THE Information ADVISOR™

Analysis, Advice, and Strategy for Business Information Professionals

Comparing Print, Online, and Free Publication Directories

Say you need to get a list of publications on a certain subject or industry, or you need details on a specific trade magazine or scholarly journal. In today's world of Google and free web look-up sites, is there still a place for the traditional publication directory? This article surfaces and compares coverage and features of a selection of the leading fee-based directories, both in print and online. In next month's issue, we'll do a roundup of free sites and search strategies for looking up publications and discuss the question of the role for the traditional fee-based directory.

We'll begin the series this month by reviewing the leading directories. Here you'll recognize the familiar, even old-

HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights

Check out the editor's Intelligent Agent blog at **www.ia-blog.com.**

Figure 1

MediaFinder allows nonsubscribers to view the initial results page for free.

fashioned-sounding, publishers and guidebooks that have been familiar to librarians for decades. Somewhat as a surprise—we'd say a reassuring surprise—despite the massive changes that have occurred in the information landscape, these longtime publishers and directories are not only around but appear to have adapted quite well to the new information world. The publishers and their products can be summarized as in the table on page 2.

Coverage and features of these directories is compared in our chart on page 4. We also had the opportunity to test out the online versions of each of these products, which we report on here.

MediaFinder (Oxbridge)
www.mediafinder.com

MediaFinder, which was launched in 1995 by Oxbridge Communications, represents online access to all of the data from each of Oxbridge's three publication directories. These are its *Standard*

Periodical Directory, *National Directory of Magazines*, and *Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters*. MediaFinder also includes the contents of a fourth related product, a directory of catalogs called the *National Directory of Catalogs*, as well as a handful of high-profile blogs, such as The Huffington Post.

When you link to MediaFinder, even if you are not a paid subscriber, there is an option to do a basic keyword search, limit that search to a particular topic category, view the first page of results (see Figure 1), and then click on the top result to see a full set of data on that top publication (see Figure 2). While this is a very limited search, it still enables nonsubscribers to find names and descriptions of a handful of relevant publications. You can also retrieve information on a specific publication by title. While the kind of data that is returned varies by publication, typically you'll be able to view the publication

type, primary category, target audience, frequency, year established, ISSN, media type, textual description, contact URL and email, publisher and publisher contact information, subscription prices, and list rental fees.

But the real power of MediaFinder is in its extremely comprehensive, well-thought-out, and powerful set of advanced search operators. While some of these are probably geared more toward the needs of advertisers, marketers, and PR firms than strictly toward researchers, they can be of great value in compiling a very targeted list of publications meeting specified criteria. Here is a listing of the filters and screening options available on the Advanced Search page:

- Title (starts with, contains, exact)
- Company name
- Company type
- Publication subject (263 headings)
- Frequency
- Publication type
- Accepts ads (Y/N)
- Accepts book reviews (Y/N)
- Rents lists (Y/N)
- Ethnic type
- Target audience
- Religious type
- Media type
- Date founded
- ISSN
- City/State/Country/ZIP code/ Area code/Fax
- Records "must have": phone, fax, URL, email address

You also have the option in the advanced search option to sort results by title, publication type, circulation, or state.

There are also tabs you can click on to perform even more detailed screen-

ing and searching, such as by a publication's circulation range, list rental fees, subscription price ranges, advertising type and rates, and staff titles. Again, these filters are probably going to be more useful for advertising and public relations purposes than just research, but they are a very nice option.

We did several searches on MediaFinder, and all we can say about our search experience was that it was a pleasure. Everything was extremely well thought-out, powerful without being confusing, fast, and extremely detailed. And it all worked as it should. Given that this is a site by librarians for librarians, we shouldn't be too surprised!

Gale Directory Library
www.gale.cengage.com/ DirectoryLibrary

Gale, the long-respected publisher of popular library and reference directories, has gone through many changes over the years. It had been known first as Gale Research and then The Gale Group before it was acquired by Thomson in 1985 and became Thomson Gale. Gale was sold by Thomson in 2007 when it divested itself

of its Learning division, and it changed its name to Cengage Learning and Gale to Cengage Gale. Cengage describes its mission as "delivering highly customized learning solutions" and is based in Stamford, Conn. Gale itself remains headquartered in Farmington Hills, Mich.

