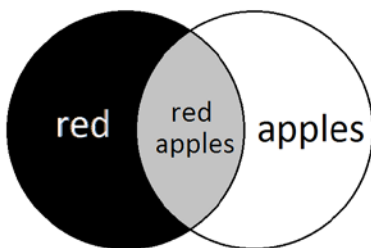


Glossary of Terms used in Database Searching

Boolean Operators:

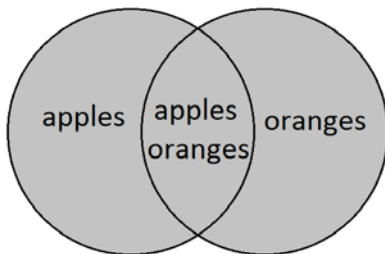
Used to command the database to perform a search in a certain way. The three Boolean operators are:

AND: Combines terms/limits search results. All terms combined with "and" must be in each record retrieved.



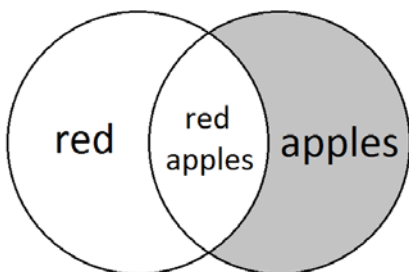
“apples and red”

OR: Broadens search results. Either one term "or" the other must appear in the record.



“apples or oranges”

NOT: Eliminates unwanted term(s).



“apples not “red”

In most cases, if no operator is used, the system will assume a default Boolean or proximity operator. The default operator will vary from system to system.

Controlled Vocabulary:

The official terms used in databases to make searching a topic easier. These terms are called: “subject headings,” “search terms,” or “subjects” in our most common databases. Some controlled vocabulary lists include the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, the *Thesaurus of Eric Descriptors*, and the National Library of Medicine's *Medical Subject Headings*.

False Hit:

Retrieval that is irrelevant. (Most common in keyword searches.) This happens when a word has multiple meanings, like “bass” (guitar or fish).

Field:

A specific segment of a record, i.e., author, title, abstract, publisher, etc.

Keyword Searching:

Searching for words that can be found in any field, not necessarily in the descriptor field. Also called “free text” or “natural language” searching.

Nesting:

Combines several terms and Boolean operators into a single search statement. Use parentheses in multi-word searches that include more than one Boolean or proximity operator. For example: *(personnel management or administration) and (turnover or job satisfaction)*

Search Statement:

Instruction to the computer to find records matching the term or combination of terms entered. Also called “search string.”

Truncation/ Wildcard:

Method to retrieve various forms of a word by entering the root of the word (or some part of it) followed by the truncation symbol. The symbol varies from system to system. The most common truncation symbols are ? # * \$. Some systems have implied right truncation.

(**Example:** librar# would retrieve the words library, librarian, and libraries.)