Intended Outcome and Relevance

Publishing a document beyond the confines of a course is a challenging but worthwhile endeavor. Once published, the document stays with you for the rest of your professional career. This is not intended to dissuade you from publishing, but instead to help you realize the importance of gathering good sources, checking facts, making sure you have something to prove before writing, and getting good feedback from peers, mentors, and colleagues throughout the process.

- Before going any farther consider the following:
  - Who is the intended audience? (peers, article for a newsletter or journal, grant)
  - What current area(s) within the field does this topic fall into?
  - Will this paper cover something new? Provide new information or techniques on previously conducted studies? How relevant is your paper compared to current research being done in this area?
  - What is the intended outcome? (Book, Book Chapter, Article, Series of Articles)

Storyboarding, Brainstorming, or Outlining Ideas

With a clean sheet of paper, a white board, blank word document, or iPad with a clear screen; write the topic of your proposed document. Then, in no particularly order, write down all the words, ideas, movies, books, websites, and so forth that pop into your head when you see that topic.

- Begin organizing your main ideas, sub-ideas, and sources on a separate sheet based upon that initial brainstorming.
- It is perfectly acceptable to come up with ideas as you go through the process, which might not have originally occurred to you. If this happens, just go add them to the original sheet or plug them in as you form the main ideas or sub-ideas.

Think Broad, then Narrow

- When starting to consider a topic(s) for a paper, article, dissertation, etc., it is easiest to list every single word that relates in some way to your topic. This will help improve the efficiency of your search.
  - Ex. I want to write a paper that considers the therapeutic benefits of active release therapy on hamstring injuries.
    - Potential Search Terms
      - hamstring, tendon, injury, active release therapy, ART, tenosynovitis
To do the actual search, it frequently helps to combine related terms, concepts, or ideas and search them as a unit rather than individually within a database. This is when Boolean Operators could potentially make searching easier. So, first let’s review Boolean:

- **Boolean Operators are fancy words to describe combining terms or concepts using AND, OR, or NOT. Note:** These operators must always be capitalized or the database will not recognize them as Boolean Operators.
  - **AND,** when placed between two words, automatically limits the number of terms. It tells the database both words must be present in an article or it will not be listed as result.
    - Ex. (hamstring AND hamstring tendon)
  - **OR,** when placed between two words, automatically expands the number of results. It tells the database to retrieve any articles in which both words are present.
    - Ex. (tendon OR tenosynovitis)
  - **NOT,** when placed between two words, really limits the number of results. NOT should be used infrequently for this reason, because it is easy to miss articles you need, if it is used incorrectly.
    - Ex. (injury NOT tenosynovitis)

- Look at your search terms and see what connections can be made among the terms.
  - Ex. hamstrings are tendons and tenosynovitis refers to a lining of a tendon (PubMed – MESH Headings for hamstring injury)
  - Ex. active release therapy and ART, which is an abbreviation of active release therapy
  - Ex. tenosynovitis refers to a specific part of the tendon.
    - **Alert:** tenosynovitis might useful, but it could potentially not useful. Similarly so, removing injury from the search terms might be necessary, since a more specific term (tenosynovitis, tendon, tendonitis) are available.
- Combine the terms you identified as being related and consider using Boolean Operators
  - tendons OR tenosynovitis OR tendonitis ➔ (This is an example of a potential search string!)
  - hamstring OR hamstrings
  - active release therapy OR ART

**Starting the Search**

- Go to Still One Search (i.e. Big Blue Box on the library homepage [www.atsu.edu/atsmlib](http://www.atsu.edu/atsmlib))!
- Then, enter your search string(s), and begin selecting articles to make your point.
  - This could be done by doing a separate search for each string and then, after looking at the results, experiment with combining the strings using Boolean Operators.
  - Another way would be to combine search strings using Boolean Operators from the beginning and then evaluate the results to see if they will help you.
These are two potential examples of ways to begin gathering articles for this search. Use your imagination and explore other options until you find a way that works for you.

Modifying the Search

- Within Still One Search – specifically the Advanced Search Option – it is possible to limit your search from the beginning in the following ways:
  - **Peer Reviewed** – check this box and only peer reviewed content will appear in your results.
  - **Language** – if you can easily speak and read a second language, feel free to select it here or change it immediately to English.
  - **Year Range** – typically material later than 5-10 years prior to today is not useful, unless it is a historical article.

- Once you have done one (several) searches, it is possible to limit the search using the options on the left hand side of the screen. The ones listed below are used most frequently:
  - **Geography** – limit it to the U.S., USA, or whatever country applies for your topic.
  - **Year Range** – easily expand or limit this at the top.
  - **Database** – choose to view results from among the listed databases
  - **Search Term** – limit by the words used from your search string

Evaluating the Quality and Quantity of Your Results

- Sometimes it is tough to decide when to stop a search, evaluate the results, and then move forward with the project or return to searching.

- Here are some general guidelines to consider:
  - **Less than 50 results could mean…**
    - The search terms are not ideal for retrieving the appropriate articles. Consider looking at the Subject Terms at the bottom of the email (EBSCO Databases – Still One Search, Academic Search Complete, Sport Discus, etc.) or check out the MESH terms (PubMed, OVID – searching of the Medline content) and see if the subject terms of the article retrieved match the content of the article you are trying to find.
    - Limits (year, geography, etc) selected need to be loosened to get more results.
    - The database you are searching is not appropriate for retrieving the sought articles.
  - **More than 50 results could mean…**
    - Your search terms are not specific enough for your topic area. An indication of this would be numerous articles, which contain the search term, but do not relate to your topic area.
    - The years searched are broader than the scope of the subject area covered in the project.
    - You are considering all countries and languages, when in fact anything not published in English or in the U.S. does not relate to the project.
• Once articles, which fit the scope of the project are readily accessible, it is time to store them for future use! This could be done in any of the following ways:
  o Create a personal account in EBSCO
    ▪ This makes storing articles permanently in one location easy! **Note: Still One Search personal accounts are different from personal accounts created in CINAHL or Academic Search Complete.**
  o Create a personal account in MyNCBI
    ▪ Store those searches, articles, and more easily. You can even link your personal account to the library resources. With this option, you login into MyNCBI and then search full-text immediately without having to enter the library website. Pretty Spiffy!
  o Use the Folder (EBSCO Database) or Clipboard Options (PubMed)
    ▪ EBSCO--The Folder option appears as a box with a plus sign at the far right of your citation within EBSCO databases. Once an article is selected to go into the folder it changes shape to a box with paper at the top.
    ▪ PubMed—look to the Send to Section, click down (carrot) option to the right, and select “add to my clipboard.” You will be returned to the results screen and the Clipboard in the upper right will have a # to the right of it and the reference itself will say “in my clip board.”
    ▪ **Note:** These options are great for storing interesting articles as you are searching. Before logging off completely, though, make sure to email a copy to yourself or store the articles permanently by downloading or adding them to a folder in a personal account.

**Still Confused? Want to discuss searching in greater detail?**

Contact the Arizona Campus or the Missouri Campus to get your questions answered today or to schedule a one-on-one appointment!

Missouri Campus: 660-626-2340 or cyberlibrarian@atsu.edu

Arizona Campus: 480-219-6090 or libaz@atsu.edu