

Chapter 13

Replicating Top Users' Searches in Summon and Google Scholar

David Earl Noe
Rollins College, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the results of a review of the first 25 results for some of the most common searches in one college's instance of Summon™ and the results for the same searches in Google Scholar™. The results of the searches were provided to a panel of three librarians who did not know from which discovery service the results came. The chapter treats each search and its results as case studies and discusses both quantitative and qualitative evaluations. The study finds that neither search tool can provide reliable results for a simple search without further refinement of the search.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of resource discovery does indeed have many meanings. The various products that fit into the new, evolving class of discovery layers function differently from one another. This chapter details the results of one library's study of search results from two such unified resource discovery tools: Summon™ and Google Scholar™. This method can be used to review other unified re-

source discovery tools as librarians explore their options in this arena.

Librarians at Rollins College have encountered students saying, "I can find everything on Google Scholar™." In a recent LibQUAL^{®3} survey, more than one student noted that Google Scholar™ was less overwhelming than Summon™. There is one instance of a student suggesting in an instruction evaluation that the library instruction was not necessary: "I do not need to be shown how to Google the library." We cannot know exactly what the student meant by this, but it is reasonable to assume that it was a reference to the Summon™

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basic search on the library home page and its Google-like interface. What we do know from these interactions is that this and subsequent generations of students coming to college will expect a one-stop-shopping resource discovery layer using simple searches to find information.

Faced with student expectations, increasing costs of subscription content, and tightening budgets, libraries have some tough choices to make: implement a commercial resource discovery tool, make do with free products like Google Scholar™ or WorldCat® Local Quick Start, or continue with the existing combination of multi-disciplinary and discipline specific databases to which the library already subscribes. Can users get the precise results they need with the simple searches they actually perform in these discovery services?

BACKGROUND

First released in mid-2009, Summon™ is a discovery tool built by Serials Solutions®⁵. It integrates well with the ERM (Electronic Resource Management) software and link resolver in their 360 Suite. Serials Solutions® ingests content into a unified index from databases, publishers, open access sources, and library catalogs and other local records. All subscribers share the same data set. When a search is performed, access rights and holdings are checked against access specified in an ERM, but a patron may choose to search beyond the respective library's collections. When last checked, Summon™ returned over two hundred twenty seven million items in a blank search. Not long ago, the number was twice this, but Serials Solutions® recently merged e-book titles with print books, which could account for this seeming decrease.

According to Google,

Google Scholar™ provides a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature. From one place, you can search across many disciplines

and sources: articles, theses, books, abstracts and court opinions, from academic publishers, professional societies, online repositories, universities and other Web sites. Google Scholar™ helps you find relevant work across the world of scholarly research (Google, 2011, "What is Google Scholar?").

Google Scholar™ (GS™) has met a mixed reception from the librarian community. It has some advanced search features, but it provides no interface for narrowing a set of results. Users can set preferences such as language, libraries with which to link, showing citation export options in results. It is free, but Google is quite secretive about the coverage of Google Scholar (GS™). The library does not know exactly what it is not paying for.

Rollins is a master's level university in Winter Park, Florida. In 2011, the college had a little over three thousand students, about three quarters of whom were undergraduates, and two hundred eight full-time faculty. The college is served by the Olin Library, which provides access to over three hundred thousand volumes, about 50,000 serial titles (print and electronic), and over one hundred databases.

Summon™ was selected by the Olin Library in the summer of 2009. Olin was using a federated search engine, but slow response, a clunky feel, complexity in choosing databases, difficulty with authentication, and ineffective use by students led to a lack of buy-in from the librarians. A focus on full text articles, the ability to refine and limit with faceted searching, ability to expand beyond Rollins, a clean interface, searching before authenticating, and integration with the Serials Solutions® 360 Suite were the primary factors leading to the selection of Summon™.

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