Gale makes the data from its *Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* available on its online database, called Gale Directory Library. In addition to this directory, subscribers to this online service can access dozens of other Gale publications, such as *Brands and Their Companies, Directories in Print, Encyclopedia of Associations, Market Share Reporter, Research Centers Directory*, and other well-known Gale resources.

We were able to restrict our search on Gale Directory Library just to the *Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* by going to the Advanced Search page and then highlighting just that publication from a pull-down menu that listed dozens of Gale sources. We were then presented with another pull-down menu with searchable fields that were related specifically to the data included for that directory:

American Journalism Review
Former Title: Washington Journalism Review
Publication Type: Magazine
Primary Category: Journalism & Writing
Target Audience : Consumer
Frequency : Bi-monthly
Year Established : 1977
Media Type : Online/ Print
Description : Examines and reports on the press in all its forms, analyzes the product as well as the process of reporting, and covers new trends & technology in the rapidly changing media industry.

Title Phone : - - Toll Free: - -
Title E-Mail : editor@ajr.org

Publisher : American Journalism Review, University of Maryland, 1117 Journalism Blvd, College Park, MD, 20783-1716
Publisher Tel : 301-405-8803 Fax: 301-405-8323
Publisher URL : www.ajr.org

Subscription Prices		Accepts Ads: Inquire for Rates
Annual subscription individual	$24.00	
Circulation		Rents Lists: Inquire for Rates
Total circulation	25,000	

Nonsubscribers can also view the profile of the top MediaFinder result.

Figure 2

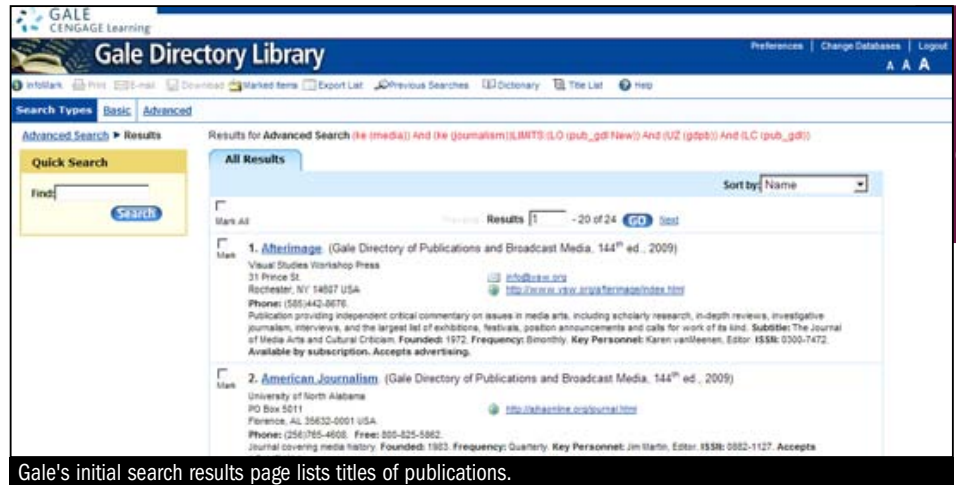| Publisher/ Parent Company	Gale/ Cengage Learning	Oxbridge Communications/ Oxbridge	ProQuest (R.R. Bowker)/ Cambridge Info Group
Print Directories	*Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*	*Standard Periodical Directory National Directory of Magazines Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters*	*Ulrich's International Periodical Directory Magazines for Libraries*
Online/ Fee-Based Versions	*Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* searchable on Gale Directory Library	MediaFinder (all three)	Ulrich's International searchable on Ulrichsweb.com (Serials Solutions)
Online/Free Versions	N.A.	MediaFinder: Free keyword search to view basic data	N.A.
Other Formats/ Online Services	*Gale Directory* also available on Dialog (File 469)	MediaFinder on CD-ROM	Ulrich's International also available on Dialog (File 480)

- Title
- Description
- City/State/ZIP code/
  Area code/Country
- Officer name
- Year founded
- Ads accepted
- Ad rates
- ISSN number
- Available online
- Principal language
- Several broadcast-specific fields

Gale's initial search results page lists titles of publications.

