Generating and Refining Keyword Searches

In this session, students are asked to explore a particular database and to think critically about how they generate search terms. Students work individually and in groups of 4-5 to locate resources and discuss their findings with the class.

Research Topic: You have an assignment to write a five page paper about the psychological effects of social media participation. You have decided to focus your research on Twitter. Your professor requires you to use at least three scholarly sources that you find in the Library’s databases. You have decided to start with **Academic Search Complete**.

Initial Brainstorming (5 minutes)
What keywords would you use to search for articles on this topic?
- Spend 1-2 minutes writing down keywords individually; make notes either on paper or using Microsoft Word on your tablet.
- Share your ideas for keywords with your group; write them on your group whiteboard.

Initial Searching (5 minutes)
- Think about which keywords may be the most effective. As a group, use your tablets to test out a number of combinations; make a note about each search and how many results it returns.
- Select one group member to project your most effective search to the group’s TV display.

Class discussion (10 minutes)
- What search terms did you find most effective?
- Librarian will have each group talk about the search they selected and displayed; the Librarian will display each group’s search to all screens in the room as each group discusses their findings.
- Were there any other search strategies or database tools you used?
- During the discussion, the Librarian point to aspects of the various groups’ results to compare search results and discuss search strategies students used or could have used:
  - Direct phrase search
  - Database subject terms
  - Using database facets

Refining Your Search (10 minutes)
- How could you refine your search?
- In your small groups, talk about what you might do to improve your search results and make notes on your group whiteboard (5 minutes)
- Test your ideas then select one full-text article to project to your group’s TV screen; review the abstract or first 1-2 paragraphs.

Presenting Your Findings (10 minutes)
- Select one group member to keep your group’s most effective search results pulled up on his/her tablet; have a second group member open the full-text article your group selected.
- Librarian will have each group take 1-2 minutes to present their findings and article; the Librarian can then select some examples to display to the central projector to discuss any further strategies and/or search tips.

Debrief (5 minutes)
- What would your next steps be if you continued to work on this assignment?
- Any questions?

Closing
- Ask all students to take the brief Flynn DisCo survey.