Searching Features and Options

iBase Professional Digital Asset Management

1   How important is searching in a digital asset management system?

Searching is arguably the single most important feature of digital asset management and media asset library systems; after all, no matter how easy it is to get your files into the system, or how attractive and intuitive the interfaces are, if the files can't be quickly and easily found and retrieved the whole thing is pointless!

Of course, in iBase Media Services we not only recognise how important searching is, but also how useful are the automatic search assistance features standard with every system we supply. More of those later.

2   iBase search options and features summary

Search options include -

- Quick search with automatic suggestions from the content.
- Quick search with Boolean operators.
- Phrase searching.
- Wildcard and fuzzy searching for that elusive or misspelled word.
- Advanced or field search.
- Subject / keyword search.
- Search by collection.
- Map search.
- Drill down / refine the last search.
- Search history.

3   Quick and Field (Advanced) search options

Firstly, what are the essential differences between Quick and Field searching? (Field search is sometimes also known as Advanced search)

In straightforward terms, Quick and Field searches are characterised by -

- A Quick search – searches all* metadata fields with the same word or phrase entered in a single box, and returns all of the items that have that word or phrase in any of the fields.

* Or if not all fields should be included in the quick search, a system manager can set which fields are indexed for inclusion.

- A Field search – can search individual or multiple metadata fields using different logical operators and search for all of them at the same time.

O.K. – so what are they both for? Good question and read on!

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3.1   A user's perspective on Quick search and Field (Advanced) searching

We know of course that users will almost always use the simplest option presented to them, and Quick search will – more often than not – be the first thing that a new user on your system will try.

Just like using a web search engine such as Google, they'll type in a word or phrase and expect to get an indication of whether they're likely to find what they want. And that's exactly what iBase does, as the user types it automatically displays suggestions from the content, be it metadata, captions, keywords / subjects etc…

If the quick search is designed correctly there's a good probability that the user will easily find what they want, and they'll have no need to use any other search options.

But suppose that the search - let's say it was the word 'scenic' - found far too many items, maybe several hundreds or thousands, to be able sensibly to browse through them all and find the one that's just right for the requirement?

In an iBase digital asset management system there are several ways in which refining a search could be done, for instance -

- An iBase quick search allows Boolean operators to be used, e.g. 'scenic NOT coastal' will exclude all scenic images tagged with the word coastal. (There's more on this further down).

- The Refine Search option can be used to narrow down the results already found.

On the other hand, for a user who is familiar with the content - a content creator for example - who is aiming to find one specific item, it's quite likely that their best option would be to use Field search from the outset, which will enable them to home in on exactly what they're looking for. In any event, after a Field or any other kind of search, the items returned can be reduced by using Refine search.

In short, someone who is familiar with the way the content is organised is very likely to find field search useful, whereas someone who isn't familiar with the content - an occasional visitor to a commercial picture library for example - is far less likely to want to use field search and will probably choose quick search every time.

4   More details about the iBase search features

Note: Search terms entered are shown here as italicised.

4.1   Suggestions as you type

iBase Quick search also finds words and phrases in text documents such as Word documents and PDFs. As the searched for word or phrase is typed into the Quick search box, suggestions from the data will appear as illustrated here for the word *north* –
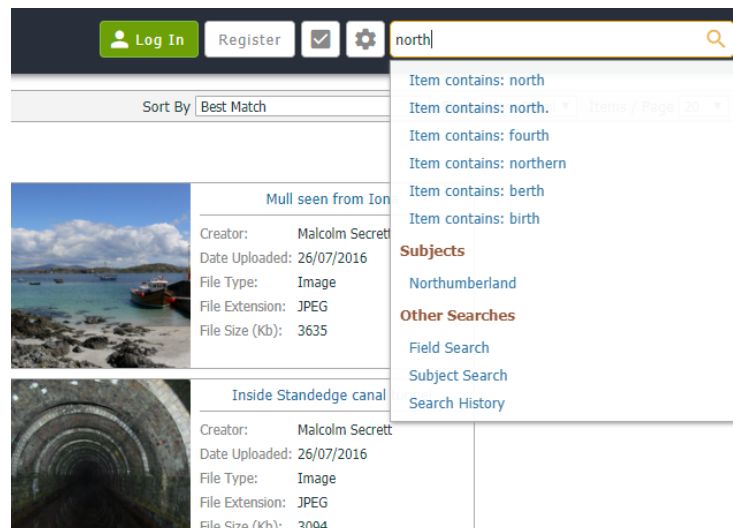
4.2   Wildcards