We did several test searches. The initial search results page listed titles of publications that matched our search terms (see Figure 3). Each listing also included contact information, and most provided additional information on the publication, such as a short description, year founded, frequency, key personnel and ISSN number. Clicking on a title provided additional information such as production-related data (e.g., printing method), as well as more information on circulation and subscription fees.

Overall, we did not find Gale's database anywhere near as intuitive or as nice to use as MediaFinder. It was less clear how to search what we wanted to find, and it was not as satisfying a search experience. We were also surprised to find out there was no effective way to search by subject—neither keyword field limiting nor description field limiting seemed to work well. We actually had much better luck finding publications covering a particular industry and subject by searching this directory as File 469 on Dialog. There, we could limit our search to two useful fields, Abstract (AB) and Descriptor (DE), not available on Gale's own online system. (Note that File 469 also combines data from two other now-defunct Gale publications: *Directories in Print* and *Newsletters in Print*.)

Ulrichsweb.com (ProQuest)
www.ulrichsweb.com/ulrichsweb

ProQuest's *Ulrich's International Periodical Directory* can be searched online via Ulrichsweb.com, a subscription-based site that includes all the data in the print directory as well as ceased and forthcoming titles, and offers a huge selection of advanced search options, functions and special features.

Linking to the first page provides subscribers with some simple browse and search options. We could browse by subject (more than 900 of Ulrich's own subject codes, which are modified Library of Congress headings), browse by index (title, subject, electronic vendor, language) or do a simple search by keyword, subject, title (exact) or title (keywords).

Surprisingly, traditional directory publishers have adapted quite well to the new information world.

By clicking on the Advanced Search link, though, we had the option to apply a great number of limits and search options, allowing extremely precise filtering and sorting of Ulrich's giant collection of publications from around the globe. A sample of the kind of fields and categories available for searching on the Advanced Search page includes the following:

Title, ISSN, Dewey Decimal number, country of publication, LC Classification, coden, refereed status, language, year first published, end year, frequency, price, features and attributes, document type, keyword, media type, abstracting & indexing, document availability, Copyright Clearance Center, corporate author, publishing company, address, telephone, fax, email, URL, personnel name, circulation, distributor, electronic vendor, status, subject, publication code and reviews

We also had the option to limit our search by *type* of publication, e.g., academic, scholarly, newspaper, trade/b2b, and newsletter.

Upon doing a simple or advanced search, Ulrichsweb.com returns a listing of matching titles with accompanying information (see Figure 4). A handy legend on the results page also indicates which publications on that list are refereed, electronic, and/or open access. Clicking on an individual title brings up the full record, which has comprehensive details on the publication, such as publisher, country, status, start year, frequency, language, price, Ulrich's subject heading, and so on. There are tabs to find even greater levels of detail about the publication, covering data like other editions/formats, availability on abstracting and indexing services, publisher and ordering information, advertising rights, demographics, and any reviews of the publication, such as those in the popular *Magazines for Libraries* book. (Note: *Magazines for Libraries* is not available to search online.)

In addition to all of these features and capabilities, Ulrichsweb.com also provides other useful features, including access to some of the journals' table of contents, identification of where the publication is available online, links to local libraries, and a wide range of library-oriented administrative tools. Our only complaint was that we could not search the full text of the textual descriptions that were included with many of the publications; this would

have made it much easier for us to find the kinds of publications we wanted. Note that Ulrich's is also available on Dialog (File 480), where we were able to search on the full text of the description. Another advantage we found from searching Ulrich's on Dialog was the ability to more easily browse its subject headings with an Expand SH= command.

