Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) Basic Search Guide

Example: Find print books on the topic “evidence-based” using a “word or phrase” (keyword) search of the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC):

1. Access the Erwin Library homepage at http://www.waynecc.edu/library/

2. Click the OPAC Search tab

3. Click the OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog) direct link to open the Search area
4. Enter your search term, a word or string of word with no punctuation, into the **Search box**, in this example **“evidence based”**

5. To refine your search, use the **drop-down menu** to the right of the **Search box** to set your basic search parameter, using **words or phrase** (i.e. **Keyword**) or use the drop-down menu to select to search by **author** or **title** instead

6. Use the **library drop-down menu** if you wish to change the default search parameter from **“Wayne”** (i.e. search only holdings in the Erwin Library), to **“All”** (i.e. ALL N.C. Community Colleges), if you want to find the item at any of the over fifty community colleges in the Community College Libraries in North Carolina (CCLINC) consortium

7. Click the **Search button**

8. In the **Search Results list** illustrated below, item #5 shows **“evidence-based”** in the title of the book, so most of the book will probably cover your chosen topic
9. To verify if other items in the Search Results list that don’t have “evidence-based” in their titles will be useful to you, click the blue title link of an entry see where the search term “evidence-based” was found in the Catalog Record for the item

Note that 44 titles were found for this keyword search, which is always the broadest type of search.

Note "evidence based" is in the title of some books.

To see if an item is relevant to your needs even though the search term is not in the title, first click on the blue title link.
10. Click the blue Catalog Record link to access the entire catalog record containing all available information about the item.
11. As this example illustrates, “evidence-based” only occurs in the Contents section of the Catalog Record, indicating that only a small portion of the book deals with that topic. This could make the book less useful to your research. A subject search may be more useful in this case.

12. Conduct a subject search to find items that have more than a small part of their contents dedicated to your topic by choosing New Search from the top menu bar.
Example: Find print books on the topic “evidence-based” using a “subject” search of the OPAC:

13. Choose “subject” from the right hand drop-down menu. Note that subjects are established by the Library of Congress, and you may have to do a few keyword searches of your topic to find a sample catalog record with the Subject term (in blue) which most closely matches the topic you are searching.

14. Enter “evidence-based” into the left hand search box

15. Click the Search button
16. Since the subject search is more focused, your Search Results list will be shorter, in this example only 7 titles instead of the 44 titles found with the keyword search, but each item will have a subject that is probably much more pertinent to your topic.
17. To establish the correct **Library of Congress Subject Heading (LCSH)** for any future subject searches on the topic, click on the blue title link for the entry, then the blue Catalog Record link, beside one or two titles in the Search Results list and scroll down to find the LC Subject terms in blue text.

18. As the catalog record in the example shows, the official LCSH is “Evidence-Based Medicine.” Note that a search of other catalog records in the sample search’s Search Results list will offer another LCSH of “Evidence-based nursing” as an alternative subject heading to use in future searches of the
**OPAC**, or any other type of online database such as those in **WCC Single Search**. Most research databases use the LCSH standard.

The Erwin Library Reference staff will be happy to tell you more about searching for materials in the **OPAC** in person in the library, or by phone at 919-739-6890 or Ext. 6890 from on-campus. A librarian will also reply to a request made through the **Erwin Library homepage** using the **Ask a Librarian form**.