

Introduction to Boolean Searching
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Introduction to Boolean Searching

- The purpose of this presentation is to introduce you to Boolean searching.
- Boolean searching is also known as terms and connectors searching.
- Boolean searching based on mathematical theory.
- Most online databases and internet search engines support Boolean searches. The terminology varies.

Introduction to Boolean Searching

- **Advantages of Boolean Searching:**
 - › You pick the terms and control the results
 - › Results are more precise and relevant
 - › Complete search results
 - › Cost effective
- **Disadvantages of Boolean Searching:**
 - › You need to know terms relating to your topic
 - › Your ability determines your search success
 - › Difficult to search for broad legal issues

Boolean Search Techniques

- First, you should analyze your legal issues or problem.
- What is the jurisdiction?
- What area(s) of law?
- What do you need to find?
 - › Background, overview
 - › Statutes
 - › Rules
 - › Regulations
 - › Case law
 - › Analysis, practice tips

Boolean Search Techniques

- After you have analyzed and defined your issue(s) identify a database to search that will contain the information you need.
 - › Look at the coverage and scope of the database. What type of documents are contained in the database and years are covered?
 - › Pick subject or jurisdiction specific databases.

Boolean Search Techniques

- After you have analyzed your issue(s) and picked a database to search you should formulate a search query accordingly.
 - › Generate Synonyms, use a thesaurus if available.
- The art of searching lies in understanding how your issue is likely to be expressed in the documents contained in the database.

Boolean Search Techniques

- The next few slides will show you a variety of operators you can use to form a Boolean search including:
 - Quotation marks
 - Basic connectors
 - Wildcard symbols
 - Numeric connectors
 - Grammatical connectors
 - Parentheses

Boolean Search Techniques

- Quotation marks in most databases limit your search result to those documents which contain the specific phrase.
 - "living will"
 - "limited liability"

Boolean Search Techniques

- Basic connectors
 - AND to narrow the search to retrieve records containing all of the words it separates.
 - OR to broaden the search to retrieve records that contain any of the words it separates.
 - NOT to narrow the search to retrieve records that do not contain the term following it.

Boolean Search Techniques

- Wildcard symbols
 - > ! use with a root for any ending
 - Bank! for banking, banker, bankruptcy
 - > * use in place of a single letter
 - Anders*n or dr*nk

Boolean Search Techniques

- The singular form of a word automatically retrieves the plural and the possessive. BUT the plural or the possessive DOES NOT retrieve the singular.
- Watch out for hyphens and acronyms. Databases treat these differently.

Boolean Search Techniques

- Numeric connectors
 - > Restricts search results to those containing your terms within a certain number of words.
 - Limited /10 liability
- Grammatical connectors
 - > Restricts search results to those containing your terms within a certain grammatical unit, a sentence or paragraph.
 - Limited /s liability
 - Limited /p liability

Boolean Search Techniques

- Parentheses group like words or phrases together.
 - Words in parentheses are processed first and treated as a unit.
 - In other words (defect! /s design!) or "product liability" is telling the database to retrieve any extension of defect within the same sentence as any extension of design OR "product liability"

Boolean Search Techniques

- Consider using fields or segments.
 - Use a date field or segment to restrict your search results after a date, before a date, between two dates, or on a specific date.
 - Most documents in databases are separated into sections of text. The types of fields or segments depend on the document.
 - Search for cases a specific judge heard using the JUDGE field or segment.

Boolean Search Techniques

- Once you get a list of results, most databases allow you to narrow the results further or search within the results.
 - Lexis- Focus
 - Westlaw- Locate

Boolean Search Techniques

- Tips
 - › If your search query is too complicated you may not get enough results.
 - › If your search is not complicated enough you may get too many results.
 - › Practice, practice, practice!

Questions ?

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