Keyword searching allows you to do the broadest search for information in online databases. Keywords can provide the key to open the door to your information, hence the word “keyword.”

When you do a keyword search in an online catalog or article database, you are searching various (sometimes all) sections or “fields” of the record for the book or article, such as the author, title, abstract, or subject fields. This is the biggest advantage of keyword searching as well as a disadvantage. A keyword search will look for your search words in more places or fields than a subject search will. At the same time, a keyword search might uncover or yield results that contain irrelevant items or “false hits,” because the computer will search everywhere for your search words, whether they are main topics or incidental ones.

With keyword searching, what you type in is what you get. There is no value of importance placed on your search words.

Here’s an example of an item found with keyword search in an article database. The topic is identity theft. The search resulted in 206 items or “hits.” Notice that the search found the words in the abstract of the article. It’s our lucky day, because the article is a relevant “hit.”

**Keyword search**

**Click in the entry box and enter search term(s)**

[identity theft]  

Search for words in title, citation, abstract in entire article content  

Type words to search for. You can use AND, OR, NOT. Results are sorted by date

**Time**, August 4, 2003 v162 i5 p72

**Runaway ID Theft.** (Your Time/Money)(Brief Article) *Daren Fonda.*

**Abstract:** Identity theft is soaring. The crime is up 79% from February 2002 and hit an estimated 7 million people in the past year, according to the research firm Gartner. How can you shield yourself? The Identity Theft Resource Center, a not-for-profit organization, suggests that consumers check their credit ratings annually…