Information Literacy 2
Search Strategy: The Basics

1. **Identify your question or what you want to know**

2. **Ask yourself the following questions:**
   - What sources are available?
   - Will my textbook be enough?
   - Should I look in an encyclopedia?
   - Are there any library reference books on my topic?
   - Will the article databases have information on my topic?
   - Will the Internet have the information I need?
   - Which sources have the depth of information that I need?

3. **Choose the best sources for your topic or question.**
   - After answering the questions in step 2, choose the sources with the best information for your project
   - Use as many sources as you need

4. **Find the location of each source**
   - Possible sources for background information:
     - *CQ Researcher* (Research Resources on library webpage)
     - *Opposing Viewpoints in Context* (Research Resources)
     - *Credo Reference* (Research Resources)
     - *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia* (Research Resources)
     - Google Advanced Search (choose .edu, .gov, or .org)
   - Search for articles in library databases:
     - *Academic Search Complete* (Research Resources on library webpage)
     - *ProQuest Newspapers* (Research Resources)

5. **Plan your search strategy**
   - Think about your topic and how you are going to search the resources
   - Write down keywords, synonyms, and alternative spellings
   - Be as specific as possible. If you don’t find enough information, broaden your search

6. **Discover how to find the information within the sources**
   - Print sources
     - Look for an index
     - Read the preface or introduction, or explanatory notes
     - Examine the table of contents
   - Electronic databases
     - Combine keywords. Look for Boolean operators.
     - Use links to related information.
Searching Databases

1. **Boolean or combination search**
   - Use operators AND, OR, NOT
   - **AND** narrows your search by combining topics
   - **OR** broadens your search by including any information on topics
   - **NOT** narrows your search by excluding information

   The example of a Boolean search for information about *Cats AND Dogs AND Birds* is illustrated by the circles above. The information retrieved is that information where all three circles intersect. You can see it is a specific section of the information.

2. **Phrase search**
   - Words linked together for a unique meaning
   - Some databases or search engines require quotation marks for phrase searching:
     - “united states”
     - “bilingual education”

3. **Truncation and Wild Cards**
   - Uses a symbol to represent different endings or plural forms to the root word
   - Different databases may use different symbols
   - Some databases automatically truncate
     - *librar?* searches for library, libraries, librarian, librarianship, etc.
     - *educat* searches for educate, educated, educator, education, etc.
     - *wom*n* searches for woman or women

4. **Plus + and Minus – Commands**
   - Using + in front of keywords allows you to mark certain words as essential to the search
   - Using – in front of keywords allows you to exclude certain words from the search
     - +carrot juice allows you to limit your search to carrot juice
     - “bilingual education” – ESL excludes ESL from your search results

Books:
