



WWW.

Search

Recessionista Research Revisited 2015: Utilising quality free web resources to enhance your Library Service²



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² Developed from a presentation given at the LAI/CILIP Joint Conference Waterford, 2014 and updated.

Abstract

Recessionista is a blend of the word recession and fashionista and is defined in the Urban Dictionary www.urbandictionary.com as “a person who is able to remain stylish during times of economic hardship”. My premise is that a Library service, like a recessionista, does not have to be limited just because its budget and resources are. By utilising some of the many quality and freely available web resources³ available, I believe that all libraries can greatly improve and enhance their Library service.

The original Recessionista Research workshops and presentations took place in 2010 and as so much has changed since then on the web landscape, I have revisited the topic for 2015. This article will explore some current free resources and will look at tips for power searching, specialist search engines, creating alerts and finally how to find free articles and images.

Keywords: *Web Resources, Free*

Which Search Engine?

The search engines used for most general web searching are Google at www.google.com and BING www.bing.com as they are the largest and have advanced searching functionality. A smaller engine but a good alternative is DuckDuckGo <http://www.duckduckgo.com/>. It is billed as “The search engine that doesn’t track you” so you do not see those annoying ads that follow you around the Internet and you do not get the same results every time. I like its clean, clutter and ad free- layout and as it grows in size, the results are improving greatly.

The first step in any search is to devise a search strategy and it is worth spending time on this. Terminology and use of search words is important. Re-do

³ Examples are based on the author’s work at IBTS.

your own search strategy using the words most likely to appear, without jargon or abbreviations. I often add the term review* when looking for information on a product, service, film, book etc. as I do not want to just get the generic blurb or the hard sell. Adding the terms (solved OR resolved) is useful when looking for the answer to a technical question e.g. “phone switching off” as that should bring you to the answer and not just bring back forum sites with other people asking the same question.

MY TOP TEN SEARCH TIPS

1. Boolean searching

Boolean searching – especially the **OR** operator is the single search tip that makes the greatest difference to my search results especially when you consider the many spelling and word variations between medical terms used here and in the US e.g. (Haematology OR hematology) (haemophilia OR hemofilia) (paediatric OR pediatric).

There are also differences in common everyday words such as e.g. (Colour OR color) (Autumn OR fall) (Aeroplane OR airplane) etc. The **AND NOT** Boolean operator eliminates terms from your search that you do not want. Instead of AND NOT – you can use a – (minus) just before the search term you want eliminated in most search engines e.g. blood donors – organ should eliminate organ donors from your search. When searching using symbols in Google, do not leave any spaces between the symbol and your search terms.

2. Filter with search tools

After doing a Google Search – use the search filter options under *Search Tools* to refine your results by county, time, all results and location. The time filter is particularly useful to filter out older material. The date in Google is the date the material was uploaded to the Net and not the date of the actual document so check the document date itself.



Search Tools can be found under the search box or the filters can sometimes appear down the left hand side of the results screen in the older Internet Explorer browsers.

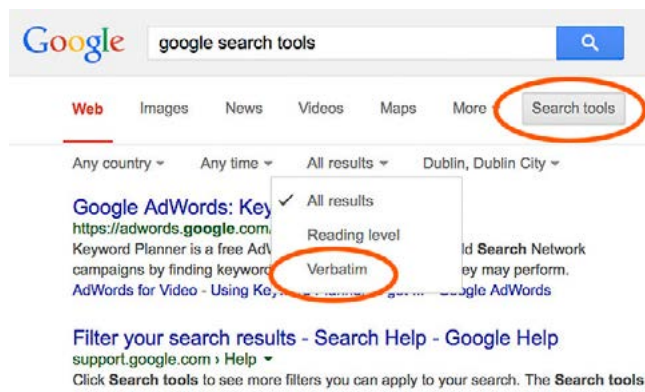
3. Verbatim search

In 2011 Google eliminated the “+” operator from its set of tools and in its place we now have *Verbatim*. Google automatically looks for variations on your terms and sometimes drops terms from the search which may not always suit. You can

use *Verbatim* to force Google to carry out your search exactly as you have typed it in. As with the other search tools – you first run your search, then click on ‘Search tools’ in the menu above the results. In the second line of options that appears, click on ‘All results’ from the drop down menu and select *Verbatim* (see above). If you are carrying out in-depth research it is worth using *Verbatim* even if your “normal” Google results seem to be satisfactory as you may see different content in your results.

4. site: and -site: search commands

Use the *site:* command to focus your search on particular types of site, for example *site: ac.uk* will search for UK academic websites, *site: edu* will search for US academic sites and *site.org* will bring back organisational sites. You can also search inside a large rambling site like <http://europa.eu/>: the official website of the European Union by using the *site:* command e.g. *site: europa.eu* followed by keywords e.g. *blood directive*. If ordering items online, I often use the *site:* command (*site: ie* OR *site: uk*) to only search Irish and UK sites to



cut down on delivery costs and avoid customs tax. You can also use the minus site command *-site:* to exclude sites from your search e.g. *-site: com* to cut out commercial sites. Note that there is no space between the *site:* command and type of site.

