Subject searching using keywords

1) Choose Advanced Search and All libraries/collections in Search Scope. The default is to Search Everything, but this will probably bring back too many results.

2) Look at the search terms that you came up with in the “Building a search” exercise earlier and work out how to use the terms you identified in SOLO. Here is an example on the topic of the human rights of child refugees

- What key concepts did you identify in the “Building a search exercise”? In the example above the key concepts are refugees, children and human rights. Each of the key concepts is combined with AND (e.g. refugees AND children AND human rights). The AND ensures that you search results contain all of these words. In the advanced search, make sure to add a new line for each concept.

- If you identified synonyms or alternatives words for your search terms enter these in parentheses with OR in between each word e.g. (refugee OR asylum seeker) AND (child OR juvenile OR minor). The OR tells SOLO that your results must contain at least one of these words but not necessarily all of them, i.e. you want results which have either the word refugee or asylum seeker (or both). When you are using OR in SOLO it must be inserted in capital letters.

- To find alternative word endings use * e.g. child* finds child, children, childhood etc.

- You can also replace a single letter or number with ? e.g. minor? finds minors, minor (but not minority, minorities etc). You can also use it in the middle of a word e.g. wom?n for women and woman.

- To search for an exact phrase use “quotation marks” e.g. “Human rights”. Phrase searching is useful for phrases which have a particular meaning (e.g. “Human rights”, “discourse analysis”, “virtual reality”) and for the names of countries and organisations e.g. “South Africa”, “United Nations”).
3) If you get a reasonable number of results move on to step 3 below.
If you do not get any results (or very few):
   a. Check your spelling
   b. Try another search this time for a slightly broader topic. For example, human rights or refugees generally or human rights of children generally. It may be that there is a chapter on your research topic in a book which has a broader focus.

If you get too many results:
   a. See if any of your search terms are being misinterpreted and make adjustments if necessary.
   b. Try narrowing down your search by including more concepts (e.g. limit you search to a particular region or country (e.g. child refugees in the UK or EU).
   c. Limit your search by date (see 4 below) so that you only see the most recent items.

4) To the left of your results, under Sort & Filter Results, you will find a list of some of the topics covered in your results list. Click to expand the list under Topic.

Please note – if you hover over a topic, you have options to include (left) and exclude (right) options. Include ensures that all of your results include the chosen concept (e.g. in a search for child refugees, ticking include for protection, will ensure that all your results relate to the protection of child refugees). Exclude will remove items from your list that relate to the chosen concept (so in a search for child refugees ticking exclude for women will ensure that you do not get any results about women. This could be dangerous as it may exclude items about women which also talk about children).

5) Try out the options beneath the Topics for refining your search by Date, Library, or Creator (author).

   It is particularly important to avoid using the Exclude option when refining by Library. This is because if an item is held in a number of libraries and you choose to exclude one of them, you will not see the item at all. For example, if you exclude the Bodleian, you will not see an item which is in the English Faculty Library (or any other library) but also in the Bodleian. To refine your search by library you are advised to use the Include option but not Exclude.

Further Advanced Search Options

- Try limiting your search to particular fields (e.g. titles, authors, subjects etc) using the drop down menu.
- Try limiting your search by date, resource type (e.g. book, journal, audio-visual), language or by library (under Search Scope - or to online resources only).
Finding items using subject headings

As well as entering keywords you can also find items by using subject headings in SOLO.

If you already know the title of a book or other item which covers your research topic you can often use this information to find other items on the same topic:

1) If you can remember the title of a book on your research topic, search for it now. Alternatively pick a book from the results list of your keyword search.

2) Click Details & Links.

3) Under Details & Links find Subjects. Click on the subject that is most relevant to your research. SOLO will then search for all items in the system with this exact subject heading. (Note SOLO does this by running a new search for your chosen subject heading, but limits the search so that it only returns items which match the subject heading you chose exactly).
More about subjects: most items in SOLO have subjects (or subject headings) describing their coverage. These are chosen by Librarians from a controlled list of subjects or thesaurus called Library of Congress Subject Headings. Because we use a controlled list of subject headings to describe books you should be able to find all the items on a particular subject by searching using the correct subject heading.

If you are doing in-depth research it is worth becoming familiar with the main subject heading for your topic, as this will help you to find relevant items in SOLO and other library catalogues and databases. Discovering subject headings via the “one good record” method described above is one way to do this. Your subject librarian will also be able to give you advice on subject heading for your subject.

You can also browse subject headings.

1) Return to the SOLO home page and choose Browse.

2) You can browse alphabetical indexes of authors, titles and subjects. Choose By Subject, enter one of the subject headings you found in part 3 above (i.e. one of the subject headings listed for a book on your research topic) and click Browse.

3) Look through the alphabetical list of subjects on screen. To the left of each heading you will see the number of items available for that subject (e.g. in the screen shot above 252 items are listed on child refugees). If you click on the subject you will be taken to a list of these items in SOLO.
4) You may also see suggested search terms, e.g. in the example above the first suggestion is “Refugee children – Iraq – fiction”. You can use this to guess another subject heading, e.g. the heading for fiction about refugee children in Britain is likely to be “Refugee children – Great Britain – fiction”. If you see or can guess a suggested search term that looks interesting, copy it and paste it into the browse by subject box at the top of the screen and click Browse.

Note – When browsing (or guessing) subject heading relating to Britain use Great Britain (not UK).