How do we sum up and compare these three publication search sites? We were obviously impressed with Ulrich's scope and features, and if you want to do an extremely precise search through a vast collection of global publications, it is the place to turn. But, overall, we found MediaFinder to be an easier and more satisfying tool when searching for publications about a certain topic, which we think would be the most typical researcher's use of a publication directory. One reason that Ul-

rich's wasn't as easy to use, of course, is that it is more comprehensive and offers so many more search functions and data; overall, Ulrich's does an admirable job of making all this available in a reasonably straightforward

manner. Our assessment of Gale Directory Library was that it's pretty good, but it came in third after MediaFinder and Ulrichsweb.com. We were disappointed that it wasn't more intuitive to use, given its library origin. ■

The Information Advisor

◀ BACK TO RESULTS
◀ SEARCH MY LIBRARY'S CATALOG ▶

Click highlighted text for a new search on that item.

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Ulrichsweb.com returns a listing of matching titles with directory data.

Figure 4

	Number of Publications Included	U.S. /Canada or Global Coverage?	Frequency of Update	Data Provided[1]	Indexes OR Search by: Title, Subject, Geographic, Publisher	Pricing
PRINT						
OXBRIDGE						
—*Standard Periodical Directory*	64,000	U.S./Canada	Yearly	S, E, T, F, P	Title, Sub	$995
—*National Directory of Magazines*	20,590	U.S./Canada	Yearly	S, E, T, F, P	Title, Sub, Geo, Pub	$995
—*Oxbridge Directory of Newsletters*	15,185	U.S./Canada	Yearly	S, E, T, F, P	Title, Sub, Geo, Pub	$945
PROQUEST						
—*Ulrich's International Periodical Directory*	218,290	Global	Yearly	S, E, F, P	Title, Sub[2]	$966
—*Magazines for Libraries*	6,076	U.S./Canada	Yearly	S, E, T, F, P	Title, Sub	$330
GALE						
—*Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*	58,441 (43,224 pubs)	Global	Every 8–10 months	S, E, F, P	Title, Sub, Geo, Pub	$1,100
ONLINE						
OXBRIDGE						
—*MediaFinder*	75,000	U.S./Canada	Daily	S, E, F, P	Title, Sub, Geo, Pub	$795/6 months; $1,295/year; site license plans available
PROQUEST						
—*Ulrichsweb.com*	332,559 Includes ceased	Global	Weekly	S, E, F, P	Title, Sub, Geo, Pub	Tiered annual subscription fee
GALE						
—*Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*	58,441 (43,224 pubs)	Global	Every 8–10 months	S, E, F, P	Title, Sub, Geo, Pub	Varies by user

Ulrich's Subject Code:
1. S = subject category; E = editorial description; T = target audience; F = frequency; P = price to subscribe.
2. Subject index in Volumes 1–3; Title index in Volume 4.

Search Engine Review: OneRiot

When it comes to choosing a general web search engine, we've remained loyal Google fans since it was first introduced more than 10 years ago (see the accompanying article on Google on page 7). But in last month's issue, we briefly profiled seven new search engines that we thought were worth bringing to your attention. Out of those seven, though, we found only one—Biznar—with enough potential to make it worth recommending to information professionals as another worthwhile search engine. However, we also found one more search engine to be intriguing enough to warrant further investigation, which we report on in this article.

That search engine is called OneRiot (www.oneriot.com), the rebranded and relaunched site that had been known as Me.dium, and was introduced in 2005. When it was launched, Me.dium's claim to fame was that, unlike traditional search engines, it could identify and then rank webpages based on calculating user interest and activity on a particular page.

We found OneRiot intriguing enough to warrant further investigation.

The relaunched OneRiot search engine did not change that fundamental approach to how it ranked its pages; however, its method and formula for determining how much user activity was occurring on webpages was tweaked. As discussed in last month's issue, the factors employed for measuring user interest now include recent activity, rate of change of activity, how long users

OneRiot's homepage identifies its "Hot Topics."

stay on a page, and how new the page is. OneRiot is able to calculate these factors along the lines of how Alexa (www.alexa.com) does its calculations, by looking at the web searching activities of users who have downloaded its toolbar, which the firm claims is in the hundreds of thousands. (We downloaded the toolbar ourselves to get a feel for OneRiot's user experience.)

