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Search Techniques: Field & Phrase Searching

- Field Searching
- Field Searching: Examples
- Field Searching: Benefits
- Phrase Searching
- Phrase Searching: Using Proximity Operators

Search Techniques: Field Searching

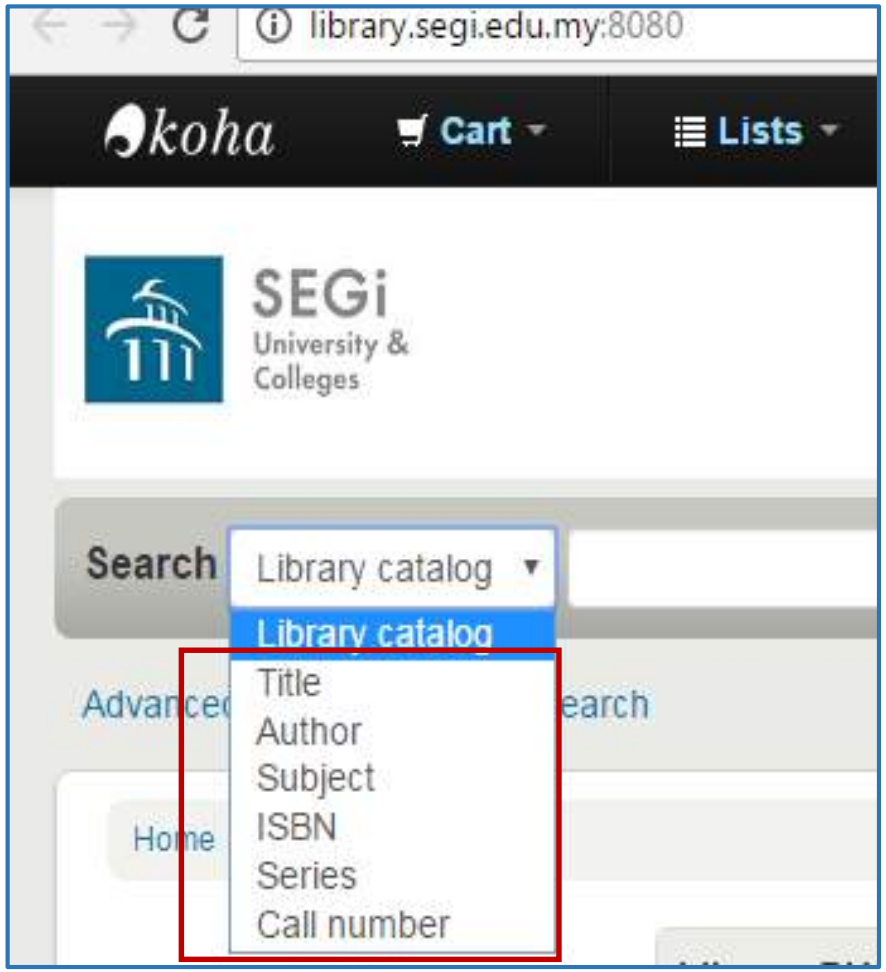
Records in electronic databases and library catalogues have fields and subfields to display information of the item concerned. We can search these fields to look for resources that is relevant to our needs.

Example of fields used are:

