

## Franklin D. Schurz Library

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### GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN DATABASE SEARCHING

#### **Boolean (Logical) Operators:**

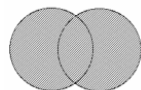
Set logic to indicate relationships between search terms. The three Boolean operators are:

**AND:** Combines terms/limits search results. All terms combined with "and" must be in each record retrieved.



"apples and red"

**OR:** Broadens search results. Either one term "or" the other must appear in the record.



"apples or oranges"

**NOT:** Eliminates unwanted term(s).



"apples not 'red'"

In most cases, if no operator is used, the system will assume a default Boolean or proximity operator. The default operator will vary from system to system.

**Controlled Vocabulary:**

List of terms used to assign subject headings. Examples of controlled vocabulary lists include the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, the *Thesaurus of Eric Descriptors*, and the National Library of Medicine's *Medical Subject Headings*.

**False Hit:**

Retrieval that is irrelevant. (Most common in free text searches.)

**Field:**

A specific segment of a record, i.e., author, title, abstract, publisher, etc.

**Free Text Searching:**

Searching for words that can be found in any field, not necessarily in the descriptor field. Also called Keyword searching.

**Nesting:**

Combines several terms and Boolean operators into a single search statement. Use parentheses in multi-word searches that include more than one Boolean or proximity operator. For example: *(personnel management or administration) and (turnover or job satisfaction)*

**Search Statement:**

Instruction to the computer to find records matching the term or combination of terms entered.

**Stop Words:**

Words that do not appear in the index in a particular database because they are either insignificant (i.e., articles, prepositions) or so common that the results would be higher than the system can handle (as in the case of IUCAT where terms such as *United States* or *Department* are stop words in keyword searching.) Stop words vary from system to system. Also, some systems will merely ignore stop words where use of stop words in other systems will result in retrieving zero hits.

**Truncation/ Wildcard:**

Method to retrieve various forms of a word by entering the root of the word (or some part of it) followed by the truncation symbol. The symbol varies from system to system. The most common truncation symbols are ? # \* \$. Some systems have implied right truncation.

(**Example:** librar# would retrieve the words library, librarian, and libraries.)

*\*\*If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. Please contact Julie Elliott at 520-4410 for assistance*