



Keyword vs Subject Searching

In the library's catalog, you have the choice to search by many different fields. This handout focuses on the difference between KEYWORD and SUBJECT searching.

KEYWORD searching uses keywords or words that relate to or are similar to the topic you're researching.

SUBJECT searching uses specific language used by librarians to place sources that relate to your topic in the catalog

Let's say you're researching native plants in Florida

You perform a **KEYWORD** search using "plants" as your **KEYWORD**

The screenshot shows the Edison State College library catalog interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'LINCCWeb Tools', 'My Account', 'Bookbag', 'Help', 'Log In', and 'End Session'. Below this is a search bar with 'GO to Databases', 'You Are Searching the Library Catalog', and 'Search Florida Libraries'. The search results page shows 'Records 1 - 10 of 354 for Anywhere= plants and Type= BK'. A yellow oval highlights the 'Select All' checkbox and the record count. The first result is '#1 The A to Z of plant names : a quick reference guide to 4000 garden plants'.

Here you can see that we get 354 results when we search Edison's catalog for "plants" and limit the format to books. 354 is a lot of books to go through!

Looking through your results you might notice that many of the books are not specifically about native plants or even specifically about plants!

Keyword vs Subject Searching

Let's look at a record to show you how **KEYWORDS** work

Full View - Record 3 of 354

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MARC

Record: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ... 354

Author [Fagan, Brian M.](#)

Title [The first North Americans : an archaeological journey / Brian Fagan.](#)

Edition 1st pbk. ed.

Published New York : Thames & Hudson, 2012.

Format Book

Description 272 pages : illustrations (some color), maps ; 25 centimeters

Series (Ancient peoples and places)

Notes Includes bibliographical references (p. 258-262) and index.

Contents Foundations. The earliest Americans ; After Clovis ; The Far North : West to East ; Foraging the west Coast ; Before the Pueblos ; People of the Plains ; The Eastern Woodlands : nuts, native **plants**, and earthworks
Apogee. The Far North : Norton, Dorset, and Thule ; The West coast : not a Garden of Eden ; The Southwest : villages and pueblos ; The Eastern Woodlands : moundbuilders ; The Mississippian : Eastern Woodlands climax ; The Northeast : Algonquians and Iroquoians.



[More details About this item](#)

This book, *The First North Americans: an archaeological journey* is not specifically about plants but there is a chapter that mentions plants and that is why the word is highlighted in the record, and why this books comes up under a **KEYWORD** search for "plants"

Let's now look at what happens when you perform a **SUBJECT** search for "plants"

EDISON STATE COLLEGE

LINCCWeb Tools My Account Bookbag Help Log In End Session

GO to Databases You Are Searching the Library Catalog Search Florida Libraries AskALibrarian.org

Search Results Search History

View Selected Add to Bookbag E-mail Print

Select All

Records 1 - 10 of 190 for Subject= plants and Type= BK page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Sort options: Author/Year(d) Author/Year(a) Year(d)/Author Author/Title Title/Year(d) Title/Year(a) Year(d)/Title

Here we see that a **SUBJECT** search reduced the amount of books to 190!

Keyword vs Subject Searching

The **SUBJECT** search for plants brought back the book: *Native Wildflowers and other Groundcovers for Florida Landscapes* which is exactly on our research topic. Let's look at the record:

Full View - Record 2 of 190

[Back to Results List](#) MARC

Record: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 ... 190

Author [Huegel, Craig Norman.](#)

Title [Native wildflowers and other ground covers for Florida landscapes / Craig N. Huegel.](#)

Published Gainesville : University Press of Florida, 2012.

Format Book

Description xiv pages ; centimeters

Notes Includes bibliographical references and index.

Contents Defining the **plants**
The natural landscape
Landscape maintenance
Where to get **plants**
Ferns
Grasses and graminoids
Wildflowers
Landscape **plants**
Landscape **plants**

ISBN 9780813039800 (alk. paper)
0813039800 (alk. paper)

Subject [Native plant gardening -- Florida.](#)
[Ground cover **plants** -- Florida.](#)
[Landscape **plants** -- Florida.](#)
[Landscape gardening -- Florida.](#)



[More details](#)
[About this item](#)

Here we can see that Native Plant Gardening is one of the ways librarians entered this book into the catalog

Since we know that this book will be helpful, clicking on the blue linked subject headings will show us how many books Edison has in their collection that are on that subject

Here's what it looks like when you click on the subject heading:



Edison State - Browse List - Mozilla Firefox

catalog.lincweb.org/F/2GUYVUCDHMP86NDMAEF57TKG4TGCRG554RRUXIVD34GBAG88MR-11972?func=scan&scar

UU to Databases You Are Searching the Library Catalog Search Florida Librarians

Search | Results | Search History

Edison State - Browse List: Subjects, All

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# Recs	Entry
8	Native plant gardening -- Florida
1	Native plant gardening -- New York (State) -- New York Metropolitan Area
1	Native plant gardens -- Florida
	Native plants. - [See Related Information]
	See: Botany
	Native plants for cultivation - [See Related Information]
7	Native plants for cultivation -- Florida
1	Native plants for cultivation -- Himalaya Mountains
1	Native plants for cultivation -- New York (State) -- New York Metropolitan Area
1	Native plants for cultivation -- New York (State) -- New York Region
1	Native plants for cultivation -- United States

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This shows us a further break down of how many books Edison has on Native Plants

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Clicking on the subject heading next to the number then takes us to a catalog search results list like this:

The screenshot shows the Edison State College library catalog interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the college logo and 'powered by LINCC web'. Below this are links for 'LINCCWeb Tools', 'My Account', 'Bookbag', 'Help', 'Log In', and 'End Session'. A secondary navigation bar includes 'GO to Databases', 'You Are Searching the Library Catalog', 'Search Florida Libraries', and 'AskALibrarian.org?'. A search bar contains 'Search', 'Results', and 'Search History'. Below the search bar are links for 'View Selected', 'Add to Bookbag', 'E-mail', and 'Print'. A breadcrumb trail shows 'Subjects, All' > 'Current' > 'Native plant gardening -- Florida' > 'Next' > 'Native plant gardening -- New York (State) -- New York Metropolitan Area'. A 'Select All' checkbox is present. A summary line indicates 'Records 1 - 8 of 8 for Native plant gardening -- Florida' and 'page: 1'. Sort options include 'Author/Year(d)', 'Author/Year(a)', 'Year(d)/Author', 'Author/Title', 'Title/Year(d)', 'Title/Year(a)', and 'Year(d)/Title'. Two results are displayed: #1 'Native wildflowers and other ground covers for Florida landscapes' by Huegel, Craig Norman, published in Gainesville by University Press of Florida in 2012, with a call to click on College/Campus for availability and a call number of SB439.24.F6 H84 2012; and #2 'Natural Florida landscaping' by Walton, Dan, published in Sarasota, Fla. by Pineapple Press in 2007, with a call to click on College/Campus for availability and a call number of SB439.24.F6 W35 2007.

So now you can see how **SUBJECT** searching allowed us to shrink 354 results to just 8 results

Use **KEYWORD** searches to bring back a wide variety of sources and **SUBJECT** searches to bring back a narrow list of specific results