5. filetype: command

Use the *filetype:* command to limit your search to different types of files. Use *filetype: ppt* to find PowerPoint files and presentations, *filetype: xls* to find excel spreadsheets with data and statistics. I often search for *filetype: pdf* when searching for an article or report as there is a good chance that a pdf file may be the full text. You can also try *filetype: doc* to find word documents which may also give the full text or combine both with the OR Boolean operator e.g. (*filetype: pdf* OR *filetype: doc*). Again there is no space between *filetype:* and the type of file.

6. Asterisk * as truncation and between terms

As well as using an asterisk to truncate a word e.g. *econom** will find *economy*, *economics*, *economical* etc., the asterisk can also be used between two words to stand in for 1-5 words. This is useful if you want two of your keywords close to one another but suspect that there may often be one or two words separating them. For example the search *research * librarian* will find *research officer / librarian*, *research services librarian* etc. if you have searched for the phrase quotation marks “*research librarian*” – you might have missed these as phrase searching can often narrow a search too much.

7. Change order of search terms

Changing the order in which you type in your search terms can change the order of your results. The pages that contain the terms in the order you specified in your search are usually given a higher weighting. This is another useful tip if you are stuck in a search rut and seeing the same results over and over again.

8. Different country versions

The country versions of Google give priority to the country's local content, although it might be in the local language. This is a useful strategy when searching for research groups, companies and people that are active in a specific country. Use the standard ISO two letter country code, for example <http://www.google.fr/> for Google France or www.google.it for Google Italy. It is also worth trying your search in Google.com. – go to the bottom right hand corner of the Google home page for the link. The content on www.google.com can be different from the content on local sites e.g. www.google.ie

9. ~ sign and inurl: command

If searching for a specific type of document e.g. a guideline I use the ~ (tilda) sign to find synonyms e.g. ~guide will find guides, guidelines, guidances etc. You can also use the inurl: command and search for sites with the word guideline in the web address so that you know the document will most likely be a guideline or you can combine the two e.g. (inurl: guideline OR ~guide transfusion).

10. Cached sites

If you are working with strict firewalls which blocks sites – use the **Cached** option to access the Cached (saved version) of a site by clicking on the small green arrow after the web address. The cached copy is an older version of a site and might lack some important elements like the formatting and updated links. However, it may have the information you require.

META AND SPECIALIST SEARCH ENGINES

If a search in Google, Bing or DuckDuckGo is not proving fruitful – the same search can be done in a metasearch engine which searches multiple search engines at the same time. **Deeperweb** <http://deeperweb.com/> is a meta-search engine which breaks your results down into categories – general web, blogs, news, academic, cloud, metrics, research, etc. and **Dogpile** <http://www.dogpile.com/>

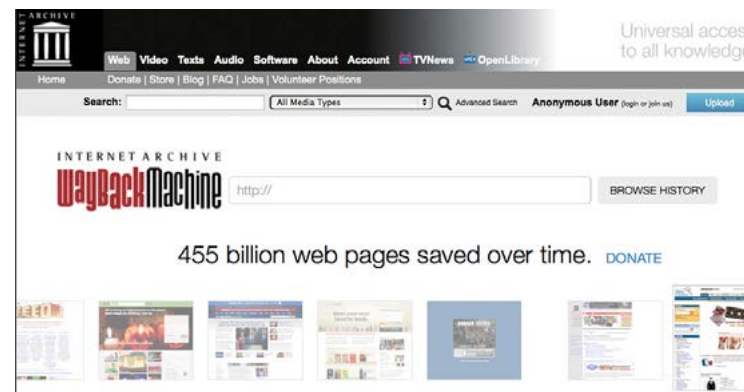
[dogpile.com/](http://www.dogpile.com/) is another multi engine aggregator with the slogan “All the best search engines piled into one”.

Another useful search engine is the **WayBack Machine** <http://archive.org/web/> when you are looking for documents or information previously posted on the Internet but no longer available. It is a search engine that contains over 452 billion web pages archived from 1996 to the present. The archive does not contain every web page ever published. Rather, it is a collection of “snapshots” taken over time and can be a valuable resource for older “lost” material.

MillionShort <http://million-short.com/>. If you keep seeing the same results from Google over and over again give MillionShort a try. MillionShort enables you to remove the most popular web sites from the results. Originally, as its name suggests, it removed the top 1 million but you can now choose the number of results that you want omitted. I usually remove the top 100 sites. The page that best answers your question might not be well optimised for search engines or might cover a topic that is so “niche” that it never makes it into the top results in Google or Bing.

Google Scholar

Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com> provides a search of scholarly literature across many disciplines and links to the publications of professional societies, university repositories etc. One excellent feature of Google Scholar is the **Library Links** option under Google Scholar settings. Set up links to a Library of which you are a member in the “Library Links” box. If that Library has signed up and uploaded its holding to Google Scholar, you can access these articles directly from the link on Google Scholar via your Library login.