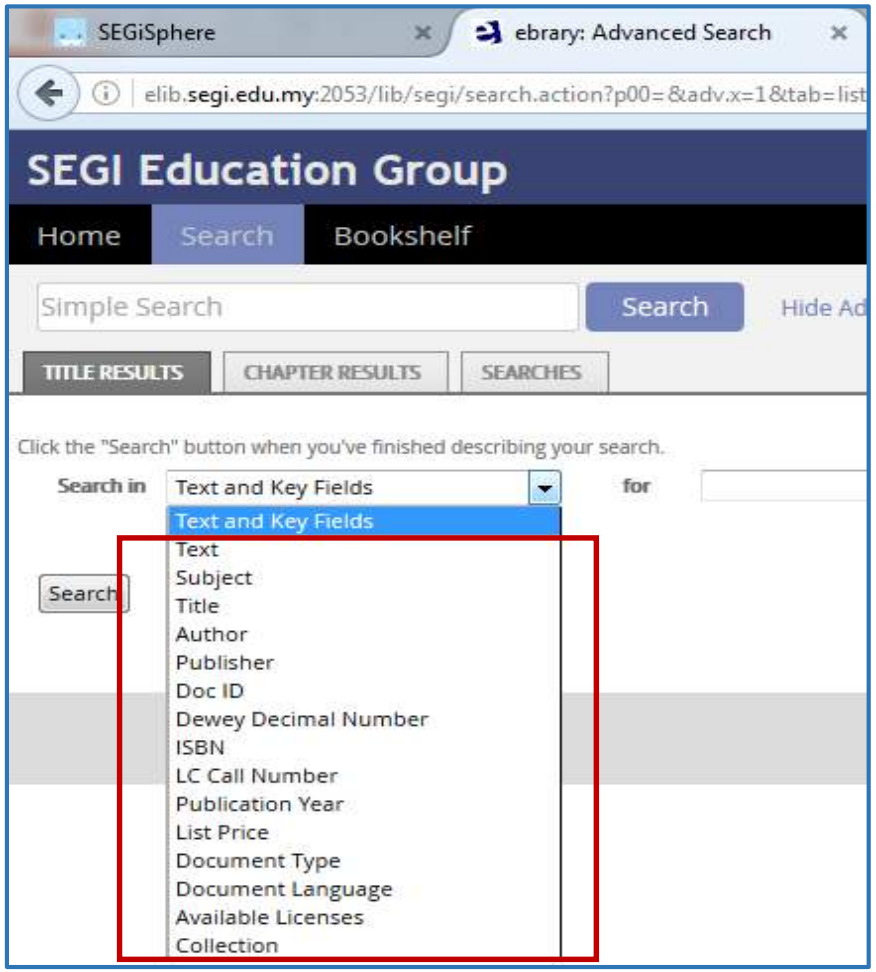
Fields	Title	Author	Subject/ Descriptor	ISBN	Call No.	ISSN	Series	Publisher	Volume	Issue
Book	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	
Ebook	√	√	√	√						
Journal	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√

