Transcript: Subject Terms and Thesauri

In this video, you will learn how to:
- use the tools available in UNB Libraries' article databases to find the best words or phrases for researching your topic.

Subject terms are words or phrases used by a database or a catalogue to categorize its content. You can think of subject terms as the preferred language used by a database to capture the essence of a topic. By tapping into this language you will retrieve more precise search results.

When you go into a Tim Hortons in Fredericton, Canada, you can request "a double-double." However, if you go into a cafe in Paris, France, and ask for "a double-double," they will have no idea what you want. You need to make your request using the proper terms and the appropriate language--"Une tasse de café s'il vous plait."

You can find the best words and phrases for researching your topic within UNB Libraries' article and research databases, by using the 'subject terms' or 'thesaurus' options.

In a number of EBSCO databases, you can access the subject terms via the Thesaurus or Subject Terms link in the top left of the blue navigation ribbon. In many databases by ProQuest, the link to the Thesaurus is located just above the main search box.

Let's try a search in Academic Search Premier. Let's use the terms from the **Keywords, Synonyms, and Phrase Searching** video. I am interested in finding peer-reviewed journal articles about *phones*, *restfulness*, and *teens*.

Unfortunately, "No results were found."

Let's explore the Subject Terms to check if the lack of results can be attributed to my search vocabulary.

While I used the word *phones*, the subject terms suggested are TELEPHONE or CELL phones.

The word *restfulness* does not appear and no suggestions or alternatives are provided. I'll try *sleeping* instead. The subject term SLEEP is suggested by the database.

Instead of using the word *teens*, we will use the subject term TEENAGERS.

If we try a new search, using terms recognised by the database, we now get more results.

Using the correct words for your search will make all the difference to your results and make you a happier researcher.

Remember, each database has its own preferred vocabulary. You should check with each one and not assume that a search term will be recognized by multiple databases.

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If you have any questions about the resources or about your research, talk to us via the chat widget on the library's home page.