

Field Searching

In online databases, like library catalogs and article databases, as well as Web search engines, each item (book, article, Web site) in the database has a **record** that is composed of the unique information about the item, such as the title, the author, and the publication date.

Here's an example of a database **record** from a library catalog:

Author	Von der Leyen, Katharina
Title	Barron's guide to 140 dog breeds / Katharina von der Leyen
Publ date	Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, c2000
Edition	English language ed
Location	General
Call no.	SF 426 .V6613 2000
Status	On Shelf
Phys descr	158 p. : col. ill. ; 22 cm
Subject	Dog breeds Dogs

Notice the labels for each of the parts of the record including *Author*, *Title*, *Publ date*, etc. These are called **fields**.

It is possible to search on particular **fields** of the item record to find the item. So, in an online catalog, for example, you can expect to be able to search for a particular author by doing an *Author* search or search for a particular title by doing a *Title* search. In most online catalogs, you can search within several fields including the publication date, the call number, and the subject. Likewise, you can search within several fields in online article databases.

Gone are the days of card catalogs when you could only look for a book by author, title and subject! Gone are the days of book indexes, like the [Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature](#), where you could only look up a subject! **Field searching** can assist you in quickly finding that proverbial "needle in a haystack"!

The more fields the particular database allows you to search within, the easier it will be to find a particular item. So, you can search for all books on the subject of "dog breeds," published between 2000 and 2004, for example. When you search on more than one field at a time, you are in effect doing a **Boolean** search, that is, Dog Breeds and 2000-2004. (See the handout "Boolean Logic and Searching.")