# SECTION 3

## Locating documents

2nd Year Master Electrical engineering and electromechanics
Course: Documentary research and dissertation design
SECTION 3 : Locating documents

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## 3. LOCATING DOCUMENTS

### 3.1. Research techniques

During this stage, the various sources selected are queried, using search equations, and the relevant results are recorded, to obtain the primary documentation. In order to carry out a rigorous documentary search, it is advisable to use a research form and to keep a research log.

### 3.2. Terminology

- **Primary document:** Document presenting original information.

- **Secondary document:** Document containing descriptive or analytical details of a primary document. E.g. bibliography, catalogue, table of contents, etc.

- **Search slip:** This will list the keywords used in the search and any synonyms.

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## SEARCH STRATEGY FORM

**Step #1**: Write your thesis statement (2-3 sentences) in the box.

**Step #2**: Extract the keywords from your statement for use in searching.

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**Step #3**: Think of as many synonyms as possible for your keywords and enter them in differentcombinations into EBSCOhost Business Source Premier.

Example – for the word 'Change' you might try innovation, modification, adjustment, advancement, variation,transition, diversification, transform, alternate, adapt, develop, etc.

_____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____

**Step #3**: If you are finding too many unrelated results think of any restrictions you might want toadd by using the 'NOT' function in advanced search.

_____ _____ _____ _____

**Step #4**: Certain subject terms will appear repeatedly in your search results. Record these and beginto search by Subject Term rather than keywords. Choose 'SU Subject Term' from the drop down
menu which reads 'Select a Field'.

_____ _____ _____ _____

Optional: Add a date range to limit results.

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- **Research log**

| Source | Date | Keywords |
|--------|------|----------|
|        |      |          |
|        |      |          |
|        |      |          |
|        |      |          |
|        |      |          |
|        |      |          |

## 3.3. Performing the search

Spoken language is not always suited to documentary research tools, so it is necessary to translate the subject of the research into keywords. To find relevant keywords, you need to adopt a lexical approach:

- Consult a dictionary of synonyms.
- Think about generic and/or specific terms.
- Avoid empty words such as articles, pronouns or coordinating conjunctions.

This involves combining the keywords defined above to write a query. As each tool operates according to its own query language, it is strongly recommended that you familiarise yourself with the rules to be followed. The clearer the query (i.e. the one that complies with the rules), the more relevant the results will be.
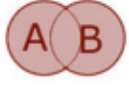
## 3.3. The search operators

From a general point of view, making a query involves combining keywords using search operators.

### 3.3.1. The Boolean operators

By establishing a logical connection between search terms or keywords, they can be used to find information or a document.

The operators are often used in English and must be capitalised.

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| Examples of search equations<br><br>**A** and **B:** Keywords<br><br>**AND, OR** and **NOT:** Boolean operators | A **AND** B | A **OR** B | A **NOT** B |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Delimitation of research** |  |  |  |

- Operator **AND** : Very precise search: only A and B together.

- Operator **OR** : Very broad search: on A, on B and on both at the same time.

- Operator **NOT** : Oriented search: everything about A except for B.

### 3.3.2. Truncature * or ? / $

It can be used to broaden a query based on a term (all variants of the word will be taken into account: singular/plural, masculine/feminine, etc.).

- **\***or **? :** replaces a character at the beginning, middle or end of a term.

- **$** : replaces several characters at the beginning, middle or end of a term.

### 3.3.3. The search by expression

The use of quotes "    " allows to launch a search on a "character string". It is particularly useful when a search produces too many results or when you are looking for a specific expression.

### 3.3.4. The Case (capital letters, empty words)

When searching a database or library catalogue, it is recommended that you use only unaccented lower case letters. Blank words are non-significant words such as articles, prepositions, pronouns, etc. With the exception of a search by expression, they are completely useless.

You can improve your search by using the advanced functions offered by the tools. The "Advanced search " gives access to search criteria such as:

- **Date:** to restrict the search to more or less recent data.

- **Document language**

- **Document format:** allows you to restrict the search to a certain extension (PDF, JPG, etc.).