



## The Lamar Soutter Library

a Legacy of Service and Learning

<http://library.umassmed.edu>

Google: the Good, the Bad and the Ugly and how to make the most of it

Google can be a very useful tool:

- Google **Scholar** can sometimes quickly find full text articles on the Web that may not otherwise be available free. (But it's not the only way – see alternatives below.)
- Google **Earth** has some fun features.
- Google **Maps** are clean and simple.
- Google **Images** finds some really great pictures (but watch out for copyright restrictions).
- Google **Desktop** can help you find items when you forgot where you put them.
- Google **Book Search** can help you find books and search inside them.
- Google is quick and easy to use.

BUT:

- Google ranks according to popularity.
- Google has advertisements (though at this time Google Scholar does not).
- Google Scholar is not always current (so you might be missing something very important).
- Google Scholar still crawls only limited sources – other engines search more widely.
- Google and Google Scholar get a lot of redundant hits.
- Results cannot be sorted.

Make Google even more effective:

- Use the **Advanced Search** option to more precisely target your search.
- Use modifiers: quotes (" ") for an exact phrase; minus sign (-) to exclude certain words or phrases; tilde (~) for similar words; **define:** to find the definition of a word or phrase; **site:** to look for only certain types of sites (e.g., site:edu); conversions (e.g., cm in foot); mathematical signs for basic calculator functions (e.g., 4+7; 30% of 55; etc.).
- Download citations directly from Google Scholar into RefWorks.

Alternatives to Google - just as fast and easy but more accurate:

- Instead of Google Scholar, try **Scirus** (<http://www.scirus.com/srsapp/>). It specifically searches science sources; allows you to choose the type of source you want; sorts by either relevance or date; with Advanced Search, lets you narrow your search very effectively; and is just as quick and easy as Google Scholar.
- If you need a particular article, **PubMed's Single Citation Finder** is fast and accurate. It's in the left sidebar; enter just minimal information (year, volume, page number).
- **Windows Live Academic Search** (<http://academic.live.com/>) – in Beta but lots of potential.
- For regular searching, try other search engines. **Exalead** (<http://www.exalead.com/search>) makes it easy to narrow your search; gives thumbprints of retrieved Web pages; doesn't push paid sites. **JUX2** (<http://www.jux2.com/>) compares Google, Yahoo and MSN at the same time. And paid library databases are very powerful and may be easier than you think.

**Remember: for any serious search, you should never rely on just one search engine.**

For more information, contact the Library Service Point

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