Search Techniques: Field Searching: Examples

Fields for library books



Fields for e-books in Ebrary



Book

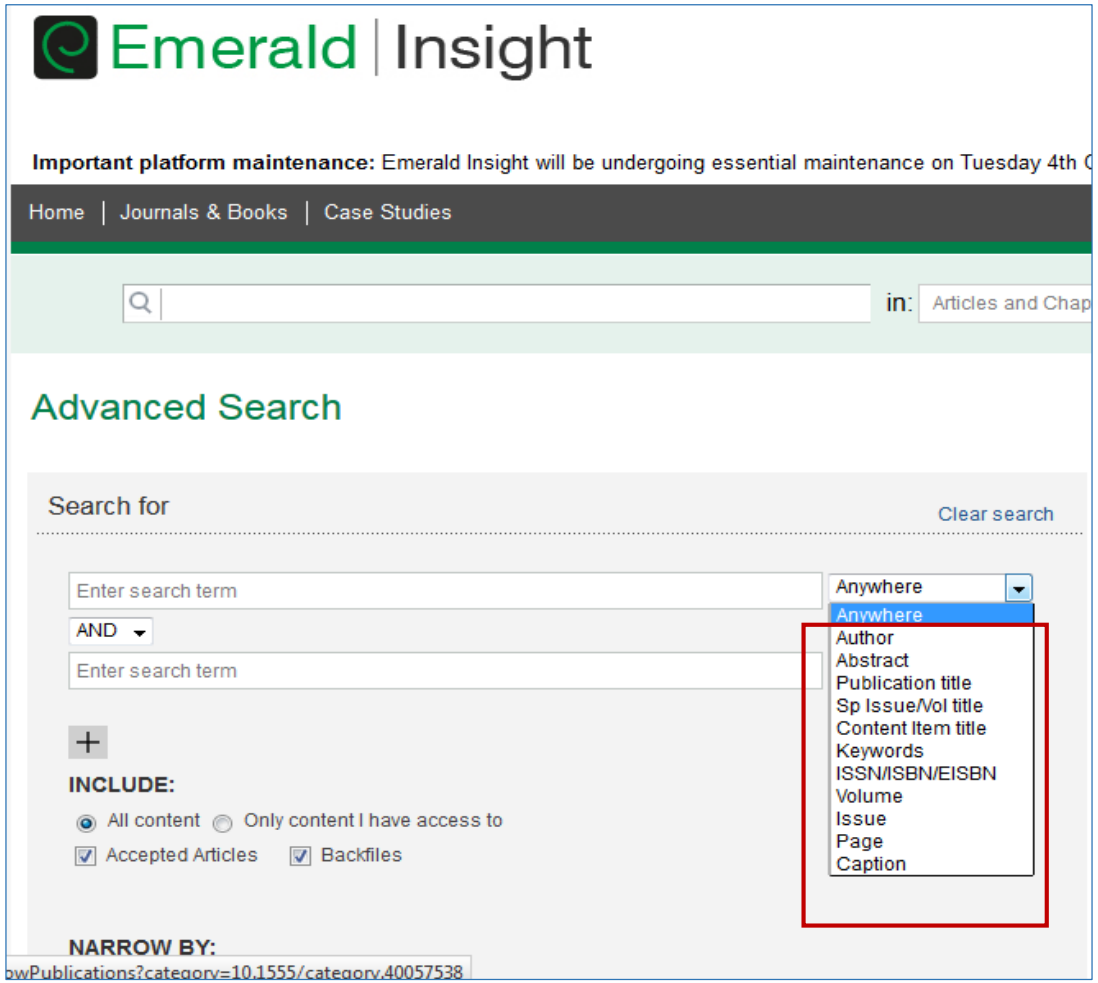
Title
Author
Subject
ISBN
Series
Call Number
Publisher

