

Web Scale Discovery Tools

Web Scale Discovery Tools are Like Trees . . .

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What is web scale discovery?

Web scale discovery is a type of search tool that can return results from myriad sources both internal and external to a library utilizing pre-harvested and indexed content. Most web scale discovery services utilize a single search box to start a query, and, depending on the service provider, provide a plethora of options to narrow and refine relevancy-ranked results.

Another way to think about web scale discovery services is to think of them as trees. Most services are highly adaptable to the library that contracts it, as well as the different types of users that the library serves. Web scale discovery services draw from several different aquifers of information, including the library's collection, open-access journals and archives, privately contracted online journal providers, and the World Wide Web. Search results are gathered in into a single set of ranked results, creating a veritable cornucopia of information for the user.

Users can then sift through the harvested results according to their needs through the different limiters offered by providers. In some cases, users can even access real-time status on the availability of their search results within the discovery service itself. Although still in its infancy, web scale discovery tools are deeply impacting how users search for and obtain information.

Main Competitors

Serials Solutions: Summon
OCLC: WorldCat Local
Ex Libris: Primo Central
EBSCO: Ebsco Discovery Services

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Web Scale Discovery

Advantages

- Simple to use
- All search results in a single place
- More comprehensive than traditional database searches
- Potential use with other devices, including mobile devices and social media outlets
- Searches popular and lesser-known databases alike
- Helps libraries stay current in information searching tools and technologies
- Updated and improved frequently

Disadvantages

- Less accessible
- Tailored to researchers, not average users
- Very costly
- Returned results can be overwhelming in number
- With more results comes more irrelevant results that users must sift through
- Privacy issues arise with the inclusion of social media outlets
- Features vary widely across providers

Results

Users

Local ILS

Electronic Databases

Open Access Sources