

2011

Google Scholar: Friend or Foe?

John Glover

Virginia Commonwealth University, jglover2@vcu.edu

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GOOGLE SCHOLAR

Friend or Foe?

John Glover – VCU Libraries – February 11, 2011

2004: YER NOT ACADEMIC!





2009: WHAT THE...?

“...Google Scholar is, on average, 17.6 percent more scholarly than materials found only in library databases and ... there is no statistically significant difference between the scholarliness of materials found in Google Scholar across disciplines.” (Howland, Wright, Boughan, & Roberts, 2009)

“It’s just not very good.” (VCU faculty member, 2009)

“Google Scholar isn’t useful for research.” (VCU faculty member, 2009)

2011:






FEBRUARY 11, 2011

9:40 A.M.

In the middle of a library instruction session, a pleasant, polite, student asks in front of the entire class: **“I know we’re supposed to use the library databases and all... but does this star stuff [wildcards, Boolean operators, etc.] work, you know, online? What if we just want to start with Google?”**

Note: this student was born **after** the World Wide Web.



2011

- ❖ Plays well with library resources (+)
- ❖ Indexes JSTOR, Academia.edu, more (+)
- ❖ Brief delay for adding new publications (+)
- ❖ Indexes much foreign language material (+)
- ❖ Equal coverage to many academic citation databases (+)

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- ❖ Many problems with searches (-)
 - Results ordering, Booleans, duplication, author names
- ❖ “Relevance” can be opaque, non-useful (-)
- ❖ Contents and ranking hijinks via ASEO (-)
- ❖ Many unknowns, Google not talking (-)
- ❖ Exists at Google’s whim as a “beta” (-)



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- ❖ Used regularly in promotion dossiers (?)
- ❖ Financially challenged libraries may begin to switch to Google to replace some citation databases (?)
- ❖ Diversity of content (?)
- ❖ Researcher behavior all over the map (?)
- ❖ Influencing database and library website design (?)



“DISCOVERY SOLUTION”

- ❖ New/developing tools for conducting academic research
- ❖ Make online search easier and more effective
- ❖ Layers on top of catalogs and databases
- ❖ Summon, Primo, WorldCat Local, Encore, etc.
- ❖ Currently expensive in \$\$\$, work hours, or both
- ❖ ...but it's coming, one way or another.

“DISCOVERY SOLUTION?”

- ❖ GS searches print and digital resources
- ❖ GS can outstrip any library or consortium of libraries in terms of size, resources, and commitment... if Google thinks it's profitable
- ❖ How much would pay-to-play GS cost?
- ❖ Authority, reliability, evaluation, organization?
- ❖ What happens if GS gains a monopoly and runs off the “good information” providers that make it more valuable currently?



COMPLACENCY

- ❖ 5 years → massive improvement in content
- ❖ 10 years → ???
- ❖ Tone of current librarian opposition to Google Scholar
- ❖ Danger of assumptions

MORE TOOLS

❖ During the discussion, multiple tools were discussed, including:

- Directory of Open Access Journals: <http://www.doaj.org/>
 - Categorized, searchable links to free, full text, quality controlled scientific and scholarly journals
- Find It Virginia: <http://www.finditva.com/>
 - Find it Virginia is a collection of databases that provide free 24/7 access to resources such as newspapers, magazine and journal articles, and books such as encyclopedias.
- Mendeley: <http://www.mendeley.com/>
 - Academic reference management software for researchers