Library Research Tips for the Literature Review

1. **Identify Key Concepts:** First, identify the key concepts in your research question. For example, if you are researching the question, “How do uniform policies contribute to student achievement?” the key concepts might be: *uniform policies, student achievement, secondary school*. Or, even more simply, *uniforms* and *achievement* and *middle school*.

2. **Combine Key Concepts:** Use quotation marks or Boolean phrases (“AND,” “NOT,” “OR”) to help limit your search results:
   
   a. Putting “student achievement” in quotation marks ensures that you will only retrieve results with that exact phrase, rather than every article with “student” or “achievement” mentioned. Likewise, while an initial search for “uniforms” might find many sources, a specific phrase like “uniform policies” might help limit your results.
   
   b. The Boolean phrases (AND, NOT, OR) refine your search in the online tool. For example, you can search for uniforms AND “student achievement” to limit your search to materials that contain both of those exact phrases.

3. **Refine Your Search:** Use synonyms or truncate terms to help refine your search. Since different articles will use different words to describe the same topic, you might need to try multiple, alternative searches to help you find sources.
   
   a. Start by thinking of possible synonyms for your keywords. For example, instead of searching for “student achievement,” you might try keywords like “academic achievement,” “attainment,” “academic success,” “school success,” etc.
   
   b. If you want to search for different variations of a word, you can use the truncation symbol (which is usually an asterisk *) following the root part of your keyword. For example, searching for the truncated phrase, *achiev* would reveal results that would include the terms achievement, achieving, achiever, etc.

4. **Use Subject Headings:** Instead of using your own keywords, try to use the subject headings that the library or database uses to classify articles. Standardized words or phrases are chosen by experts in the field and are used to describe the main topics of each article.
   
   a. After you do a keyword search and find an interesting source, click on the “subject(s)” link to bring up all the sources that share this same header. You may want to try multiple subjects.
   
   b. Once you know the preferred subject heading, you can use that phrase in a search with more specific words. For example, if you discover that the preferred subject heading is “middle grades” instead of middle school, you can search for this phrase alongside other keywords that are important to your topic (e.g., “uniforms” or “academic achievement”).

**Locate Research Materials at Morris**

1. **Search Databases for Articles, Dissertations, and Tests:** An article database allows you to search within a group of journals for articles on a particular topic. Suggested databases for our course include the following (links are available from the library page [http://libguides.lib.siu.edu/education](http://libguides.lib.siu.edu/education)):
   
   - ERIC (broader search for all education materials using controlled vocabulary)
Other EBSCO databases such as Education Abstracts, Academic Search Premier, PsycInfo (narrower search)
- Google Scholar (web-based search)
- Dissertations & Theses (dissertations)
- Mental Measurements Yearbook (tests)

2. **Limit Articles to 'Peer Reviewed':** While you may want to start with a general search, you need to be careful that you are finding sources from academic and scholarly journals (e.g., the *American Educational Research Journal*), not popular or practitioner-oriented magazines (e.g., *Teacher*). Looking broadly is good at first, but make sure to limit your sources used in your literature review to scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles. Most databases allow you to limit your searches to peer-reviewed items.

3. **Find Full-Text Articles:** The journals and databases include many full-text items, but Morris Library can obtain any item you want regardless of its form in the available online tools. If the pdf or linked full-text isn’t linked at the bottom of the citation/abstract in the database, click on the red Find Full Text button to see if we have it in another database or journal. If we don’t the menu will offer a link to “Request Item via Interlibrary Loan” that will populate an Interlibrary Loan request form for you. Just click submit and you will receive an email with a link to the article in a couple of days. You’ll have to set up an Interlibrary Loan account the first time to request an article: [https://illiad-lib-siu-edu.proxy.lib.siu.edu/illiad/firsttime.html](https://illiad-lib-siu-edu.proxy.lib.siu.edu/illiad/firsttime.html). We recommend you use your siu85XXXXXXX number for the username and your last name for your password.

4. **Find Specific Journals:** If you have the title of a journal you wish to explore, you can determine if Morris Library has the journal. Copy the journal title and paste it into the “Find e-Journal” search box under Journals on the Library website. From there, you can link to the full-text options, and look up the issue you are interested in or explore all issues.

5. **Search for Books and Other Sources:** Use similar strategies to search for books, chapters, edited volumes, media, government documents, and other sources in the catalogs: I-Share @ Morris Library and SIUCat Classic from the Library website under “Books and More.” Pull up the full record and use the subject terms to search for other books in your area of interest. You can order items we don’t have through I-Share and they will be delivered within a few days to Morris Library or mailed to your home. You need to set up an I-Share account – see Set Up for Success at the top of the Library website. Use your siu85XXXXXXX number for your username and your last name for your password as with the Interlibrary Loan account.