Effective Search Strategies: Lesson Plan

Subject
Understanding the benefits of academic databases compared to Google; practicing three vital advanced search strategies (subject search, Boolean search, and wildcards); learning the special features of library resources

Audience
Ideally, grade 11 or 12 university level classes

Learning Objectives
- Students can identify the best search term combintation from a list
- Students can explain the advantages of databases compared to Google
- Students can combine search terms in a database to retrieve between 5 and 40 relevant articles

Content Outline
1. Introduction
2. Databases vs Google
   a. How do databases work? What are their advantages? What are Google's advantages?
   b. Demonstration: search for "Criminal Profiling" in Google (millions of surface level results) and in LegalTrac (48 academic articles)
3. Advanced Search Skills
   a. Keywords vs. Subject
      i. Definitions and examples
      ii. Demonstration: "Wrongful Convictions" search as keyword and as subject
   b. Boolean Search Logic
      i. Difference between AND and OR
      ii. Active learning exercise – cards
      iii. Demonstration "Wrongful Convictions" AND "Canada" vs OR "Canada"
         1. Guess which will retrieve more results
   c. Wildcard
      i. Explanation and examples
      ii. Demonstration: "Canada" vs. "Canad*"
         1. Guess which will retrieve more results
4. Assessment
   a. Three multiple choice questions. Which is the best search for each topic?
5. Resources
   a. Refer to handout for information on accessing research tools
6. Conclusion
   a. Librarians are here to help – overview of library services
   b. Any questions?