

Search Tutorial

Help for Brooks Free Library Historical Newspaper Collection Searching

This site features two different forms of search syntax, **Precise Search**, and **Simplified Search**. Precise Search features Boolean search syntax, while Simplified Search utilizes a more modern Internet-like search experience. The differences are outlined in detail below, but in summary, Precise Search is a more traditional syntax and tends to be favored by experienced researchers, while Simplified Search is favored by occasional researchers.

Below are the rules for a successful search using Precise Search syntax.

Precise Search Syntax

The following are valid searches:

To find documents with the exact word, enter only the word into the SEARCH dialogue box: i.e., **Traffic**, then press **SEARCH**

To find documents containing an exact phrase, enter the phrase with no symbols: i.e.,

Traffic Circle, then press **SEARCH**

Precise Search utilizes Boolean Operator syntax for accurate complex searches. Boolean Operators are words, not symbols, and do not require the use of italics, parentheses, or quotation marks. The Boolean operators are **and**, **or**, **not**, and **near**.

Enter Boolean Operators as follows:

- **document** *and* **region**
- **document** *or* **region**
- **document** *and not* **region**
- *not* **region**

Removing the power of Boolean Operators

Sometimes you just want a word to be a word, not a Boolean operator. If you want to search for a phrase that includes a Boolean Operator (for instance, black and white) you first have to remove

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the Boolean power of the word **and**. To do so, simply enclose the Boolean operator in quotation marks.

- traffic **"and"** circle will find the phrase "traffic and circle", while **traffic and circle** will find each page that includes both the words traffic and the word circle not necessarily adjacent to each other.
- **to be "or" "not" to be**, will find the phrase "to be or not to be"

Proximity Search Explained

- **Traffic near circle** finds newspaper pages with the word **traffic** within 10 (by default) words of the word **circle** – you don't use italics for the word near, used here only for clarity.
- **Traffic near(5) circle** finds newspaper pages with the word traffic within 5 words of the word **circle**. Users can substitute any other number up to 100 for the number 5, and get the appropriate result. By default, the search engine assumes proximity within 10 words.

Simplified Search Syntax

To find documents containing the exact word, enter the word only (for instance, the word **traffic**) then press Search. The MicroSearch search engine will return the **Results** page, a list of all documents containing the word **traffic**. (All search queries are case insensitive).

To find documents containing two words, enter the words separated by a space. Note: In Simplified Search, spaces between words are interpreted as the word **OR**.

Entering the phrase **Traffic Circle** will find every document containing either the word **Traffic** or the word **Circle**. (Documents containing both words **will score higher** in the Search Results page.)

To find documents that contain the **exact phrase**, enter the desired phrase within quotation marks (for instance, **"traffic circle"**). The Microsearch search engine will return a list of all documents containing the exact phrase **traffic circle**. Simplified Search Special operators include the plus+ and the minus – signs:

document +region (Finds documents that **must** contain both words)

document -region (Finds documents containing the first word **but not** the second word)

-region (Finds all documents that do not include the word.)

Proximity Searches are not supported in Simplified Search syntax. To do a Proximity Search, go to **Precise Search** by checking the **Precise Search** button on the Advanced Search page.

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Below is a summary chart of the search rules of the two different syntaxes

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Precise Search

The following are valid searches. *In an actual search, do not italicize special symbols or Boolean operators.*

To find documents with the exact word: Enter word only: **Holiday**

To find documents with the exact phrase: Enter phrase: **Holiday pay**

Boolean Operators: Note that Boolean operators are **words**, without parentheses, or quotation marks.

- document *and* region
- document *or* region
- document *not* region
- *not* region

Removing the power of Boolean Operators

- rock "and" roll - will find **rock and roll**
- to be "or" "not" to be will find

to be or not to be

Proximity Searches

- payroll *near* laws
- payroll *near(5)* laws

Complex Searches

...contain at least one Boolean expression, and may require quotation marks. (cat "and" dog) **OR** fish **OR** (cows "and" horses) would find any document that contained:

1. **cat and dog**, the exact phrase,
2. **cows and horses**, the exact phrase
3. **fish**, the word.

Simplified Search

The following are valid searches. *In an actual search, do not italicize special symbols or Boolean operators.*

To find documents with the exact word: Enter word only: **Holiday**

To find documents with the exact phrase: Enter phrase within quotation marks: "Holiday Pay"

Boolean Operators: Note that Boolean operators are **symbols**, without parentheses, or quotation marks.

- document +region
- document region (**or** is implicit)
- document -region
- -region

Removing the power of Boolean Operators

Placing quotation marks around a phrase will remove the implicit **or**. "just cause" will return documents containing the exact phrase **just cause**.

Proximity Searches

not supported in Simplified Search

Complex Searches

...contain at least one Boolean expression, including spaces that are interpreted as **or**: "**cat and dog**" fish "**cows and horses**" would find any document that contained:

- **cat and dog**, the exact phrase,
- **cows and horses**, the exact phrase
- **fish**, the word.