COMPREHENSIVE SEARCHES
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This exercise assumes you are already familiar with basic database searching. But if you want a review of the basics, see the following: https://library.dts.edu/Pages/RM/DBM/.

This exercise will give you some practice selecting terminology for comprehensive searches. Almost any concept can be expressed in many different ways, using many different words. So a comprehensive search for a concept often requires a long list of search terms.[1] We will construct such a list.

Our sample topic is afterlife. Mary Seminarian has been studying afterlife in the OT. She notices many authors claim that the doctrine of afterlife gradually develops from a vague concept of continued existence to a specific hope in bodily resurrection in late OT and intertestamental literature. Mary plans a fresh assessment of OT and ancient near eastern (ANE) evidence with special attention to resurrection. Mary wants to build a big bibliography.

Mary is interested in three concepts that will be combined in a straightforward search logic: (afterlife) AND (old testament OR ane). So she plans to construct three lists of terms: a list for afterlife, a list for OT, and a list for ANE. She knows a single search term can possibly include both the concept of afterlife and the concept of OT/ANE, and a term like that won't fit the simple logic above. For example, the "Fields of Aaru" (also called "Field of Reeds") is the place where the dead continue to exist in ancient Egyptian mythology, so the single term "Fields of Aaru" has both the concept of afterlife and the concept of ANE. A fourth list will hold special terms like "Fields of Aaru." This is the search logic: (special terms) OR (afterlife AND (old testament OR ane)).

Below you are going to help Mary select good search terms for her four lists: the afterlife, OT, ANE, and special list. A method for finding good terms is described in "Database Searching Tips: Part 1" (https://library.dts.edu/search-tips-1), in the section on page 2 called "How to Find Good/Better Search Terms." Generate a big list of candidate terms, but then **test candidate terms** and keep only terms that have real promise of being helpful. For example, reincarnation is relevant to afterlife in Hinduism and Buddhism, but it is not a good term for afterlife in the OT or ANE. Different databases may use different terms. So select terms that are useful in Atla Religion Database and in WorldCat. Ignore other databases. That means you must search those databases to assess usefulness of the terms. If you test a promising term and discover it is surprisingly unhelpful, you might want to bring it up in class for discussion.

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[1] By "term" I mean any word or phrase that conveys a concept. It might be a standardized subject heading or a natural language expression. (Aside: this footnote uses a standard Word footnote style. It does not conform to DTS/Turabian style. What is wrong?)

Afterlife List

List up to 10 good/helpful terms for the concept of afterlife. You can fill this out by hand if you wish. Any format is acceptable.

1. afterlife
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

ANE List

List up to 10 good/helpful terms for the concept of ANE

1. ane
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

This brings us to a problem. The following well known ANE works seem to mention resurrection. Some say a lot about afterlife; some say little. So these ancient works could be search terms.

- Sumerian: the Gilgamesh Epic and Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld
- Akkadian: literature depicting Marduk, Gilgamesh, Adapa
- Ugaritic: the Baal and Anath Cycle and The Tale of Aqhat
- Egyptian: the Osiris myth (parts preserved in many different versions)

Would you put these terms in the ANE list or in the Special list? Write a couple of sentences explaining and justifying what you would do.

OT List

List good/helpful terms for the concept of Old Testament

1. "old testament"
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Never finished?

After additional study of the bible, Mary sees a need to explore terms related to life (for example: tree of life, breath of life, water of life, life in Deuteronomy). Although the word "life" is common and has many uses, she identifies some passages that may have an elevated concept of life, a concept that suggests afterlife. Although "life" seems like an obvious topic, it did not occur to her when she began the study. When you are trying to search comprehensively, expect to expand and refine over a period of time. You finish searching when you finish writing, not before.