

WSP Episode 2: Search Strategy & WSP Advanced features

Welcome to WSP Episode 2: Search Strategy & WSP Advanced features. My name is Beth Duttlinger and I'm a library consultant at the Alliance Library System. In this episode, we will be reviewing search strategies and then we will look at some advanced features in WSP. For the basics in WSP searching, please view Episode 1 of this podcast series.

OK, let's cover some search strategy basics. If you are a serious searcher, you should:

1. Know your assignment – what are you required to do? How many sources do you need? What kind of sources are required? How long does it have to be? Do you have an assigned topic or can you pick your own? If you can pick your own, does it need to be approved?
2. Take a minute to define your search—it's helpful to write it down! What are key words and phrases? Are there synonyms?
3. Keep track of searching and add to your list as you find additional terms and descriptors.

As we look at WSP advanced search features, let's imagine that we have an assignment: 2-4 pages with 4 sources (at least 2 magazine/journal articles)

We can pick any topic, and I've decided on "Is there a liberal bias to the media coverage of presidential elections?"

In episode 1, we looked at the basic searching techniques for WSP. Now let's look at some of the advanced strategies.

Multiple search terms—WSP is a lot like Google in that if you type in words it will look for all the words in your search string. For example, for our topic, I've decided to first search for the basic terms I've identified: **liberal bias media**. You'll notice that this search looks for the keywords liberal and bias and media even though I didn't type in the word "and" between the search strings. Since there are 66 articles retrieved, let's look at the first article by clicking on the title. You'll remember from the WSP basics podcast that clicking on the title allows you to see the citation plus the descriptors and in some cases to see an abstract of the article. It's very easy to view the article in either html or pdf and we can also locate some additional terms to add to

Descriptor: [Presidential candidates -- 2008.](#)
[Presidential campaigns -- 2008 -- Press coverage.](#)

Named Person: [Obama, Barack 1961- American president-elect -- Presidential campaign, 2008 - Press coverage.](#)
[McCain, John S. 1936- American senator -- Presidential campaign, 2008 -- Press coverage.](#)

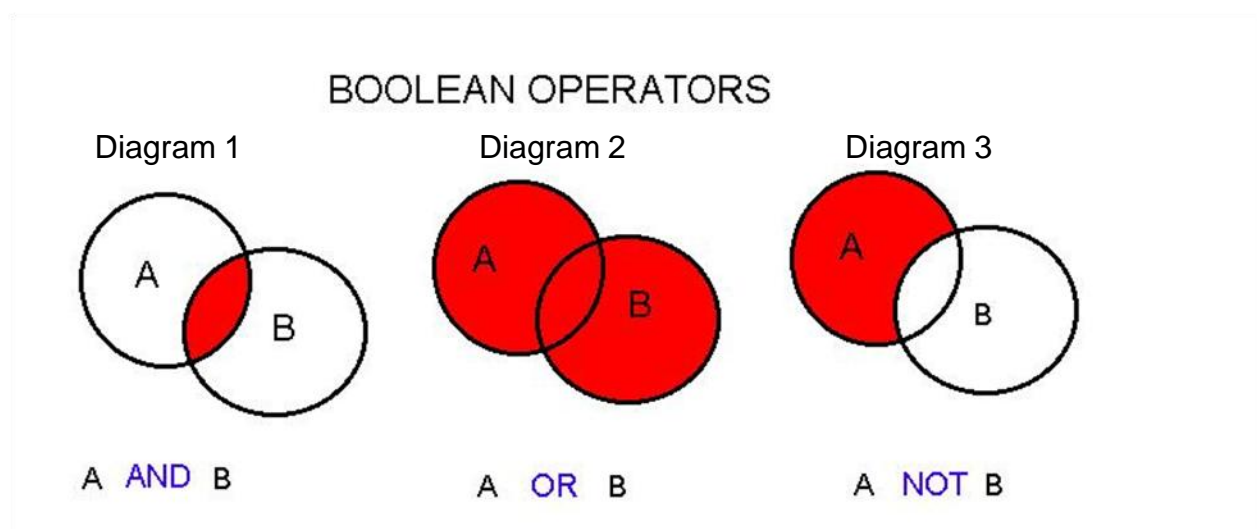
our list—in this case: presidential candidates and press coverage.

This is a very current article and I think it might be helpful so I'm going to mark it. To do that, I'm going to click on the box after the forward/back buttons in this record. You can also mark the record if you are on the "list records" screen. The mark button is in front of the article.

