

Online Catalog: Basic Searching

Library & Technology Center

Research Guide

<http://www.fcsl.edu/ltc>



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What is the Online Catalog?

The online catalog provides information about the Library's resources. It will tell you if we have something in our collection and how to locate it. It includes information on items in print, on CD, on microform, and online.

Here are some helpful searching examples:

The catalog is not case sensitive, so you can input your searches in UPPERCASE, lowercase, or Mixed Case. When searching, English language articles such as "a," "an" and "the" are ignored by the catalog system. For example, "The Life of Roscoe Pound" is searched as "Life of Roscoe Pound" and the article "the" is ignored.

The ampersand (&) is automatically converted to the word "and" and apostrophes are ignored. So "Tip O'Neill & the House" would be searched as "Tip Oneill and the House."

Most other punctuation marks are replaced by spaces. For example, the title "U.S. Constitutionalism" will be searched as if it were three words, "U S Constitutionalism." If you omit the space between the U and S you will get different results.

You can also search the catalog by keyword, title or series title, author, author and title, subject, or call number. Below is a brief introduction to each of these methods of searching.

Keyword Searching

The keyword search is one of the broadest searches available. This can be very useful or it can be very dangerous and result in too many hits. For example, searching for "court" as a keyword search will result

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in over 5,800 hits! But words such as “and,” “but,” “that,” “this” and “from” are not indexed as keywords and therefore cannot be searched.

Broadening or Narrowing your search with...

Truncation –Don’t be afraid to use the asterisk * at the end of a word or string of letters to find all the words beginning with those letters. For example, adolescen* will retrieve adolescent, adolescents, adolescence, etc.

Limiting – To limit your options by year, material, language, publisher, location, or words in the title, author, or subject; click on the “Modify Search” button after your initial search. A screen will appear that allows you to modify your search criteria.

Boolean Operators - Boolean Operators combine or limit the words you use in a search. If you use "OR" as in juvenile OR adolescent - you will find records which have either of those words. Using "NOT" as in environmental NOT waste - will find records that have the word environmental, but not any of those that also have the word waste.

The system will assume an "AND" if no Boolean operators are used between search terms, so entering "constitutional law" will be interpreted by the system as "constitutional AND law."

Author Searching

You can start an author search with as little or as much of the author’s name as you know. For example, to retrieve materials by Oliver Wendell Holmes you could use Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Holmes O, Holmes Oliver, etc. You do not need to enter a comma between the names and the periods after initials are read as spaces and apostrophes are ignored. The system will find entries which appear in the catalog record as authors, editors, or even contributors to works. You can also search for corporate authors or government agencies as authors such as ABA for American Bar Association.

Title Searching

You may enter as much or as little of the title as you know. Remember that initial articles such as “a” are ignored, but smaller words within the title are recognized. For example, a search on "law torts" will not produce any hits in a title search, but "law of torts" will find some records.

Combined Author/Title Searching

The combined author/title search allows you to combine these two searches. Simply enter the author's last name (or corporate or government author), then as much of the title as you can.

Subject Searching

The subject search uses a specific, controlled vocabulary for describing Library material. A subject search will sort through the standardized Library of Congress subject headings in the catalog record. However, because it is a standardized list, there can be some unexpected surprises. Check with the Reference Librarian to access the library's list of subject headings, or use the keyword search as an alternative.

Call Number Searching

Call numbers help place books with other books covering similar topics. There are several different numbering schemes, but our catalog uses the Library of Congress call number system. You can enter the call number in the call number search box and see if Coastal carries that resource.

If you need help, don't hesitate to ASK A LIBRARIAN!

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