

Search History to build a search

[Recorded version](#)

Being their *raison d'être*, Abstracting & Indexing (A&I) databases have features designed to help with literature finding and their Search History function is one.

The Search History ("Recent Searches" in ProQuest interface/platform) allows you to construct a search strategy "organically". Using them, synonyms for concepts can be searched as they come to you during a session, perhaps after reading some of the result records of an initial search approach. Those synonyms can be gathered together or used separately with varying combinations of concepts and the reasons for differing results be better understood.

In the screenshot below a keyword search in CINAHL [removing the tick from "Suggest Subject Terms"] is being done.

The search is for multiple synonyms and therefore combined with **OR**.

Phrases are being enclosed in "phrase marks" to make the results include the words together in the order entered rather than separated (as well as together).

Words which could have multiple endings, all of which are useful, are searched in one go by the use of a truncation symbol (asterisk, *) standing in for the changed bit.

The screenshot shows the EBSCOhost search interface. At the top left is the EBSCOhost logo. The search bar contains the query: "foetal alcohol syndrome*" OR "fetal alcohol s". The word "OR" is circled in yellow. A red arrow points to the "Suggest Subject Terms" checkbox, which is unchecked. A blue arrow points to the asterisk in the first search term. Below the search bar are three rows, each with an "AND" dropdown, a search input field, and a "Select a Field (optional)" dropdown. At the bottom left are "+" and "-" buttons, and at the bottom center is a green "Search" button.

Open the Search History...

The screenshot shows the search results page. At the top, there are three rows with "AND" dropdowns, search input fields, and "Select a Field (optional)" dropdowns. Below these is a navigation bar with links for "Basic Search", "Advanced Search", and "Search History", where "Search History" is highlighted with a red box. Below the navigation bar, the search results are displayed. The first result is titled "1. The Strengths and Positive Influences of Children With Fetal Alcohol Spectrum".

...to see all the searches done in a session.

AND ▾ Select a Field (optional) ▾ (+) (-)

[Basic Search](#) [Advanced Search](#) [Search History](#) ▾

Search History/Alerts

[Print Search History](#) [Retrieve Searches](#) [Retrieve Alerts](#) [Save Searches / Alerts](#)

Select / deselect all

Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/> S3	"foetal alcohol syndrome*" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome*" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder*" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder*" OR "alcohol related birth defect*" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder*"	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (2,302)
<input type="checkbox"/> S2	"Fetal Alcohol Syndrome"	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (2,112)
<input type="checkbox"/> S1	(MH "Fetal Alcohol Syndrome")	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (2,007)

Refine Results

Current Search ▾

Search Results: 1 - 20 of 2,302 Relevance ▾ Page Options ▾ Sh

1. [Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder among pre-adopted](#)

If another synonym for foetal alcohol syndrome seems useful, that could be searched for and the results set, S4, combined with S3, using the "Search with OR" button.

However, in the papers it could be useful to read, another concept is wanted.

A search for a second concept appears in the Search History [S4 "cognitive development"] which can be used with another concept set when selected [S3, S4], using "Search with AND" to get seven results which have both a mention of one of the foetal alcohol syndrome synonyms as well as "cognitive development" [S5].

Seven is not very many.

Search History/Alerts

[Print Search History](#)
[Retrieve Searches](#)
[Retrieve Alerts](#)
[Save Searches / Alerts](#)

Select / deselect all

Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	S5 S3 AND S4	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (7)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	S4 "cognitive development"	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (2,657)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	S3 "foetal alcohol syndrome*" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome*" OR "foetal alcohol spectrum disorder*" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder*" OR "alcohol related birth defect*" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder*"	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (2,302)

Looking at the number of results of the two concepts searched, neither is particularly large but the smaller set is the foetal alcohol syndrome one and therefore could be the one to think more about possible synonyms, or broadening out, perhaps just "foetal alcohol" OR "fetal alcohol", as a concept.

Considering the cognitive development concept instead though, broadening it to be mention of one (or both) of cognitive OR cognition creates a set of results [S6] which is many factors larger than the number of records which have just the phrase. This is reflected in the number of results returned when that larger set is combined with the foetal alcohol syndrome set [S7].