E-Book

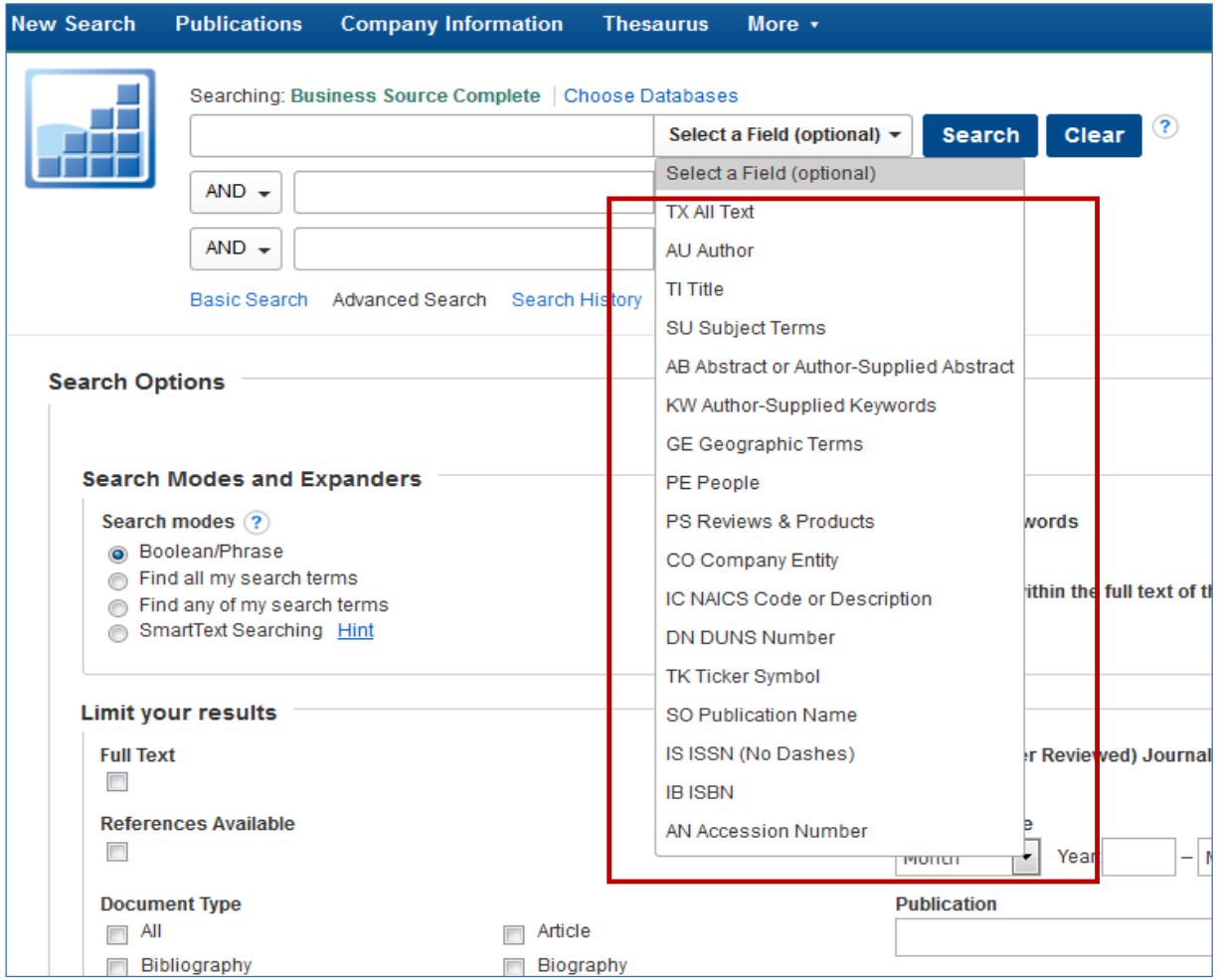
Subject
Title
Publisher
Doc ID
Dewey No.
ISBN
LC No.
Publication year
Available licenses
Collection

