How to Search:

Using "Discovery" Databases, e.g.,
EMU Esearch
Google Scholar

Since information search involves querying written, text records documenting the communications of others, it makes sense that the key to discovering material relevant to your topic is your ability to use appropriate VOCABULARY – words and phrases – to search the communication streams

- Another way to frame this is that when you are doing RESEARCH you are joining a CONVERSATION among other researchers who share your concerns about the issues and problems that engage you

- To participate in any ongoing conversation you will need to understand the LANGUAGE – words and concepts – being used by the discussants

The records in the communication stream of "discovery" databases, such as EMU's *Esearch* or *Google Scholar*, contain descriptions of each item in the database, e.g., author(s), title, publisher, publication date, content summary, and sometimes, in addition, the full text of the item

- In "discovery" databases, to find items relevant to your topic, you search the words and phrases used by the authors/publication sources

- Authors/publication sources discussing the same topic might use different words and phrases to describe it (due to the richness and complexity of language)

For example, if your topic is:

"Does being **overweight** impact **academic performance**?"

Different authors might use any of the following synonyms to describe and discuss the two topical themes:

Concept 1 Synonyms	Concept 2 Synonyms
overweight	academic performance
obesity	academic achievement
	scholastic achievement
	educational achievement

Search Tip:

- It is not effective to type a complete search statement sentence into a database search box

- Identify the main thematic concepts from your sentence and type those words/phrases only

  - The bolded words/phrases below are the main thematic concepts:
    "Does being **overweight** impact **academic performance**?"

What strategy should you use to maximize your success finding relevant material when searching "discovery" databases such as
EMU's *Esearch* or *Google Scholar*?

First, Generate Search Topic Synonyms

- If your search topic is:

  'Does **poverty** impact **language development** in **early childhood**?'

  List as many words and phrases you can think of to describe **EACH** thematic concept of your search topic

Concept 1 Synonyms	Concept 2 Synonyms	Concept 3 Synonyms
poverty	language development	early childhood education
low income	language acquisition	preschool education
economically disadvantaged	language fluency	preschool children
low socioeconomic status	language skills	nursery schools
	child language	kindergarten

Discovery Database Searching Advanced Search Screen

- If the "discovery" database offers an Advanced search screen, as found in most traditional academic databases, navigate to that screen and use that interface to search as you would in traditional academic databases
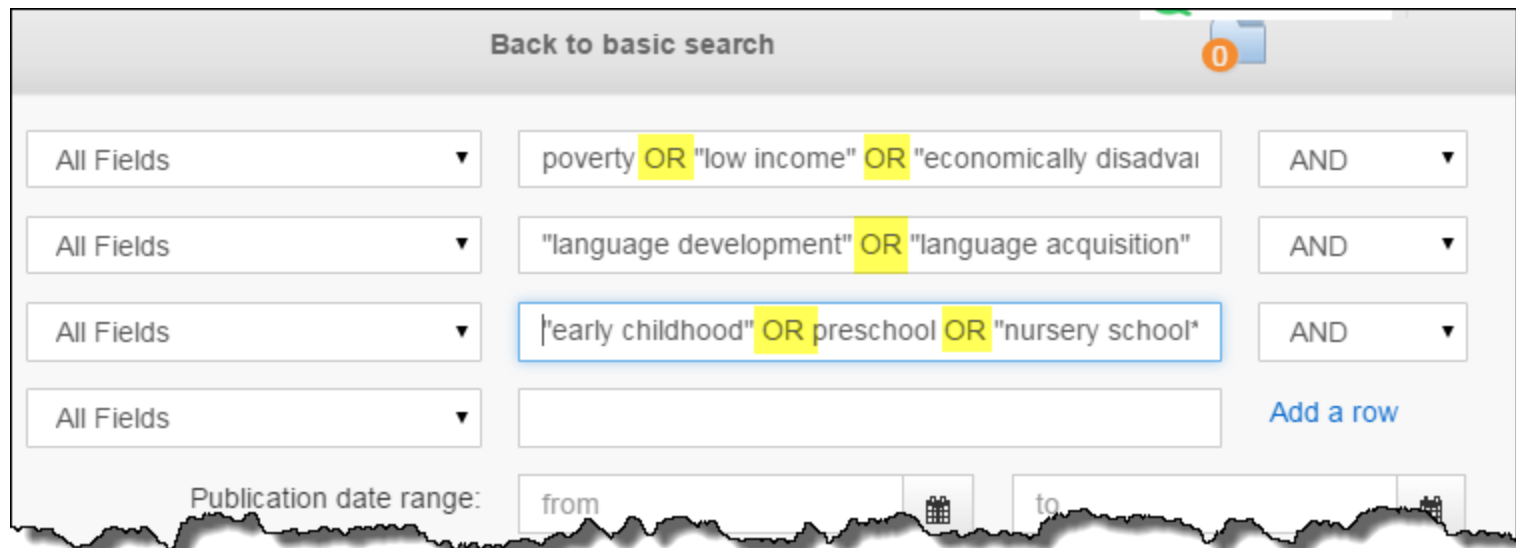
Discovery Database Searching Advanced Search Screen