Here's how it all works. When you link to OneRiot's homepage, you are shown a simple search box, as well as a listing of what OneRiot calls its "Hot Topics" (see Figure 5). According to Jayson Ayers, OneRiot's director of business development and marketing, these topics represent themes surrounding the "most active URLs" and are updated each hour. To run a search, you just enter your words into the search box. The search engine allows quotation marks for phrases and uses a relevancy ranking approach for multiple words. No Boolean operators are supported. Clicking the "search" button than brings back matching results, which are broken down into two lists: "Today's Pulse on [your search term]" and "More Results" (see Figure 6). The "more results" is just an ordinary search that OneRiot

runs on Yahoo!'s index; it is the Today's Pulse results that are derived from OneRiot's own measurement methods.

Pages that are surfaced in Today's Pulse are those that have achieved a high "Pulse" score, meaning the highest activity from OneRiot's userbase. If no page matching the user's search terms has a high enough score, than no Pulse pages are displayed at all. Note from Figure 6 that each Pulse page is accompanied by two icons: Emerging/Raging and Visit Duration. The former icon identifies whether the page is beginning to get momentum from users (emerging) or if it is already extremely popular (raging). The latter icon indicates the average time spent on the page by the users, which can range from one-quarter of the clock face being filled for a relatively shorter time to three-quarters for a very long time.

From our test searches, we noticed a few other distinctive characteristics and features. One was that most of the Pulse results were from very popular, well-known, and primarily news-oriented sources, e.g., MSNBC, BBC, Yahoo! News, and *The Wall Street Journal*. This is not surprising, since these are likely to be the sites

that are going to get the most activity, especially for breaking news items. We also found that very often—at least half the time, we'd say—there were no Pulse pages returned at all, only the "more results" listing from the simple Yahoo! search. We also noted that the majority of the Pulse pages were quite timely: They were typically from the day we were searching, and they are usually no more than 2 days old; some were no more than a couple of hours old.

We spent some time doing a wide range of business, breaking news, and popular searches. We also did searches on OneRiot and then immediately ran the same search on Google and Google News to see how our results differed and to evaluate the value we obtained from each search engine.

After spending some time searching, our take on OneRiot is as follows: It is certainly no replacement for Google. And, in fact, because of its lack of advanced features, it's not really all that appropriate as a general web search engine.

But we still see a potential special use site for serious researchers. If you want to find out about broad and/or "hot" topics—particularly those related to the popular culture or technology—and about what people are currently reading, then OneRiot performs well. Based on the youthful management's irreverent style and approach to this site, we have a feeling that a high percentage of OneRiot toolbar users are young, so the Pulse pages might also inform you of what pages, sites, and types of sites that particular demographic is gravitat-
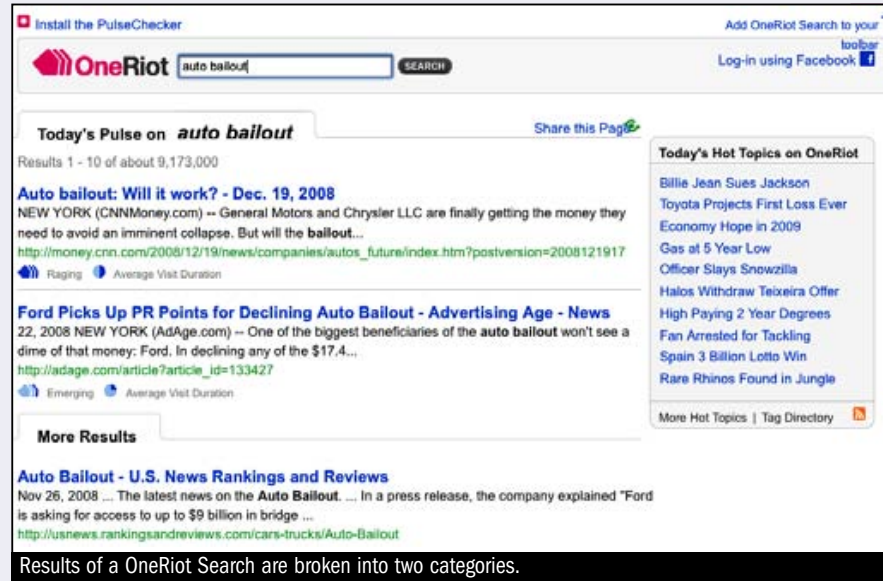

Results of a OneRiot Search are broken into two categories.