Search Techniques: Field Searching: Examples

Fields for journals & ebooks in Emerald



Fields for journals in EBSCOHost



Search Techniques: Field Searching: Benefits

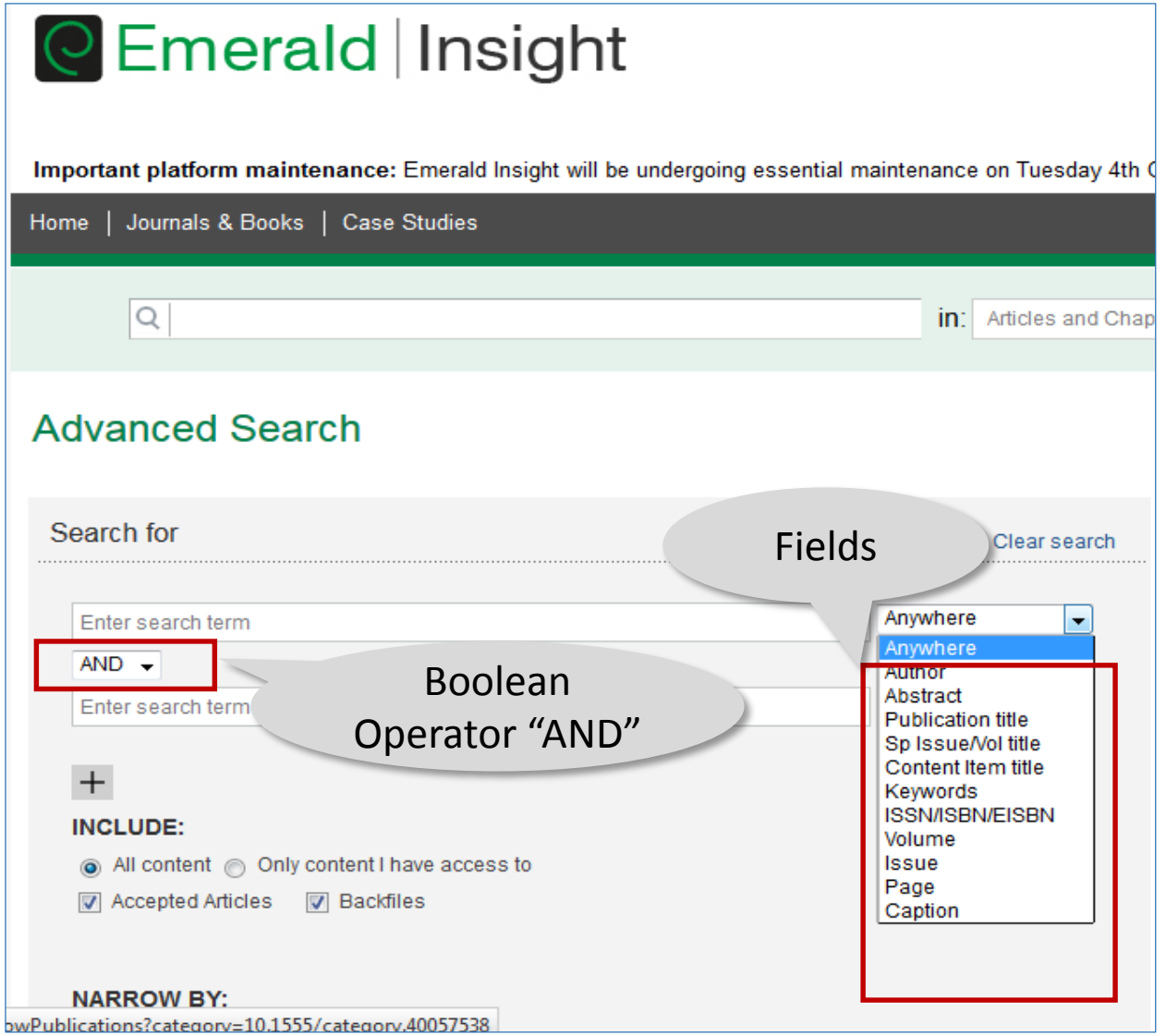
Most databases provide drop down menus for fields in a record e.g. author, title, publisher, etc. The selection of fields differ for each database.

Benefits of searching by field:
Search results are more specific e.g. if we know the author's name we can search according to "Author".

Normally in the Advanced Search various fields can be searched simultaneously coupled with the use of Boolean Operators to result in more precise results.

If we do not specify the field, the search results will be too many for us to sift through.

Sometimes fewer but relevant results are more helpful than too many results.



Search Techniques: Phrase Searching

Different databases search phrases differently.

1. The phrase is searched with the words in the order they are typed into the search box.
2. A Boolean "AND" is automatically placed between words in the phrase. That means all the words must be present in the search result but not necessarily in order they are typed into search box.
3. Phrase searching can be done in Simple, Advanced and Guided Search.

Example from EBSCOhost User Guide

1. Stop words (e.g. the, for, of and after) are replaced by any other one word. If you enter 2 stop words then they will be automatically replaced by any other 2 words.
2. Using quotation marks ("") will inform the database to give priority to this command (stop words in phrase will still be ignored). Even if one word in the phrase is in a field it will still override field searching. It will also override "Find All My Search Terms" command.

https://help.ebsco.com/interfaces/EBSCO_Guides/EBSCO_Interfaces_User_Guide/How_are_phrases_searched

