# Day 1 Using electronic resources

# Unit 1.3: Effective searching of e-resources

*Exercise 1.3.1 Searching electronic information resources; techniques and strategies*

**Work in:** Pairs

**Time:** 75 minutes plus 15 minutes discussion at end

**Please be prepared to report back to the plenary session after discussion. This report back will be about what you learned about the search process, not the search results.**

# Introduction

## Exercise explained

Individuals or pairs of workshop participants will undertake hands-on work using the computer lab to practice designing and implementing effective search strategies and techniques on a range of electronic information resources and search engines

Users should record their experiences and findings as below. They will be provided with 4 sheets each, so should be encouraged to search up to 4 resources as time allows. As an interesting exercise, they could compare running a search directly in a publisher resource with running that search through Google.

Hands-on duration: 90 minutes

Report back and discussion: 30 minutes

## Objective

To practice devising and implementing an effective search strategy and incorporating complex search techniques (where appropriate) such as Boolean operators, phrase searching, stop words, quotation marks, punctuation, wildcard/truncation symbols, restricted field searching, proximity searching, etc. in a range of e-resources available.

# Instructions

This exercise is divided up into 5 stages, the first of these should begin on paper, the others are computer based. It is important to not rush straight to the computer and the first “search” box available – that is not effective searching.

The five stages of this exercise and the five stages of effective searching:

1. Define your information need
2. Decide which resource/s to use (both e-resources and search engines)
3. Find out what search options your chosen resource offers
4. Run your search
5. Review and refine your search.

## Handouts

In your pack are some handouts on search skills, which are included for reference and can be read and referred to after the workshop

## Stage 1: Define your information need

Record your search topic and outline strategy on the worksheet provided.

It is important to select a topic that you have an understanding of and ideally, a genuine interest in. Perhaps you can select a topic that you are personally interested in or one that many of your users or colleagues might be interested in.

Completing this stage on paper is important, as even extremely experienced searchers can benefit from completing this stage away from the computer.

## Stage 2: Decide which e-resources to use

Refer to the resource descriptions sheets produced in the previous exercise or the pages relevant to your country at [www.inasp.info](http://www.inasp.info) . You will need to consider which of the e-resources available are most likely to contain content that will be relevant to your topic and searches.

You may also want to do some searching using a general Internet search tool, such as Google. That can be a useful approach to get additional leads, keywords and such that may be of use when searching the library focused e-resources. However, focus mainly on the e-resources, Google should just be used as an aid to this exercise and not be the main focus.

## Stage 3: Find out how the e-resource functions

How does the e-resource you are going to use function? Does it offer advanced search functions? Are you familiar with using it? If not then you may wish to explore the resource before you start searching it e.g. test how it functions and what the results are of your search phrases and topics. Record your results and experiences of conducting the searches using the table provided.

If there are any additional results, features or comments you think would be useful to share with others, please make a note of them too.

## Stage 4 and 5: Run your search and Review and refine your search

Using the information recorded and obtained from stages 1-3, undertake your searches using a variety of e-resources. Review and refine your search in light of the results you get as you go along. Record your experiences and findings in the table below. Be prepared to present a summary of your experiences to others in the workshop during the closing session of this exercise.

## Record the results of your search

Record the results of your searches and search topic for each of the e-resources that you have explored in detail. Be prepared to share some of your experiences with other workshop participants during the final session of this exercise.

**E-resource 1**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of e-resource : |  |
| What topic were you looking for? |  |
| What terms did you use to describe your topics? |  |
| What kind of results did you find? Too many results? Too few results? |  |
| Did these results differ for this resource from others that you tried? How? |  |
| Was your searching a success? Was this due to how you searched? Or what you searched? |  |
| Did you try to modify your search? If so, how? Was this successful? |  |
| Try running the same search in Google. How many results did you get? How useful are the results? How credible do they seem? |  |

**E-resource 2**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of e-resource : |  |
| What topic were you looking for? |  |
| What terms did you use to describe your topics? |  |
| What kind of results did you find? Too many results? Too few results? |  |
| Did these results differ for this resource from others that you tried? How? |  |
| Was your searching a success? Was this due to how you searched? Or what you searched? |  |
| Did you try to modify your search? If so, how? Was this successful? |  |
| Try running the same search in Google. How many results did you get? How useful are the results? How credible do they seem? |  |

**E-resource 3**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of e-resource : |  |
| What topic were you looking for? |  |
| What terms did you use to describe your topics? |  |
| What kind of results did you find? Too many results? Too few results? |  |
| Did these results differ for this resource from others that you tried? How? |  |
| Was your searching a success? Was this due to how you searched? Or what you searched? |  |
| Did you try to modify your search? If so, how? Was this successful? |  |
| Try running the same search in Google. How many results did you get? How useful are the results? How credible do they seem? |  |

**E-resource 4**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of e-resource : |  |
| What topic were you looking for? |  |
| What terms did you use to describe your topics? |  |
| What kind of results did you find? Too many results? Too few results? |  |
| Did these results differ for this resource from others that you tried? How? |  |
| Was your searching a success? Was this due to how you searched? Or what you searched? |  |
| Did you try to modify your search? If so, how? Was this successful? |  |
| Try running the same search in Google. How many results did you get? How useful are the results? How credible do they seem? |  |