Description

As an editor I use Google Scholar (GS) as a research tool quite often to check on spelling, nomenclature, and other style points. Since I have access to a good online search engine at a local university, I rarely use GS for literature searches. But today I tried it out at home on a search I had previously done at the university to see how GS compared.

Finding an Article

Google Scholar is an easy to use research tool. I typed in the last name of an author and the key word "cocrystal" and hit return. A total of 1,109 articles were instantly presented. The fifth from the top was the one I wanted, an article from 2012, published in an ACS journal. Pulling up the abstract took longer than I thought it would, with the computer cranking for 30 seconds before the result appeared. The material appeared too identical to the standard ACS information from the university's search engine — reference info (author, journal, etc.), abstract, citations of the article (19 in the last two years). Clicking on the "pdf" tab caused the system to crank for a full minute before a message informed me that I did not have the credentials to view the full article. No surprise there.

Saving an Article

GS states in the login page under "My Library" that you can load search results into your own private archive by clicking "save" under search results. I didn't see this save button anywhere on my search result. But highlighting the search results allowed me to copy/paste into a Word file with no problem.

Reading Full Text

Making a generic search for "cocrystal" returned scads of articles from journals and books, seemingly in random chronological order. About one-third of these had full articles available as pdf files, conveniently displayed on the right-hand side of the screen. Not many on the first two pages of results were of interest to me — obscure journals and general information.

Assessment

If you want the abstracts of articles, GS is useful. A researcher gets the the academic freedom to use such tools for their research. And It's also easier to use than more sophisticated search engines and gives the same result. You'd better have two or three search terms to narrow the search, otherwise, the desired article will be buried in junk. Citations and cross-references are easy to retrieve. I wouldn't use GS if I had access to a search engine that allowed retrieval of full articles, but I certainly would if I did not.

Category

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