

Transcript: Google for academic research - Introduction

Google is often dismissed as being irrelevant to the academic literature search. However, changes to the nature of the dissemination of scholarly research and official information in recent years mean that a wealth of relevant information can be accessed via standard Internet search engines such as Google. Too often however such information is lost amongst thousands of irrelevant, spurious and misleading results.

Based on an understanding of how the Google search engine works this session aims to show you some techniques to quickly filter your results for high quality academically relevant material.

A couple of other search engines will be considered briefly, including DuckDuckGo which has become a popular alternative to Google in the light of concerns about the privacy costs of using search engines such as Google or Bing.

Much social science research, and indeed research undertaken in many other disciplines, draws on literature beyond the traditionally published journal article, (although these are of course, key!). Certain types of documents such as government policy, or statistics collected by charitable organisations, or research projects done with schools, need to be sourced from the free web rather than retrieved from library literature databases.

So, yes, I'm afraid that means yet more places to look and more search skills to master.

When we talk about internet searching these days we generally mean Google. We'll talk a little more about alternative search engines later on.

You may be surprised just how much of the internet Google does NOT search. You may have heard of the dark or deep web. One estimation is 4% of the internet can be searched by Google as opposed to about 90% which is password protected or only available by a paid subscription, leaving about 6% of the internet for the more dubious or illegal content.

The point I wish to make is that not everything is freely available online.

Note that we can and do access some of the deep web content is contained in library subscription databases.

The other thing I really want to stress is that this session is definitely not about using Google instead of SOLO. However, for some types of literature, it is a really good and necessary tool.

For now we need to accept that Google is the most popular search engine, most people's 'go to' choice, and I think that is for a good reason – it is a very clever search engine.

However, to use Google in your academic research, it is important to understand how it works, as far as it is possible to see this. Google plays its cards close to its chest, much of how it works is proprietary information so they are not very transparent about how it all works.

Much of our knowledge in this area comes from a UK guru on Google, Karen Blakeman, who has kindly shared her wisdom with us. Google changes and develops all the time so we rely on checking in with her up to date expertise to keep clued up to how Google is working at the moment. There is a link to her website on slide 2 so you can keep up to date yourself.