Creating an Effective Search Query

The research cycle

Creating an effective search query (1)

An example:

Human rights of child asylum seekers

Creating an effective search query (2)

An example:

- **Human rights**
- **Child**
- **Asylum seekers**

Creating an effective search query (3)

	Main concept				
Concept 1	Asylum seekers				
AND					
Concept 2	Child				
AND					
Concept 3	Human rights				

Asylum seekers AND child AND human rights

Synonyms: Can you give **synonyms** or **alternative phrases for**

Asylum seeker

Child

Refugee

Creating an effective search query (4)

	Main concept		Alternative 1		Alternative 2
Concept 1	Asylum seekers	OR	Refugees		
AND					
Concept 2	Child	OR	Minor	OR	Juvenile
AND					
Concept 3	Human rights				

(Asylum seekers OR refugees) AND (child OR minor OR juvenile) AND human rights

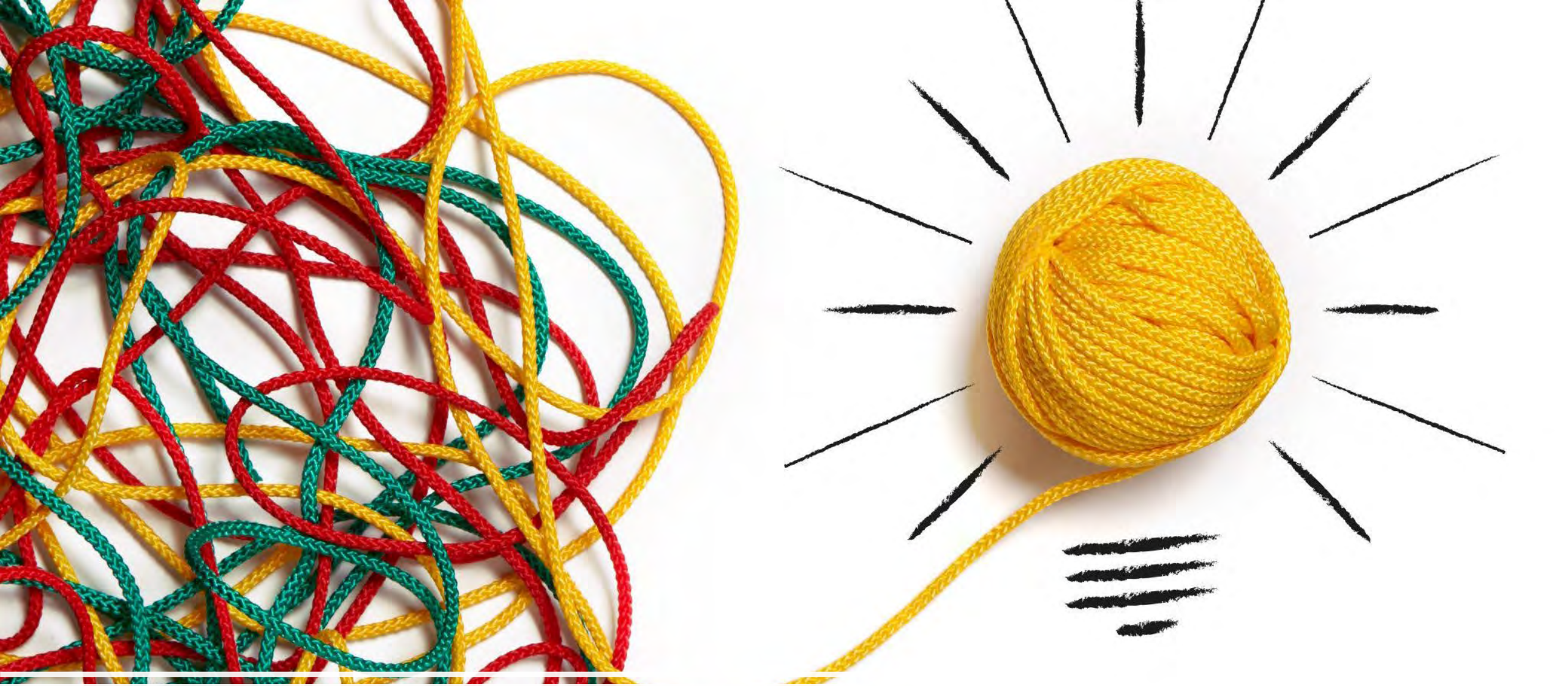
Creating an effective search query (5)

	Main concept		Alternative 1		Alternative 2
Concept 1	“Asylum seeker*”	OR	Refugee*		
AND					
Concept 2	Child*	OR	Minor?	OR	Juvenile*
AND					
Concept 3	“Human rights”				

(“Asylum seeker*” OR refugee*) AND (child* OR minor? OR juvenile*) AND “human rights”

My search string

("Asylum seeker*" OR refugee*) AND (child* OR minor? OR juvenile*) AND "human rights"



