Coffee Break Training – Info Search and Web 2.0

Quick tips for searching the Learning Resource Center (LRC) Online Catalog

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Learning Objective: *The student shall be able to formulate effective search strategies by applying Boolean techniques when researching a fire service topic in the Learning Resource Center's (LRC) Online Catalog.*

The LRC has one of the most comprehensive collections of materials relating to the fire and emergency medical services in the U.S. It's your one-stop source for identifying books, Executive Fire Officer papers, reports, government documents, and magazine articles that cover a topic in which you're interested.
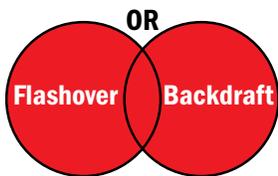
However, to ensure a successful search experience with the LRC Online Catalog, you'll want to take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with these simple, but essential, search techniques.

Boolean Search Techniques

Boolean searching is based on a system of symbolic logic developed by George Boole, a 19th century English mathematician. Boolean logic is used for database searching and is supported by most Web search engines and library databases including the LRC Online Catalog. Boolean search techniques help make searches more accurate.

When performing a Boolean search in the LRC Online Catalog, use keywords that best describe your topic. The power of Boolean searching is based on combinations of your keywords with connecting terms called operators. Two basic operators are: "AND", and "OR."

Expand your results set (Boolean "OR"): If entering a list of terms, separate each with a semicolon(;). The semicolon in the LRC database serves as the Boolean "OR" operator. This broadens your search by returning all item records that contain any one or more of the terms you list. For example:
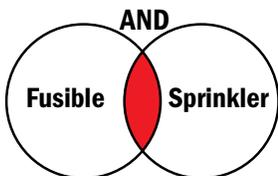
OR

Flashover   Backdraft

Query: I need information about the explosive ignition of combustible material in enclosed spaces.

Boolean logic: "OR"

LRC Catalog General Keyword Search: flashover ; backdraft

This yields over 340 records where either one or both terms are present.

Narrow your results set (Boolean "AND"): When you join terms with the Boolean "AND" operator in a search, it narrows your results to only records containing all of your search terms. Absent a semicolon between your keyword(s), the LRC system automatically applies the Boolean "AND" operator without you having to type it in. For example:

AND

Fusible   Sprinkler

Query: I want to find information about fusible link sprinklers.

Boolean logic: AND

LRC Catalog General Keyword Search: fusible sprinkler

This yields about a half dozen records where both terms are present.

Exact phrase searching: Use quotation marks in order to find records containing an exact phrase. For example, maybe you want to know what items relate specifically to smoke explosion. Searching the exact phrase **"smoke explosion"** returns more than a half dozen hits.

You can use this technique in conjunction with other Boolean operators as well. For example: **"smoke explosion"; backdraft; flashover** yields 348 items containing one or more of these three terms.