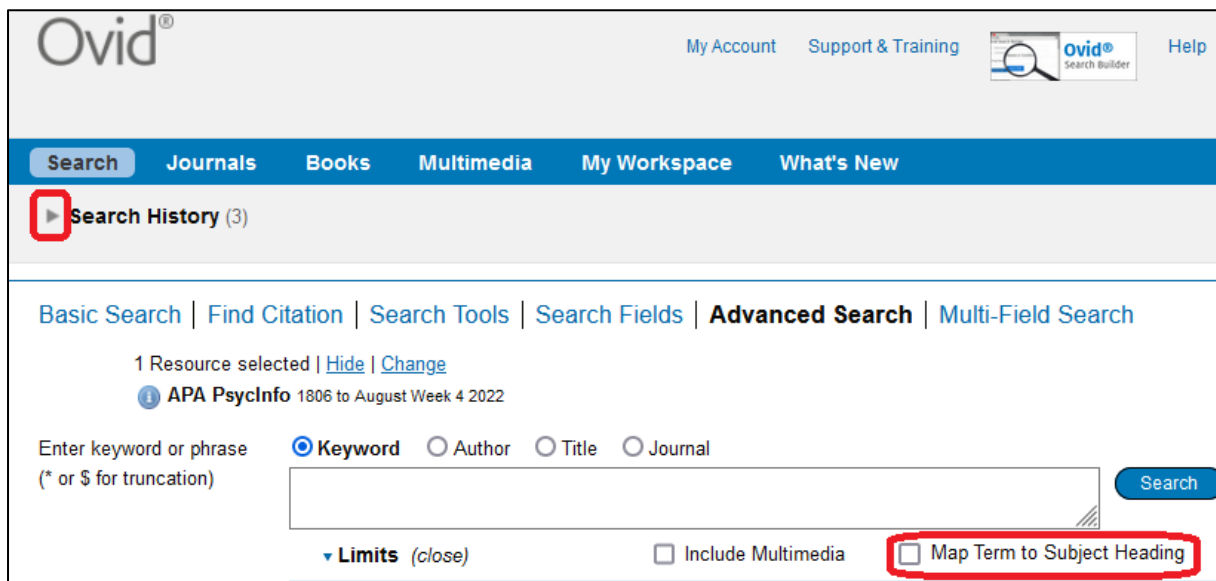
Search History/Alerts

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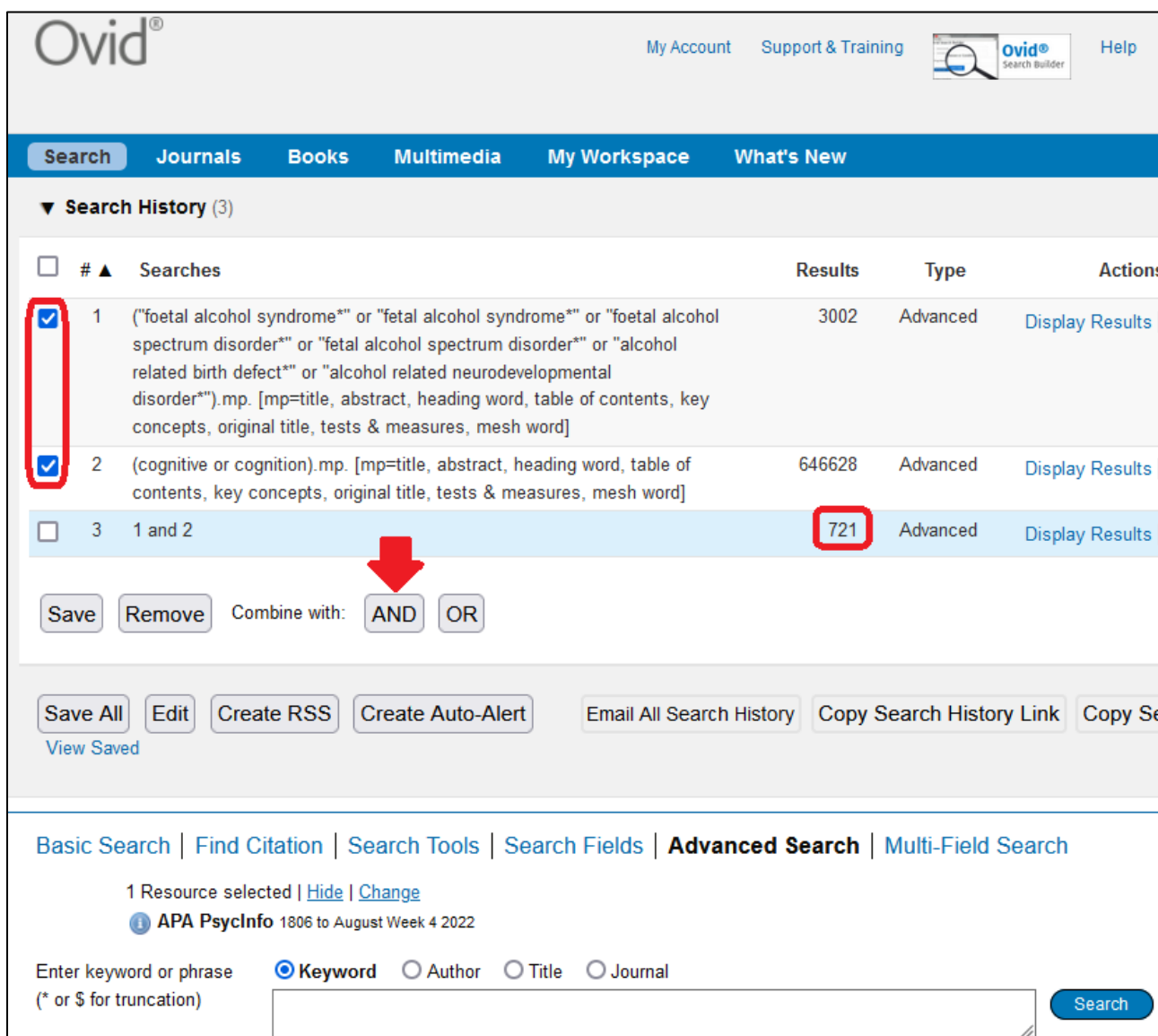
Select / deselect all

Search ID#	Search Terms	Search Options	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	S7 S3 AND S6	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (277)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	S6 cognitive OR cognition	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (217,484)
<input type="checkbox"/>	S5 S3 AND S4	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (7)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	S4 "cognitive development"	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (2,657)
<input type="checkbox"/>	S3 "foetal alcohol syndrome*" OR "fetal alcohol syndrome*" OR "foetal alcohol spectrum disorder*" OR "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder*" OR "alcohol related birth defect*" OR "alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder*"	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Find all my search terms	View Results (2,302)

The Ovid platform/interface (for searching other health-related A&I databases eg psycINFO, MEDLINE or Embase), has its Search History feature too.



Use of phrase marks, truncation and synonyms all apply. [For a Keyword search, remove the tick beside "Map Term to Subject Heading"]



"Display Results" to see the records returned.