Figure 6

ing toward. While this may not seem too significant, we can see certain types of business research projects where access to this kind of information could be useful—perhaps more for a snapshot of the *kinds of pages* some people are gravitating to than the actual content in the pages itself. For example, OneRiot could be valuable for research where you need the following:

- Data on what are popular news pages on the web
- Data on young persons' web search/reading habits
- Data on what pages are covering specific timely news stories and topics
- Leads on what may be emerging fads or trends

Finally, we can say a few words about the value of the concept behind OneRiot. We do believe that if a search engine can find a reliable method for measuring a *representative or clearly defined* group of persons' search activities that accurately

reflects their interests, than such a search engine would represent another legitimate way of surfacing important pages: possibly as important as Google's, which heavily relies on link analysis as its determination of popularity.

Here's the bottom line: We like the concept of OneRiot, but we would like more advanced precision-search features, and we have some questions about how the concept of measuring user interest on a page is being implemented. We'd really need to see the web searching activity of millions of dispersed users in order to achieve the critical mass necessary to make such results broadly meaningful. But it works well enough as a potentially useful tool for a business researcher who wants to get a sense of what some people are reading and what perspective they are getting on popular, timely topics. While that's certainly a qualified endorsement, it's still more than most Google competitors get from us. ■

OneRiot works well enough as a potentially useful tool for a business researcher who wants to get a sense of what some people are reading and what perspective they are getting on popular, timely topics.

What's New With Google?

Because it is so simple to use and so much is written about it, we rarely devote an article just to Google. But every now and then, when Google introduces something particularly noteworthy that we think is worth your attention, we will do so. And in the context of this issue's review of OneRiot and last month's review of new and noteworthy search engines, the introduction of an intriguing new Google search feature is a good time to do so.

This past November, Google introduced a new service called Search Wiki. What Search Wiki offers is a way for you to customize/append your search results. Note that this is not the same as Google's Customized Search Engine. With that service, people can create their own unique search engine by compiling a custom set of webpages for Google to search. For example, some time ago we created a rudimentary "Business Research Search Engine" that searches about a dozen selected business research sites. It can be found at http://tiny url.com/ynqtcz.

Basically, what SearchWiki does is allow you to do a few new things when reviewing your search results: customize the ranking to your liking, add comments associated with retrieved webpages that you can then read later when you retrieve that page again, and read other people's comments that they've made on webpages using the same Search Wiki commenting feature. (This works only if others run the exact same search query that you ran.)

As you would expect with a new Google feature, Search Wiki works very simply.

If you have a Google account and you search Google while you are signed into your account, you probably have already noticed SearchWiki in action, as the feature is indicated via a couple of new icons placed at the end of your search results. The way you engage these functions is by clicking on the small up/down/search balloon comment icons that are appended to your Google search results. (See Figure 7.) Again, note that these only appear if you have an account with Google and are currently signed in.

As you would expect with a new Google feature, all this works very simply. You click the up-arrow icon

next to a result if you want to "promote" it to the top of your ranked list; doing this means that that page will show up on top the next time you run the same search. You click the X button next to any page you don't want to turn up again when you do the same search, and you click the balloon to add your comment. You can even add a completely new URL that did not turn up from the Google search; that will then turn up in the returned pages whenever you perform that exact same search.

These are not earthshaking changes to Google, of course, and a key point to remember is that making these promotions and deletions only alters the rankings *you* will see, not anyone else's. Still, it's worth keeping in mind how you might be able to use these new features to improve your search experiences. We'd say the following are a couple of possibilities:

1. Personal Productivity. Clearly, if you do the same kinds of searches over and over and you always have to hunt for the page(s) that you consistently click on, it will save you a little time and aggravation to have it automatically placed on the top of your list in future searches. Similarly, if you have thoughts related to the page you are viewing and want to see these the next time you pull up the page on Google, the comment function could be a convenient way to prod or remind yourself of those thoughts. Just remember, though, just as you can read other people's comments on a site, your comments are viewable by others who have a Google account, who are signed in, and who look for comments by others as well. (There doesn't seem to be any way to turn the "public" aspect of this feature off.)