- EMU's discovery database, *Esearch,* offers an Advanced search screen similar to traditional academic databases

- *Google Scholar* does NOT offer such an Advanced search screen at this time

EMU *Esearch* Advanced Search Screen Tip

- When entering topical synonyms in each search box you MUST capitalize the *OR* connector that is used between synonyms

Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

- If you use the basic single search box interface in a "discovery" database, follow a different strategy to enter your search
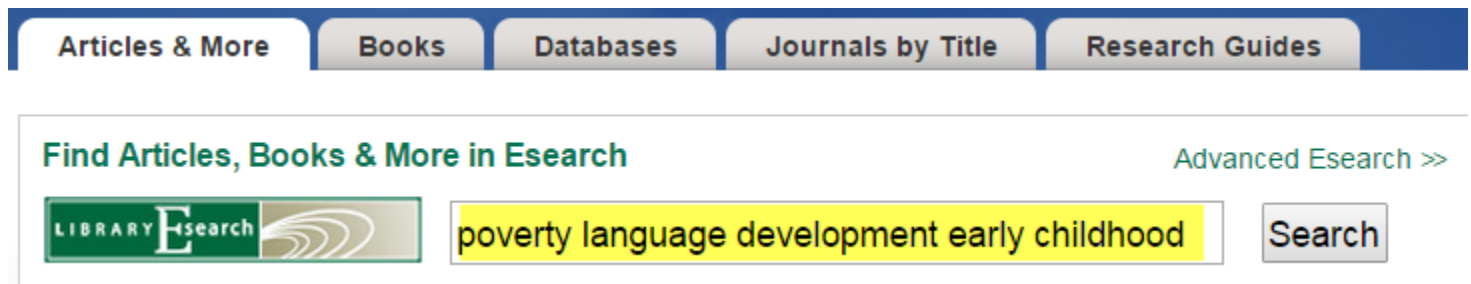
Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

1. In the "discovery" database single search box, enter, at the same time, a single word or phrase for **EACH** of your thematic search concepts

   In our example, you might start with:

   – **poverty language development early childhood**

Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

2. Review the search results

Keep alert for synonyms for your thematic search concepts that you did not initially think of

Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

3. If your result list includes sufficient material to meet your needs….Great!
    If not…

4. Redo your search, but replace one of the thematic concept words or phrases, i.e., keywords, with another word or phrase from your synonym list

Discovery Database Searching
Single Search Box

For example, if your first search does not turn up sufficient material, you might next enter:

poverty language acquisition early childhood

Replacing your original phrase:

language development

With the next phrase on your **synonym list**:

language acquisition