Build your own search string

Build your own search string table

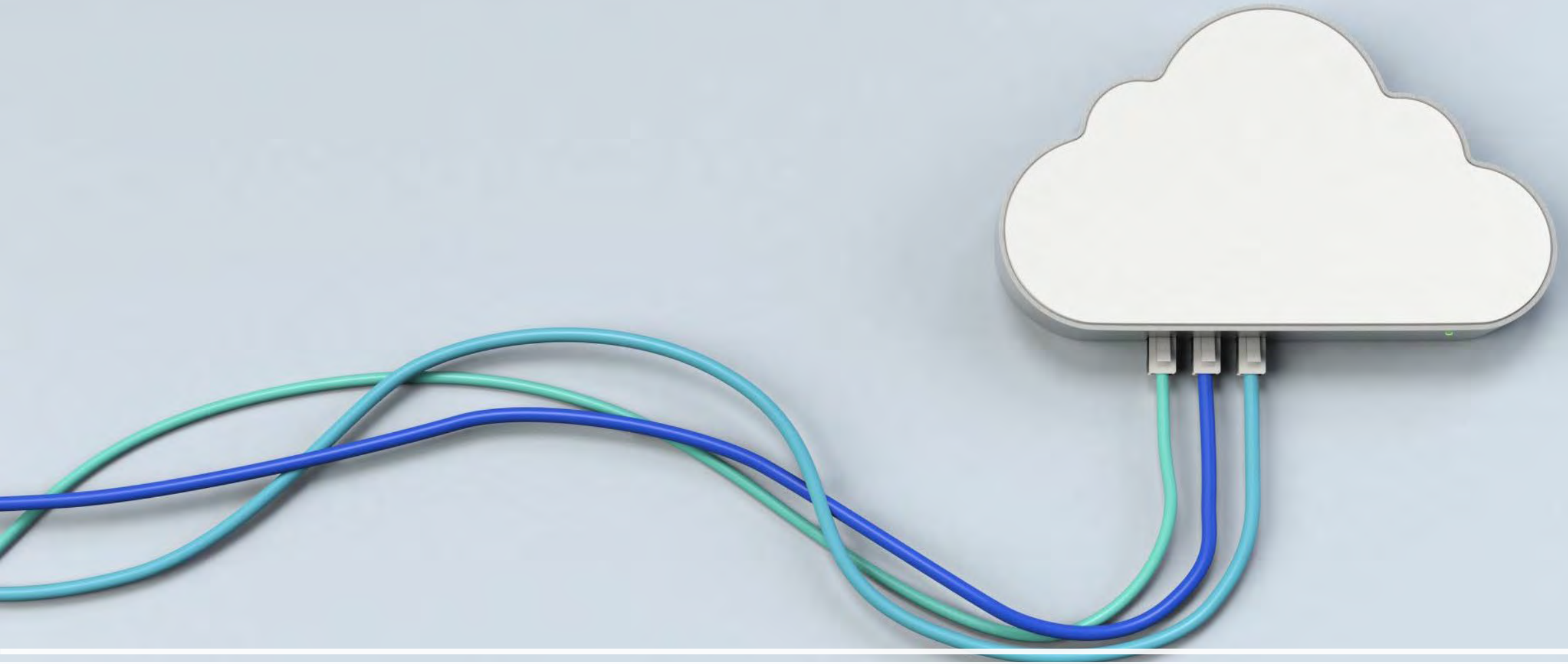
Human rights of child asylum seekers			
	Main concept	Alternative term	Alternative term
Concept 1	"asylum seeker*"	refugee*	
Concept 2	child*	minor?	Juvenile*
Concept 3	"human rights"		

Tips:

Identify keywords and consider synonyms, alternative spellings, broader and narrower terms

- Apply truncation (usually *) for alternative word endings and plurals
- Use wildcards (usually ?) to replace single characters
- Define relationships with Boolean logic:
  - 'and' for both terms
  - 'or' for either term
  - 'not' to exclude a term

e.g. ("Asylum seeker*" OR refugee*) AND (child* OR minor? OR juvenile*) AND "human rights"



Apply search string to database

Which sources to use?

Scholarly search engines

E.g. Google Scholar, SOLO Articles or Search Everything

Easily search across thousands of items

Coverage unclear

Quality varies

Likely returns too many results

Bibliographic databases (abstracts/indexes)

Often dedicated to a particular subject area

Quality is assured

Search brief details (authors, article title, subject keywords)

