

## **FORMULATING EFFECTIVE ONLINE SEARCH STRATEGIES: A BETTER (MOUSETRAP? ? OR MOUSE(W)TRAP? ??)?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Although designed to facilitate information retrieval, the user interfaces of online systems and CD-ROM indexes often pose barriers to end-user searching of marine science databases. Most interfaces do not assist in the intellectual processes inherent in developing effective online search strategies: breaking topics into their component concepts, grouping together synonyms for each concept, and combining search terms with proximity operators and boolean logic. This paper described a prototype interface based on HyperPads, a hypertext program for DOS-based microcomputers, that assists in the selection of appropriate databases; identifies the principal concepts in a natural language sentence entered by the user; prompts the user to enter synonyms and enables terms to be searched against a thesaurus; suggest truncation of search terms; and attempts to create a reasonable search strategy ready to be executed on one of the online systems or a CD-ROM database.

Paper not available at time of printing.

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