Exercise 2a: How can I establish the socio-political profile of a pair of texts?

This will help raise your awareness of the following topics: sensitivity to connotation; register; readability profile; syntactical complexity; pronoun economy.

Selecting primary source texts from newspapers

1. Log on to Databases A-Z at: https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/az.php

N.B. If you are accessing these resources from a computer not connected to the Oxford network then you will need to log in using your Oxford Single Sign-On username and password in order to access these resources. Some resources require additional log-on or passwords and these details can be seen by the icons next to the resource name on Databases A-Z

2. Select the All Subjects drop down box, and scroll to Newspapers

3. Scroll down and select the link to the Guardian / Observer

4. Select the Advanced search option
5. Using the examples given below, set your search parameters

Specify your search terms, using the operators AND, OR, NOT to limit your terms if necessary. The search terms used in this example are ‘openly’ AND ‘gay’

You can specify a date range for your results (in this example, 01 Jan 1980 – 31 Dec 1990)

Limit to specific types of document, for example only hits in the following sections ‘Editorial’ and ‘Letter to Editor’ will be included

You can also set your results list to sort by ‘Relevance’, or ‘Publication Date’

Once you have set your parameters, click on Search

Look through several of the articles in the results list to see highlighted instances of your search terms within the text on the newspaper page.

6. Select the following from the results list: The Observer, 8th April 1990, ‘LETTERS: Crossed lines on the Higgs case’ to see the highlighted instances of your specified search terms within the text on this page.

7. To view similar search terms in a different source, go back to the Databases A-Z and scroll down to find The Times Digital Archive

8. Go to the Advanced search option and again set your search parameters
Specify your search terms, using the operators AND, OR, NOT to limit your terms if necessary. The search terms used in this example are ‘openly’ AND ‘gay’ in Entire Document.

9. From your results, look at the following articles from your results list:

'Immoral use of GLC money' (Politics and Parliament)
   The Times Friday, Apr 23, 1982  ‘openly immoral purposes’

A Times Profile Mrs Mary Whitehouse, A certainty that everything is either black or white (News)
   The Times Monday, Oct 31, 1977  ‘openly scornful’

Saturday Review Boy-stew red-hot slippers (News) by Brian Alderson.
   The Times Saturday, May 06, 1978  ‘openly confessing defeat’