The wildcard (*) can be used in place of characters to widen the search. For example *air** will find air, aircraft, airport, etc. Similarly *silver** will find silver, Silverstone, silverfish, etc.

4.3   Quick search with Boolean operators.

When searching for more than one word, or to omit words from a search, AND, NOT and OR can be used.

Here are some examples:

- A search for *duck AND mallard* will find only items that contain both duck and mallard.
- A search for *duck OR mallard* will find items that contain either duck or mallard.
- A search for *duck NOT mallard* will find items that contain duck, but will exclude items that also have mallard.

4.4   Quick search phrase searching.

A phrase can be found by placing quotes around it. For example, a search for *north Yorkshire* will return items which contain either north or Yorkshire, whereas searching for *"north Yorkshire"* will return only items with the exact phrase north Yorkshire.

4.5   Fuzzy searching for that elusive or misspelled word.

iBase Fuzzy searching operates on Quick search, and employs a sophisticated algorithm that uses the entire metadata content to 'best guess' what was intended by the word of phrase entered, and it can be very useful where there's uncertainty about the exact word to be found in the content, including misspellings.

The degree of fuzziness applied is set by a system manager, and it can also be switched off by them if not required.

4.6   Advanced or field search.

Metadata fields can be searched individually or in combination. In combination the options available as shown below are: Items must satisfy all of the search criteria, or Items must satisfy at least one of the search criteria.

Items must satisfy ALL of the search criteria	▼
Items must satisfy ALL of the search criteria	
Items must satisfy at least ONE of the search criteria	
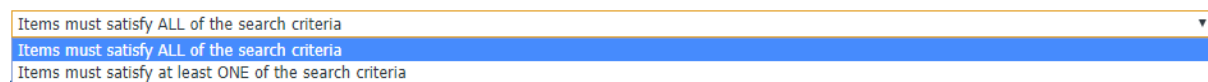
A system manager can set which fields are available for a Field search, and each field will have a range of criteria which can be independently.

For example, as shown here the field Is empty; Is not empty; or for the search term entered it Matches; Does not match; Contains; Does not contain; Starts with; Ends with.

Contains	▼
Is Empty	
Is Not Empty	
Matches	
Does Not Match	
Contains	
Does Not Contain	
Starts With	
Ends With	
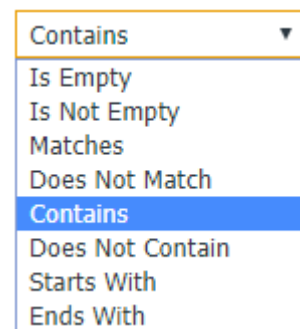
4.7   Subject / keyword search.

A subject search feature is automatically available where a subject hierarchy exists. Subjects with lower levels are indicated by +. Click the + to open the next level down.

Select subjects for searching by clicking in the box beside the term. As many as are required can be selected.

Select how you would like the subjects to be searched from the pick list. Options are:

- Find items with any of the selected subjects including children (This is the default).
- Find items with any of the selected subjects.
- Find items with all of the selected subjects.

4.8   Search by collection.

From the perspective of searching, iBase 'Collections' are groupings which have been created and which can be viewed with a single click.

Like any other search, the items returned from a collection can be refined or drilled down.

4.9   Map or location search.

Where geo-coordinates have been included in the metadata - and many cameras will record the location using their own GPS feature - map search is available. The map pins show how many items are at the location they are marking, and clicking an item opens its item page.

4.10   Search history.

The iBase search history maintains a record of all searches carried out during a session, and clicking any item in the search history will immediately re-run it.

Contact us by email or phone for more information or to request a free system.

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