

British Online Archives

Guide to Advanced Search

<https://microform.digital/boa>

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Advanced Search with British Online Archives

OR

'OR' tells search to find any of the words which you put into the search box which it can find, either on its own or with other words you put in. If you put two or more words into the search box on British Online Archives, without any other symbols, it will automatically perform this search:

Example of text typed into search:

American Revolution

Words/phrases search will look for:

American Revolution

or

American

or

Revolution

Quotes

Quotes tell search to find all of the words which you put into the search box together and only find the exact phrase which you put in.

Example of text typed into search:

"American Revolution"

Words/phrases search will look for:

American Revolution



Search by title

This search enables readers to search by collection, volume, and document title, rather than searching the words in each digital copy of a page.

Example of text typed into the search:

Words/phrases search will look for:

Where search will look for the word/phrase



Search by description



The 'description' of our collections is the content on the website which explains what each collection, volume, or document contains. This search enables readers to search by collection, volume, and document description, by searching all of the words relating to these items except their titles.

Some of our collections contain images of manuscript (handwritten) items and the handwritten words in these items cannot be searched at the present time.

Example of text typed into the search:

Words/phrases search will look for:

Where search will look for the word/phrase



Start year

If you know which year the item you need was first printed in, then this option will enable you to search by that year.

Example of text typed into search:

coverage_start:(1939)

Words/phrases search will look for:

1939

Where search will look: in the 'start year' records for every collection, volume and document.

Wildcards

These searches enable the reader to search the past, present, future and plural versions of a word at once.

Single character wildcards

Example of text typed into search:

wo?d

Words/phrases search will look for:

woad, wold, wood, word

Unlimited character wildcards

Example of text typed into search:

coloni*

Words/phrases search will look for:

colonial, colonies, colonist

When unsure of the spelling use fuzzy searches

If you are not sure how to spell a word then you can use this type of search. The search will then look for words that look a bit like the term you've used.

Text typed into search:	Words/phrases search will look for:
<input type="text" value="k~r hardie"/>	<input type="text" value="keir hardie, kier hardie, kir hardie, kear hardie"/>

Choose how precise you want your search to be

Proximity searches enable you to choose the number of words which can be located between your first word and second word in a search. They also enable search to change the order of those words.

Text typed into search:	Words/phrases search will look for:
<input type="text" value="shipping lists" ~1"=""/>	<input type="text" value="shipping old lists"/>
<input type="text" value="shipping lists" ~2"=""/>	<input type="text" value="lists of historic shipping"/>
<input type="text" value="shipping lists" ~3"=""/>	<input type="text" value="lists of UK transatlantic shipping"/>
<input type="text" value="shipping lists" ~4"=""/>	<input type="text" value="lists covering trade and transatlantic shipping"/>
<input type="text" value="shipping lists" ~5"=""/>	<input type="text" value="lists covering both African and Asian shipping"/>

Boosting

If one of the words you want to search for is more important to your research than the other, you can tell search to focus on that word over the other one. The '^' tells the search which word or phrase to prioritise. The number tells search how many times more important the word/phrase with the '^' after it is than the other word/phrase.

Text typed into search:	Words/phrases search will look for:
Cold^2 War	cold war
"Cold War"^4 nuclear war	cold war nuclear war

Do search for this word and don't search for that word

Search will usually try to find at least one of the words typed-in and will consider finding one of the words typed-in to be a successful result. Boolean operators tell search that some words are not optional and others should not be included in the results. Words with a '+' before them will definitely be included in results. Words with a '-' before them will not be included in results.

Text typed into search:	Words/phrases search will look for:
+American +revolution	american revolution
+revolution -French -industrial	revolution industrial French
+revolution +French -industrial	french revolution industrial

Grouping search terms

As with mathematics, parentheses (brackets) show search where to start when answering your query.

Text typed into search:	Words/phrases search will look for:
(revolution OR 1812) +America	revolution america, 1812 america
(+slavery -Africa) Jamaica^2	slavery Africa Jamaica

Reserved characters

There are some characters on the keyboard that tell the search to do technical commands. Holding down the 'ctrl' key and pressing the 'F5' key is a keyboard shortcut which tells the computer to refresh your internet browser window. Reserved characters are letters and symbols on the keyboard which tell our search tool to complete technical commands, so if search sees one of these 'reserved characters' it will automatically want to do the task it is programmed to do when it sees them.

If you are looking for a document title, you probably don't want search to start doing random technical commands just because you are looking for a title with an '&' in it. To stop search from doing these pre-programmed technical processes, when you use reserved characters, you need to tell search not to do them. You can tell search not to do pre-programmed technical processes by using the 'ignore it' symbol after you use a reserved character, the ignore it symbol is the '\ ' symbol (without the quote marks).

Reserved characters: + - = && || > < ! () { } [] ^ " ~ * ? : \ /

Text typed into search:	Words/phrases search will look for:
&& missionaries	<i>Error message</i>
&&/ missionaries	missionaries