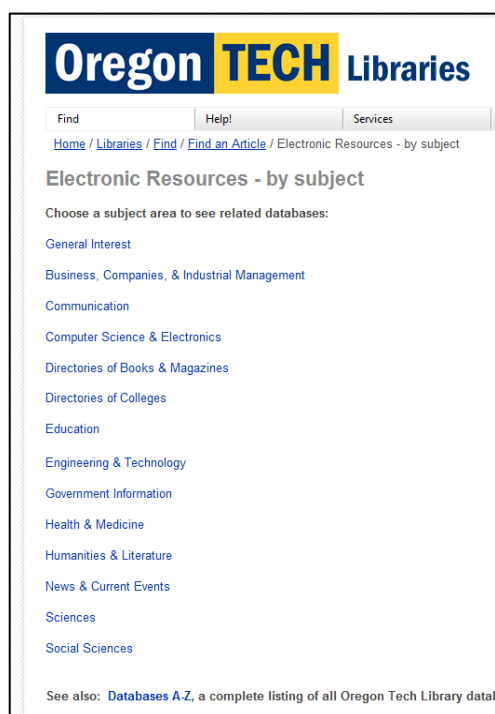# Successful Searching in Oregon Tech Library's Electronic Resources

This handout describes how to find information in the library's **Electronic Resources**, which contain organized references to articles in periodicals. **Periodicals** are anything that is published on a regular or "periodical" basis (daily, monthly, quarterly etc.) and include magazines, journals and newspapers.

1. Choose a database with the right subject focus

Go to the Library homepage at http://www.oit.edu/libraries. Under **Find,** choose **Find an Article** and **Electronic Resources-- by subject.** On your screen you will see a list of subject categories.

Click on the category that most closely relates to your topic. If you are not sure which category to choose, click on **General Interest**, which includes electronic resources on many subjects.

NOTE: Read the descriptions of the electronic resources carefully, because the list includes both **article** and **reference** electronic resources (these consist of encyclopedias and other items that are good for background information.). The descriptions will help you determine if they contain the information you need.

http://www.oit.edu/libraries/find/articles/subject

2. Simplify your topic into its key concepts

What are essential ideas that need to be part of information you retrieve? Try writing down your topic as a statement or question and then underline the terms representing key concepts.

Example: Should marijuana be legalized?

3. Think of alternative words you can use to represent the same idea

What other ways are there to say the same thing? Consider synonyms, broader and narrower terms, antonyms, colloquial words versus professional terminology.

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Examples: **<u>marijuana</u>:**   marihuana hemp cannabis   pot

　　　　　　　<u>Legalized</u>:   legalization   legalize

4. Map out the logic you will need to combine your key concepts

Use **OR** to combine terms that represent the same idea
use **AND** to combine different terms or sets of terms representing the ideas.
See **Help** to figure out how to search by phrase or truncate (that is, retrieve all forms of the search term: use truncation symbol after the word root, for example, enter legal* to cover legal, legalized, legalization, legalize). Use parentheses around OR terms when combining them with AND.

　　　　Example for EBSCO databases, such as **Academic Search Premier**:

　　　　　　Select the **Standard Search** and in the **Find** box type:
　　　　　　(marijuana OR marihuana OR hemp OR cannabis OR pot) AND legal*

　　　　Example for FirstSearch databases, such as **ArticleFirst**:

　　　　　　In the **Search For** box type:
　　　　　　(marijuana OR marihuana OR hemp OR cannabis OR pot) AND (legalization OR legalize)

　　Note: Learn more about Boolean Search logic here: http://www.internettutorials.net/boolean.asp

5. Get help when you use an unfamiliar database

 Is it clear what database conventions are for things such as truncation, searching for terms in specific data fields, limiting by language, etc.? Different database search products work differently. Do you know how to limit your search by date of publication, species or language? Use the online **Help,** or ask a librarian for assistance.

6. Learn from what you find with one search and use it with a different search.
Did you retrieve records for items that were on the right subject? Were they too technical or too popular? Did you find enough? Decide if you should try using different keywords, reworking your search logic or choosing another database.

　NOTE: OIT students, faculty, and staff can access library databases from any computer. In order to access them, you will need to provide your OIT email log-in and password. Find more information at **Help!** on the library homepage, or at: http://www.oit.edu/libraries/help/Computerhelp/techtrouble.

For practicing in building better search strategy use a **Searching Log**. It is a table for reflecting all stages of your search, databases and search terms used, quantity and quality of results retrieved. It is an exact description of your search step by step to help you analyze advantages and disadvantages of different databases and ways of searching. You can find the Searching Log form on the Library web page, here: http://www.oit.edu/Libraries/Library/Searching_Log.pdf .

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