2. Research and Knowledge Sharing. While it's too early to say whether or not you're really going to find substantive and useful information by reading other people's comments about a webpage, depending on the particular page and commentator, we could foresee some of this

Figure 7

Google Wiki uses small up/down/and search balloon comment icons.

What's New With Google?

being useful for business research, perhaps in seeing others' comments about a company or product. A big question, though, is how or whether Google is going to address the likely comment spam problem.

In a related potential use, if you are working with colleagues on a project and doing the same kinds of web searches, this shared commenting feature might be able to serve as a kind of mini KM application.

Some on the blogosphere have speculated that the reason Google introduced this feature was to gather data from users about which pages its users are considering more relevant than others for specific searches, and then use that knowledge to tweak its algorithm. Certainly that's a possibility. You can watch Google's own demo of how Search Wiki works on its own blog at http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2008/11/searchwiki-make-search-your-own.html.

> Google is still head and shoulders the best general web search engine and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

While we're discussing searching Google, we would like to make a few other observations about how Google is working these days. One is that Google is doing fewer exact matches and more "fuzzy" searching to automatically expand words to all sorts of alternate forms (plurals, gerund, etc.) and even alternate spellings, going on the assumption that most searchers want more results to help them find what they "really" mean. This can be good or a pain. As an example of the
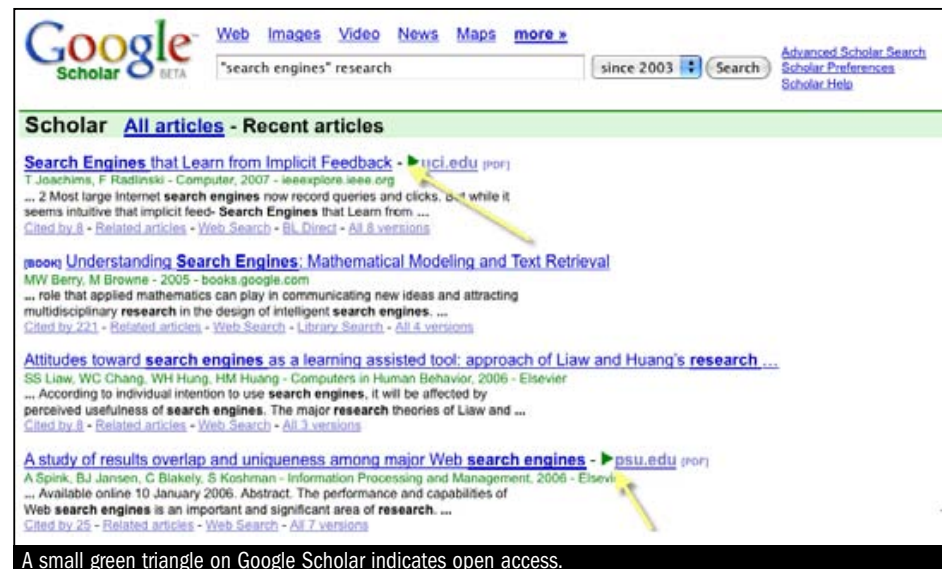
A small green triangle on Google Scholar indicates open access.

latter category, a search we were doing on the so-cial network site Delver consistently brought us back pages with the word "Deliver," which cluttered our search page with irrelevant results. We were able to get rid of those extra pages, though, by appending our search with –deliver –delivers. (We could have also enclosed the word in double quotes or added a plus sign in front of the word to have the same effect.) We also learned from Greg Notess at Web Search University (www.websearchu.com) last fall of a couple of other interesting Google-centric tidbits: Google Book Search is making an increasing amount of full text available, and a new feature on Google Scholar, a green triangle (see Figure 8), is being used to identify free, openly available links to the item it retrieved.

Finally, we've also noticed a few more inconsistencies (or perhaps out and out errors?) in certain Google searches. For example, every now and then, adding a word to our search string has resulted in *increasing* the number of our results, rather than decreasing them; in some cases a word or phrase that should have been in a returned page was not there (not even as a link to the page). But so far these are minor concerns. Our bottom line remains: Google is still head and shoulders the best general web search engine and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. ■ ▲

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Figure 8