Transcript of Talking to Databases

Emily: How… does… advertising… impact… teen… smoking… question. This library stinks! I can’t find anything.

Brian: Hey, Emily. Putting on the final touches on my project. What’s the matter?

Emily: I need three articles for my research paper. My professor told me to start by searching on Academic Search Premier. And I’ve been looking all morning, but I can’t find anything. Me and libraries just don’t get along.

Brian: Is that the search you entered? You typed in: How does advertising impact teen smoking?

Brian: You can’t talk to databases like that.

Emily: What do you mean?

Brian: Well, databases don’t understand questions. Here. Let’s write down your research question and go from there. Okay. What are the most important words or key terms in this research question?

Emily: Well, it’s about advertising and teen smoking.

Brian: Right. Advertising is a key term, but you can also break down teen smoking into teen and smoking.

Emily: All right. Now what?

Brian: Well, these are the key terms that you search for. You type in these three words, and you connect them with the word and. The and will tell the database to look for articles that only include all three of these key terms.

Emily: Here goes nothing. Wow. Look at all of them. These are pretty good. There’s plenty of articles to choose from now.

Brian: And I see that most of them include the
Emily: You mean that I can print them off from right here?

Brian: Sure, or you can email them to yourself and print them out back at your dorm room.

Emily: Cool.

Brian: This search might have found the articles you need, but there’s something else you might want to try.

Emily: What?

Brian: Take a look at the key terms again and ask yourself: Are there any synonyms or other words you can use to express those terms?

Emily: You mean like for teens, I might use teenagers.

Brian: Right. Or adolescents or youth or young adults.

Emily: Okay, how about for smoking we use cigarettes.

Brian: Great. Or tobacco.

Emily: How do you know which terms to use?

Brian: I usually start with the more formal and important sounding terms first. These are the terms that writers and researchers will use most often. Then, if I want, I try other searches using other terms. You have to work at it a little to see what is successful.

Emily: So, what do you think? Let’s try searching advertising, adolescents, and tobacco.

Brian: That sounds good.

Emily: Cool. These are even better.

Brian: And there’s even more of them, too.

Emily: Thanks a lot, Brian. I can’t believe I was making this so hard.

Brian: No problem. And it will get easier, the more research you do. Now. Back to my own research project.