phrase or presume a degree of proximity between terms.

- Now search for "social exclusion" with quotation marks around the phrase. Notice the number of results.

- Consider where the database is searching:
  ABSTRACT "social exclusion"

- Consider truncation. Try using the * operator after the stem of the word:
  ABSTRACT "social* exclu*

- Think about alternative terms such as social inclusion, alienation
  ABSTRACT "social* exclu* OR "social* inclu* OR alienat*"

- It is useful to search for your most important term/s within abstract/keyword/title. Additional terms you may wish to search anywhere within the record. Bear in mind that immediate adjacency may not always be most useful so do not use quotation marks with your additional search terms.

  ABSTRACT: "social* exclu* OR "social* inclu* OR alienat*"
  ANYWHERE: youth OR young

- Consider using wildcards operator to replace certain letters. This will find young and youth but not other derivatives such as your, yourself etc.

  ABSTRACT: "social* exclu* OR "social* inclu* OR alienat*"
  ANYWHERE: you??
  ANYWHERE: crim*

- You can choose where in relation to each other terms appear in the text by using proximity searching. For instance the NEAR operator finds terms appearing within the specified number of words, in any order.

  ABSTRACT: "social* exclu* OR "social* inclu* OR alienat*"
  ANYWHERE: you?? NEAR/3 crim*

Are there other useful ways to limit your search? E.g. year published, publication type, language etc. Subject databases may provide subject specific options, e.g. educational level

Look out for differences between databases. Check the ‘help’ and ask your librarian.