



# General Searching Information

Tisch Library at Tufts University

All databases can be used from overseas.

Librarians have subject expertise.

- [Contact the reference librarian](#) who reports to your department. Stay in touch while you're overseas.
- A librarian is online 24/7 via the [Tisch homepage](#).
- For general questions, contact the Reference Desk at 617 627 3460 or [tischref@tufts.edu](mailto:tischref@tufts.edu).

You can access our resources [by title](#) and [by topic](#).

You can [borrow materials that we don't own](#) from other libraries.

## Keyword and subject searching

Subject searching is accomplished in most databases and library catalogs using a thesaurus of acknowledged terms. Keyword searching lets you use your own words, bypassing the thesaurus. The advantage of keyword searching is that you'll usually find something -though it may not be the most relevant title- on your topic. The disadvantage is that your words may not describe the topic using the acknowledged terms.

The screen below shows the result of a keyword search on *defense spending and united states*, for which only 9 titles were found.

Note the official subject heading "United States -- Armed Forces . . ." If you select that heading, you'll find almost 50 titles.

The screenshot shows the Tufts University Libraries search results page. The header includes 'Tufts University Libraries' and a navigation bar with 'Search Results', 'Search Tufts', 'BLC Catalogs', 'E-Journals', 'Reserves', 'My Account', and 'Exit Catalog'. The search results for 'United States -- Armed Forces' are displayed, including the author 'Kaufmann, William W.', title 'Glasnost, perestroika, and U.S. defense spending / William W. Kaufmann.', publisher 'Washington, D.C. : Brookings Institution, c1990.', and description 'x, 52, [33] p. ; 23 cm.'. The series is 'Studies in defense policy' and the subject heading is 'United States--Armed Forces--Appropriations and expenditures.'

## Truncation

Variations in spelling and word endings are accommodated using a truncation symbol. *Wom#n* will find *woman*, *women*, and *womyn*. *Econom\** will find *economy*, *economics*, *economical*, *economies*, etc. Most databases use an asterisk to truncate, however symbols and their use vary widely. Check the help pages for the database you're searching.

## AND, OR, and NOT

- AND will narrow your search results. For example, a search on *armed forces and Russia* gives you more specific results than a search on *armed forces*.
- OR will broaden your results. Use it to combine terms that are similar in meaning. For example: *Great Britain economy or United Kingdom economy*
- NOT excludes terms: (*Scottish parliament not British parliament*)

You can use one or more connectors –and truncation– in the same search to increase the relevance and specificity of your results: (*china or japan*) and (*export\* or international trade*) not (*united states or America*)

The parentheses are critical. They tell the computer the order in which to process your search, much like how parentheses are used in algebra. Terms within parentheses are combined first. Note: this technique works only in keyword searching.