

## **FINDING INTERNET SOURCES**

There are many different Internet search engines. Most of them use similar search queries, usually plain English keywords and Boolean operators. Since different search engines may search different types of sites, if you don't find what you are looking for with one, try a different one. And keep in mind that the Internet is constantly changing, so the results you obtain on one day may be quite different on another. Keep a record of important Internet addresses in your Bookmarks file or write them down. For citation purposes, you may also want to keep a record of the date you accessed the site and any other pertinent information.

Although search engines are very easy to use and often return a large number of results, they are often not the best way to collect material for a paper. This is particularly true when you are just starting your research on a topic. Search engines index millions of web pages, of which thousands may have keywords you are looking for. You probably do not have the time to read literally thousands of documents to find the ten or so you will need to write a paper. Search engines treat every document as equally valuable and thus are of no help to you to distinguish between introductory and advanced material, between sites with a broad or narrow focus, or between good quality and poor quality material. Check **EVALUATING YOUR SOURCES**

## **LIMITING YOUR SEARCHES: KEYWORD SEARCHES AND BOOLEAN OPERATORS**

Search engines are very similar to the electronic library catalogs with which you may already be familiar. Simple text searches use keywords and Boolean operators to limit and define search criteria. For instance, entering the terms "death penalty" will search documents for any instance of the word "death" and for any instance of the word "penalty." Different search engines may use different terms to limit searches, but here are some common ones:

### **TERM DESCRIPTION:**

**AND** Limits your search to only those documents that contain both terms, in any order.  
For example, death **AND** penalty

**OR** Searches for all instances of either term in documents.  
For example, death **OR** penalty

**NOT** Eliminates terms from your search so that documents containing the term will not be listed.  
For example, death **AND** penalty **NOT** animals

**" "** Groups words together and searches for them as phrases in a document.  
For example, "death penalty"

**[ ]** Nesting search terms allow for greater flexibility in combining operators.  
For example, ["death penalty" **AND** "supreme court"] **NOT** animals

**+** A plus sign ("+") before each term ensures that each term will be searched for.  
For example, +death+penalty

**-** The minus sign ("-") will exclude terms from the search.  
For example, +death-penalty

**\*** Asterisks ("\*") allow for "wild card" searching, that is, searches that include all forms of a word or all types of a file.  
For example, to search for documents that contains the word "penalty" as well as the plural form, "penalties," use **penalt\***