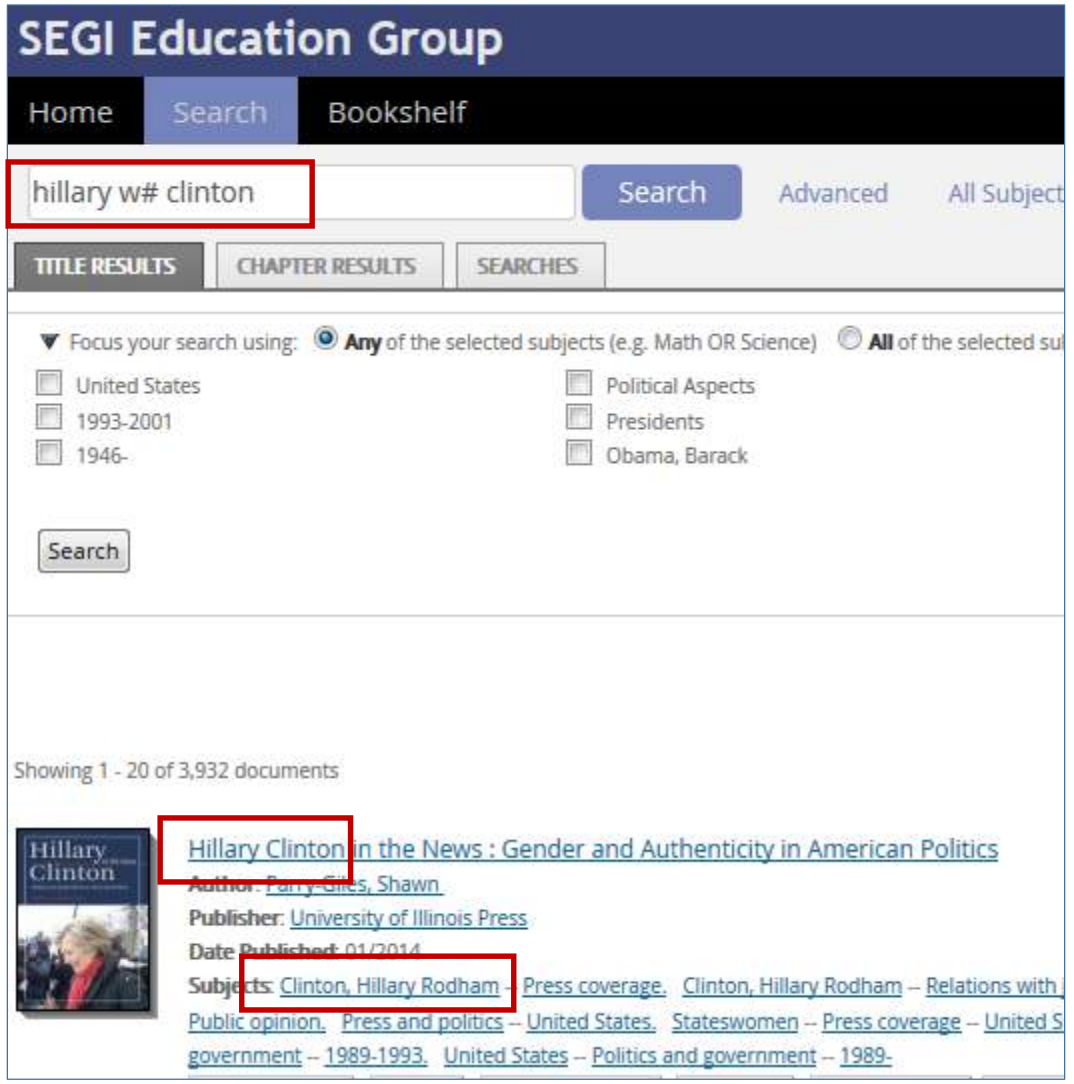
Ref: http://libguides.mit.edu/c.php?g=175963&p=1158825

Search Techniques: Phrase Searching: Using Proximity Operators

Using proximity operators in phrase search for more precision compared to Boolean.

Common proximity operators:
w# = with
With specifies that words are searched in the order they are typed in.
can be replaced by any number to state number of words in between phrase words.
e.g. stem w cell searches stem cell
Hillary w2 Clinton gets results Hillary Clinton, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Clinton Hillary Rodham in any field of a record.

http://libguides.mit.edu/c.php?g=175963&p=1158825



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Search Techniques

Please connect with the Library should you need to attend hands-on basic search skills sessions.
Thank you very much.