Keyword Searching Tips

The following tips may be applied to searches in databases or Web search engines. It is noted if a tip is for a specific tool. The words in the examples that appear in bold type represent the words searched. To get to the databases to which the seminary has access (including the ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials), go to http://search.ebscohost.com/ and click on “EBSCOhost Web.” An interface for mobile devices is available at the same URL.

When searching for a specific phrase, put it in quotation marks (true for a lot of search engines and online databases)

- Example: “our father”

“AND” is implied when searching multiple keywords in Google

- Example: entering the keywords discernment and theology in the Google search box is the same as entering discernment AND theology; in other words, both words will be present in the results returned to you without you having to type in the Boolean operator “AND”

Use “OR” in capital letters when looking for any of two or more keywords

- Example: entering salvation OR redemption in the Google search box will return hits containing either the word salvation or the word redemption – or those containing both words

When phrase searching in Google, use an asterisk - * - if a word in the phrase is unknown or when more than one word may appear

- Example: typing in slings and arrows of * fortune will return hits that tell you the missing word is outrageous
- Example: typing in forgive us our * as we forgive will return hits for “forgive us our trespasses…” and for “forgive us our debts…”

When keyword searching in databases, you may use truncation symbols (commonly, * or ?) to search word variations; Google, however, doesn’t recognize truncation symbols because it uses its own stemming technology to search on word roots

- Example: searching an online database for child? (or child*) will return hits containing the words child, child’s, children, children’s, childhood, etc.
- Example: typing child in the Google search box will also yield results for the possessive, plural, plural possessive, and compound words related to the word child

To search for a word and its synonyms in Google, type a tilde - ~ - before the word (seems to work best on very common words)

- Example: typing ~synagogue in the Google search box will return hits on the word synagogue as well as on the words Judaism, Jews, and congregation, among others

Investigate some of Google’s features, including Advanced Search (where you can specify from what domain it returns results) and Wonder Wheel (under Search Tools).