Now let's go view the second article. This one is from the Columbia Journalism Review and is also on topic. I'm going to mark it also. I see another descriptor [Journalism -- Objectivity](#). That sounds very promising. I'm going to click on that descriptor and see what else I can find.

Just looking through the first 10 articles under Journalism – Objectivity, I don't see any articles that seem right on so let's look at the next 10. Some of these could possibly be helpful but I am specifically looking for information regarding presidential elections. Let's revise this search. When we click on the searching tab, you'll see that the subject has been changed to [Journalism -- Objectivity](#). Let's add the descriptor from our first record Presidential candidates as a keyword (remember keyword searches will look in the title, abstract, and descriptors). This only retrieves a few records. Let's remove the term "candidates" and redo the search. That's better, now we have 12 records.

As you can see at the top, this is a more advanced search. By filling out the boxes the way we did, our search was only looking for the subjects of Journalism and objectivity—not just as keywords but especially in the descriptor fields. Then it combines this with the keyword presidential. It looks a little like an equation in the display (**su= "Journalism" and su= "Objectivity.") and kw: Presidential**. Using operators such as "and" allows us to combine terms and makes it easier to locate materials on a specific subject. This is called Boolean searching. Boolean searches allow you to combine words and phrases using the words AND, OR, and NOT (otherwise known as Boolean operators) to limit, widen, or define your search. Most Internet search engines and Web directories default to these Boolean search parameters anyway, but a good Web searcher should know how to use basic Boolean operators.



We've been doing a lot of searching using AND. These diagrams illustrate what information is being retrieved. Let's take our subject of journalism and Objectivity. The information we are retrieving has to have BOTH journalism and objectivity in the subject area as demonstrated by the red area in Diagram 1. If it has one or the other, it will not be included. It has to have both. Now if we said Journalism *or* objectivity it would retrieve any with either the word journalism or the word objectivity or both—as shown in diagram 2. A Not search would retrieve journalism and not objectivity so if the search had journalism *and* objectivity, it would not be retrieved—the red area in diagram 3. These Venn diagrams are a great way to show the results of these Boolean searches. WSP automatically adds the AND when searching multiple terms. If you want to search for words in a phrase—WSP has phrase searching (which involves positional operators).

If you want to search for phrases, the easiest way to specifically look for a phrase (one word right after the other in that order) is to use quotation marks. Let's go back to our topic: "Is there a liberal bias to the media coverage of presidential elections?"

If we're looking for the phrase media bias we can put it in quotation marks. We can also add other terms in combination. So

"media bias" president

retrieves 5 records (Media with bias) and president. In plain language, the quotation marks caused the search addition of the positional operator "with". Positional operators locate records in which the search terms are in close proximity within the same records. 5 records are a little too narrow for me so I'm going to use another tool called truncation.

Truncation

Truncation allows you to search for a term and its variations by entering a minimum of the first three letters of the term followed by an asterisk *. So what if we want to find any form of president?—not only president but also presidential and presidents. We can retype the search using truncation. Let's type in president*. Now we have 13 records.

Let's mark a couple more records. We've been marking records throughout this search. Now let's view those marked records. Let's click on "MARKED RECORDS". Now you will see only the records we thought were the most significant. This allows us to focus on those records. Since we've mostly been focusing on collecting relevant articles that we think will be helpful, we now have time to go and read these entire articles to see if we want to use them in our research. It is very easy to look at each of these records individually, view the articles, print and save. We also have the citation so we can cite these resources.

Looking for a citation

One other thing I would like to show you before we finish up, and that you can search for a citation. In some cases, you may have either a publication title or part of a citation that you would like to locate. If you know the name of the publication, type it in and change the box that now says KEYWORD to SOURCE. In this case, let's type in Time for Time magazine. It will start displaying the most recent articles first. That's a lot of articles! **18,592** Now if you had more of the citation, you can also add to it. Maybe you know the date: December 8 2008. Type it in and change the box to Publication Date. This narrows it down to 17. Maybe you don't know the date, but know the title of the article. Let's take out the date and type in new liberal order and change that to Title. This retrieves the article.

If you are unable to locate an article, recheck the citation information you have. Try search just by keyword or author. It also might be that the citation is correct; it is just not available full-text in WSP.

These are just some of the advanced search techniques in Wilson Select Plus. As you become more familiar with these techniques, you will be able to search more quickly and effectively. It is also important to know your assignment and define your search. Using a good search strategy and keeping track of additional terms as you search will make your research go much smoother. Always remember that WSP has a **help** tab available, and if you have any questions, you can ask for help.

Good luck with your searching!