The Online Catalog: Basic Search Tips

This document offers useful tips for successful searches in the Online Catalog. For a more detailed explanation of the Basic Search functions, please refer to documentation on the C/W MARS web site at http://www.cwmars.org

The web address for the C/W MARS online catalog is http://bark.cwmars.org.

1. In general, the SIMPLER you can make your search the better.

2. SEARCH with as FEW SEARCH TERMS as you can. When the catalog does a search for you, it will try to find records that contain every single word that you put in the search box. The CATALOG IS VERY LITERAL when it searches. pillows earth will not return the book “Pillars of the Earth”; pillars earth will. The catalog will not suggest that the search might have meant something else. A search for toolkit will return different results than a search for tool kit.

3. If a search fails when you use multiple search limiters, RETRY the search WITH FEWER LIMITERS.

4. Search TERMS can be entered IN ANY ORDER. with wind the gone will get the same results as gone with the wind. Author names can be entered in any order. mark twain will get the same results as twain mark. No comma is necessary in an author name. APPOSTROPHEs, though, are IMPORTANT. The term don’t will return different results than the term dont.

5. Enclosing words in QUOTATION MARKS will cause the catalog to search on a phrase. This may help you get a result sometimes but try the search without the quotation marks if the results aren’t what you wanted. Use quotation marks if you’re looking for a specific word. For instance, “Kissinger” will get results for the name Kissinger but Kissinger without quote will also get kissing, kissed, kisser, and so on.

6. CAPITALIZATION is IGNORED. Little Miss Marker will get the same results as little miss marker.

7. Words like AND and OR have NO SPECIAL MEANING for Basic Search. They are treated like any other word.

8. To EXCLUDE A TERM from a search, put a MINUS SIGN in front of it. gone with the -wind will get results that have gone with the but not gone with the wind. This can be helpful when narrowing a search. For instance, a search for Indian food will include both American Indian food and food from India. To narrow the search, enter Indian food -American. This will reduce the results quite a bit but you may still find something on Cherokee cooking. Further narrow the search by entering Indian food -American -Cherokee.

9. Some search TERMS will be EXPANDED in your search results. This is why a search for dog will get results that include dogs. A search for amish quilt will include results for amish quilts and amish quilting.

10. If you’re not looking for a specific item but want to see what might be available on a topic, ENTER ANY SHORT, SIMPLE PHRASE in the search text box. For example, spain hotels will return materials about lodging in Spain; china travel will return materials on traveling in China; spy thriller will return spy thrillers.

11. Sometimes, after you’ve done a search, the SUBJECT LISTINGS on the left hand side of the search screen can be helpful in narrowing or extending a search. For instance, someone searching for Saturn will see Saturn probes listed there.