Should return a smaller number of more relevant results

Often includes specialist search options

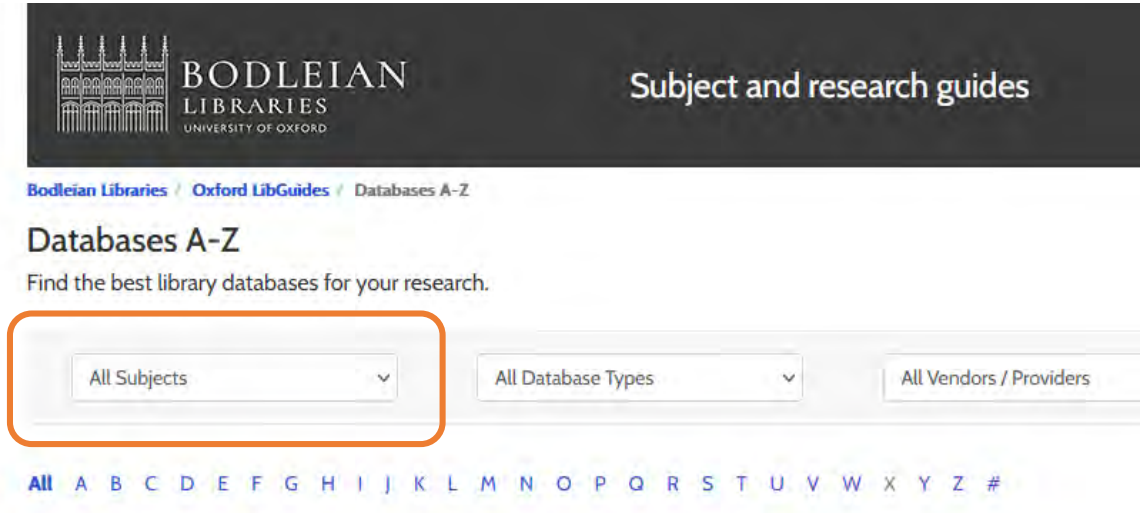
Especially good for articles and conference papers

Less good for books, policy documents and reports

Finding bibliographic databases tip 1

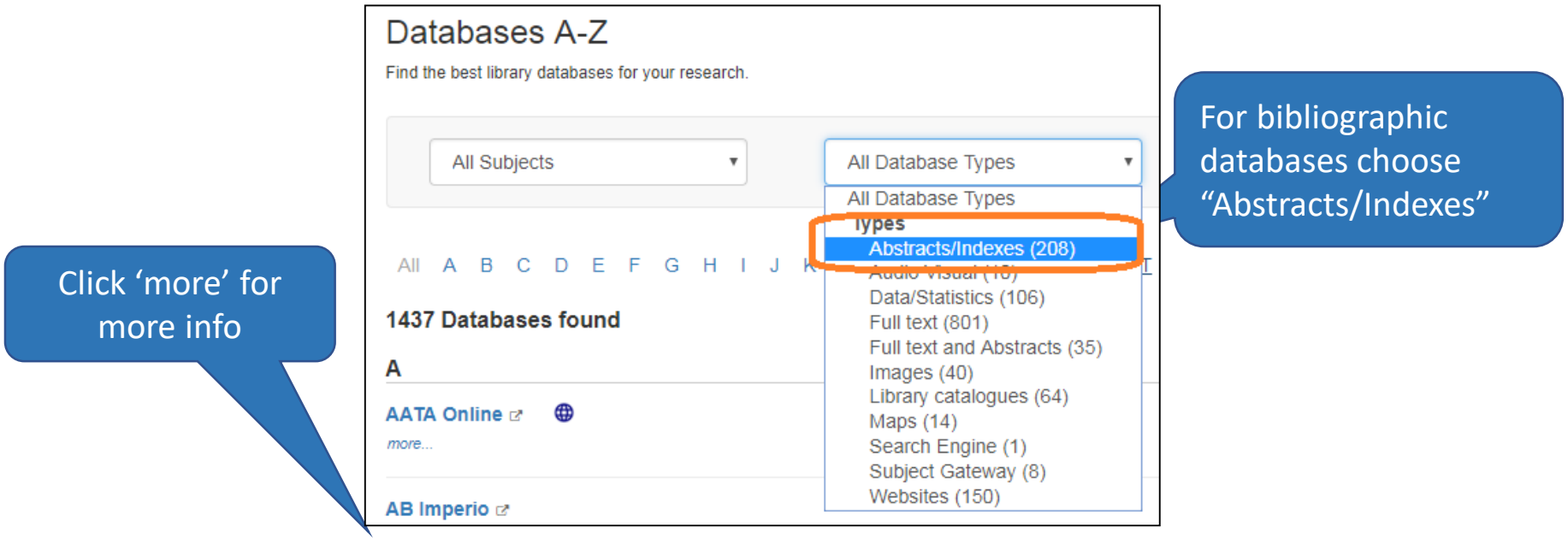
Databases A-Z
(https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/az.php)

- A-Z listing all databases
- Choose **Subject** tab



Finding bibliographic databases tip 2

Look for database type “Abstracts/Indexes”



Have a go

- Apply search string created in ‘Building a search’ exercise to find material on a platform of your choice.
- Task sheets: https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ask/workshops/searching-and-finding-scholarly-materials-training-handouts#collapse3083856

Platform	Discipline
EBSCO	Humanities
Historical Abstracts	History
MLA	English; modern languages
ProQuest	Humanities; sciences; social sciences
Scopus	Sciences; medicine; some social sciences
Web of Science	All subjects
Databases A-Z	Browse all subjects

What have you learned?

How to create an effective search query

Key databases for your research