IDENTIFYING DESCRIPTORS

As you conduct your "pre-search" in the online databases, use this sheet to help you record and organize the useful descriptors you see in the records you retrieve. Descriptors are words or short phrases that describe your topic in some way, and are also sometimes called subject headings, identifiers, or controlled vocabulary terms. Sometimes, similar descriptors are used in different databases to convey similar concepts. If concise descriptors can be identified, they can be used in your searches to improve the focus and quality of the records you retrieve.

Listed below are broad categories that might be used to classify the descriptors for your research topic. Don't forget to record exactly which database uses which descriptors.

Full Database Name:_____

i.e.: ProQuest: Women's Interest Module, or Lexis/Nexis News;World News, Middle East/Africa News Sources

1. **Recurring terms you notice being used as descriptors**

2. **Narrower terms related to your topic**

3. **Broader terms related to your topic**

4. **Related terms**

5. **Dates/names of important events related to your topic**

6. **Location and names of places related to your topic**

7. **Names of people related to your topic**

8. **Time periods related to your topic**

Adapted from:
Kuhlthau, Carol Collier*Teaching the Library Research Process*, 2nd ed. Metuchen, NJ, Scarecrow Press.1994.