Phrase search

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Discover how to perform a phrase search when searching WorldCat indexes.

Definition

The system searches for complete data in an indexed subfield. Only whole phrase indexes include data within specifically identified subfields.

Index label format

**xx=** (where x represents an alphanumerical character)

- The equals sign (=) is the format for exact phrase indexes. If you add an equals sign (=) to a word-only index (e.g., Branch Definition/Shelf Location), it will not create an exact anchored phrase search.
- Works with or without quotes assuming it is clear when the phrase search ends and the next search element begins (e.g., mc=chants other AND yr:1940-4).

**xx:"term1 term2"** (where x represents an alphanumerical character).

- Enclose search terms in quotation marks to retrieve records with the exact phrase in a word index. If you do not enclose your search terms in quotation marks, records containing either word will be retrieved (e.g., su:"french language" retrieves records containing french language while su:french language retrieves records containing both french and language).

Examples

Author name — James, Henry Alfred

- A personal name phrase search (pn= james, henry alfred) will retrieve only records with this precise name within the fields identified by the index.
  - It is an anchored search, so it must start with james.
  - It is an exact phrase, so all terms are required to appear in data order within a subfield.
- A personal name word search (pn:" henry alfred") will typically retrieve a larger number of records with these terms next to each other within the same subfield.
  - It is an unanchored search, so the search term enclosed in quotation marks can appear anywhere within an indexed subfield.
  - It is not a precise search so, while both terms must be within the same subfield, they may appear before and/or after other words.
Notes

• You can perform either an anchored (exact phrase) or unanchored search (with quotes within a word phrase index); however, the two types cannot be combined.
  ◦ Anchored search — The equal sign (=) after the index label helps identify an exact phrase. The system searches for only these words. This phrase search look for a match in a field or subfield that contains only those words. For example, if you search for \texttt{ti=the cat who walked by himself}, the system would return records with the following titles:
    ▪ \textit{The Cat Who Walked By Himself} (OCLC number 503640980; the phrase is the title)
    ▪ \textit{The Elephant's Child; The Beginning of the Armadillo; How the Whale Got Its Throat; The Cat Who Walked By Himself} (OCLC number 7750498; the phrase is a variant title)
    ▪ \textit{Just So Stories} (OCLC number 9266084; the phrase is in the table of contents as a title subfield)
  ◦ Unanchored search — Enclose search terms in quotation marks to retrieve records with that phrase in any subfield indexed for that index label. If no label is identified but the terms are within quotes, then the default keyword index is being used. The field or subfields may contain only those words or there can be words before and/or after the phrase. For example, if you searched for \texttt{ti:"the cat who walked by himself"}, then the system would return records found in the \texttt{ti=} search and records where the phrase is embedded in a field with other words, such as:
    ▪ \textit{I am the cat who walks by himself} (OCLC number 666007537)

• For exact phrases, include all subfield data or truncate using the asterisk (*).
  \textbf{Example: \texttt{pb=namgyal institut\*}}
  
  Note: Truncation requires at least three letters before truncating the search.
  Caution: Truncation of words in a word index cannot be done when combining the words in an unanchored word phrase.

• Alternative: Browse the phrase \texttt{[sca] pb=namgyal institute}. Browsing automatically gives you the full exact phrase.
  ◦ Connexion — use the scan (\texttt{sca}) command in a command line search
  ◦ FirstSearch — use the browse button (\texttt{Browse}) to enter a browse term.

• For punctuation, follow the punctuation rules of the index being used. General tips include:
  ◦ Retain periods in classification numbers. Other rules vary based on the specific classification index rules.
  ◦ Omit initial articles in the title indexes.
  ◦ Retain the first comma for the author or personal name phrase indexes if it is not the last element in the subfield.
  ◦ Retain hyphens in dates or other terms. For text indexes, these are searched as two separate terms required to be next to each other.
  ◦ Enclose the search in quotations to force the search to retrieve records with that phrase.