

## KEYWORD SEARCHING VERSUS SUBJECT SEARCHING

	Keyword Searching	Subject Searching
What it is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A keyword search looks in any field</li> <li>• Uses natural language/uncontrolled vocabulary</li> <li>• Reflects current usage (without being prescribed) and is the language found in the documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A subject search looks only in the subject field</li> <li>• Uses prescribed language/controlled vocabulary (e.g.: LCSH, or database-defined terms)</li> <li>• Prescribed subject headings reflect a careful selection of terminology so as to avoid the scattering of related subjects under different headings</li> </ul>
When to use it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When controlled vocabulary is not known</li> <li>• When you want to find the subject heading by using a keyword</li> <li>• When no subject heading exists to describe your topic (too new, etc.)</li> <li>• When you have several different concepts to apply to one search</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When controlled vocabulary is known</li> <li>• When too much material is retrieved by a keyword search</li> <li>• When specialist vocabulary is needed (e.g.: MeSH)</li> </ul>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides access to new terms or topics that may not yet be reflected in controlled vocabulary</li> <li>• Usually results in a broader search, therefore it is more likely to retrieve something</li> <li>• Serendipitous access to subject headings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides one authoritative heading for a particular subject, regardless of how many different keywords are related to the topic</li> <li>• Results in a more orderly search, often including access to related, broader and narrower terms</li> </ul>
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many hits</li> <li>• False hits</li> <li>• Not necessarily comprehensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not reflect current usage resulting in unsuccessful searches, especially for very current topics</li> <li>• Impossible to retrieve hits if not using proper subject headings</li> </ul>

