Description

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) refers to ensuring that your manuscript can be found using search engines such as Google or Pubmed. After all, you've spent a lot of time on your research. You would want to share your findings with those interested. You wish to ensure that readers can find your paper without having to perform difficult searches that could waste time. Ultimately, you want your findings to have an impact in your field of study—to ensure the visibility of your research.

What is SEO?

All of us have used search engines in one capacity or another. You punch in a word or phrase and the search engine finds what you're looking for or suggests an alternative. Depending on the search engine, your computer, and Internet speeds, a "find" can be fast or slow, and sometimes tedious.

When a researcher looks for information on a specific subject, the same process applies; however, there are search engines specific to scientific publications. For example, PubMed provides access to 7 million medical citations from various journals, books, and MEDLINE. MEDLINE, in particular, stores information from abstracts as well as citations, and Google Scholar will return a list of articles based on the word searched. These make the process of finding information a bit less time consuming, but how do you ensure that your own research is among those found?

Some SEO Guidelines

One of the best ways to ensure that readers find your research is to use keywords throughout the content of the paper, starting with the title. Some tips on choosing keywords are as follows:

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1. Use keywords to convey key concepts.
2. Use descriptive keywords in titles, abstracts, subheadings, captions, tables, and figures.
3. Restrict your title to a minimum number of relevant words.
4. Choose frequently searched keywords.
5. Create links from keywords to various websites and social media.
6. Select three or four keywords for your list and use them and their synonyms often.
7. Use proper names, book titles, well-known events, specific historical eras, and other important phrases as your keyword list.

In the past, university librarians were the ones who researched articles for their staff and students. They were experts at being able to find what they needed using the tools on hand at that time. With the Internet replacing old tools and the speed connected to it, academic research is much faster and easier and using keywords is “key.” Researchers can not only find articles of interest but also assess what others in their discipline are working on.

Keywords Will Improve an Article’s Impact

Using keywords is by far the best way to have your article recognized. More recognition in your discipline not only ensures that your research will have more impact, but also that it is valid and a reliable source of information. Articles easily found will be cited more often than those that are not. Citations also help strengthen your visibility as a researcher (your “ranking”) and your data as credible, and Google Scholar uses this citation information in its results. The more citations credited to you and your article, the higher up in the ranks you will go and the more “finds” your article will get.

Choose your keywords carefully. There are tools that can help you formulate keywords for your particular paper or subject. For example,

- Google Keyword Planner: Finds keywords and search trends pertinent to your field of study.
- Google Trends: Tracks a particular search term relative to the total search of a related item.
- Keyword Tool: Uses common Google searches to provide keyword suggestions.

In addition, you can promote your research using social media and conferences to discuss your findings and their relevance. After publishing, share your research with colleagues having similar interests in various online groups. Update your online profiles in forums that automatically enroll you after you publish your work, such as Scopus.

Monitor Your Successes

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It is important to assess how your article is faring against others in the same discipline. This isimportant for determining whether your efforts to promote your research are successful. There are afew monitoring services to help you measure this. For example, Elsevier, one of the top publishers of scientific journals, offers CiteAlert, a service that will send you an email when your work is cited in one of its publications. It also offers Altmetrics, which tracks and analyzes subjects being discussed on online forums such as social media and science blogs.

By monitoring your success, you can determine what has worked or not in getting your paper recognized and cited. Most researchers find their information using keywords, so pay attention to the trends in keyword usage and make an effort to construct yours in such a way to follow those trends. You will ultimately attract more readers and provide more information on the latest in scientific research, which is the ultimate goal.

Category

1. Manuscripts & Grants
2. Reporting Research

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