Framework for Formulating a Search Strategy

1. Construct the question
2. Select the best resource

3. Formulate the search strategy
   - Keep Concepts Separate
   - Use Limits, Truncation, Subject Headings, and keywords appropriately in the database
   - Use *subject headings* whenever possible
   - Use Boolean Logic – *AND*, *OR*, *NOT*

4. Review the retrieval
   - Citations relevant > citations not relevant
   - Evaluate the studies
   - Review the question
   - Select another database revise the strategy
## Framework for Formulating a Search Strategy

**Tompkins-McCaw Library, VCU Libraries**

### Advantage Disadvantage

| Controlled Vocabulary (Subject) | 1) A list of subject terms may help you find an appropriate search term for your topic.  
2) It can provide you with suggested terms for narrower, broader or suggested topics.  
3) Using appropriate subject headings for a topic, will retrieve all items in the database indexed under the topic. | 1) Recently coined terms, including new topics and jargon may not yet be included in the list of subject terms.  
2) When a database does not provide a thesaurus or list of subject terms, the controlled vocabulary might not be obvious. |
|---|---|---|
| Keyword | 1) Will retrieve items containing new terms, distinctive words, jargon.  
2) If you do not know the appropriate subject heading, descriptor or identifier for your topic, you can conduct a key word search first and look at a relevant item for the appropriate subject term. | 1) You may retrieve items that are not relevant to your topic (false hits).  
2) In order to retrieve more relevant items, you need to use a variety of terms. For example, to retrieve items about movies, a keyword search must include terms like films, cinema, and motion pictures. |

(OASIS: Keyword vs. controlled vocabulary or subject searching)

### References