Medical search engines

PubMed at <http://www.pubmed.gov> is the largest of all medical search engines comprising more than 24 million citations for peer reviewed biomedical literature from MEDLINE, life science journals, and online books. Citations may include links to full-text content from PubMed Central and publisher web sites. The full text of over 20% of articles is now available for free. Medscape from WebMD <http://www.medscape.com> is a comprehensive free resource for medical information and educational tools for the health professional.

PubMed's sister site is MedlinePlus <http://www.medlineplus.gov>. This offers an excellent medical encyclopaedia and directory suitable for both the professional and the lay person. Other consumer health sites are: the HSE health portal <http://www.hse.ie/portal/eng/health/> and from the UK <http://www.patient.co.uk/> along with WebMD <http://www.webmd.com/> and the Mayo Clinic site <http://www.mayoclinic.org/>

Current Awareness Service

Libraries can avail of industry related reports, newsletters and updates as these are published and they can be used to provide a current awareness service. Material can be found by setting up alerts in Google and other alerting services such as **Talkwalker** www.talkwalker.com, to get news based stories. Talkwalker can monitor your name or organisation, brand, competitors, relevant topics and alerts are sent directly to your inbox or RSS feed reader. To create alerts, simply enter a search query and refine it by result type (news, blogs, discussions or all of the above), language, frequency and whether you want all of the results delivered or only the best ones.

Mention at <https://en.mention.com/> monitors all social media sites and offers one free alert – you can set that alert up to be you or your organisation's name and website.

To keep up to date with new peer reviewed articles – set up alerts in Google Scholar or PubMed or using the option “**Alert me when this article is cited**” in noteworthy online articles can yield rich rewards. Tip: To avoid getting rubbish

in your alerts – do a very specific advanced search where possible using any filters that will refine your search and copy the search string into the alerts box to create an alert based on that refined search.

Finding and using Copyright free images

The Library offers support for those doing presentations and we often have to find free to use images to enhance PowerPoint slides. On the following sites you can find quality copyright free images which are free to re-use. Though the images are copyright free – it is good practice to give credit or attribution and link back to all images you find online.

Pixabay <http://pixabay.com/en> This is my favourite site to find and share high quality free images. There is some fee content but they are tagged as such.

MorgueFile <http://www.morguefile.com/> contains free high resolution digital stock photography for either corporate or public use.

Flickr Creative Commons www.flickr.com/creativecommons/ is an index of Flickr images with owner specified Creative Commons licences and

Wikimedia Commons <http://commons.wikimedia.org/> is an archive of free multimedia content submitted by Wikipedia users.

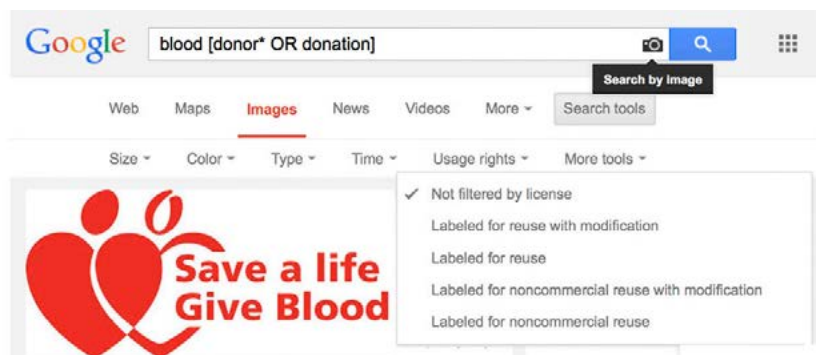
Google Images <http://images.google.com>. Not all images in Google images are free to use. To find free images – perform a Google Image Search and click the “**Search Tools**” button to access Image Search Tools such as Usage Rights

TIP

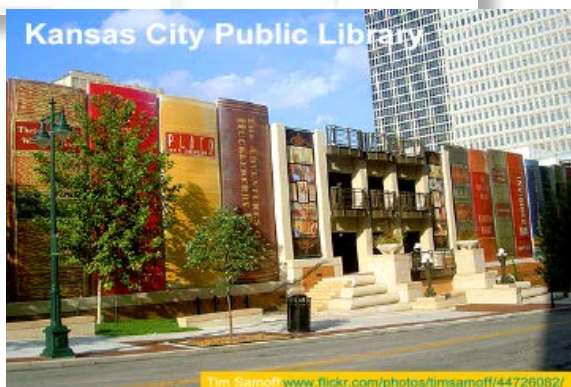
In IBTS we sign up to e-newsletters in relevant subjects. Sites like CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and the FDA (US) are excellent alerting services.



and many more. Set the "Usage Rights" filter under "Search Tools" to the last option "Labelled for non-commercial reuse" to ensure you find copyright free images only.



Under **Google Image's Advanced Search** – you can search for an image with landscape orientation which is more suited to using in PowerPoint presentations – use the filter "by aspect ratio" – and choose tall, square, wide or panoramic.



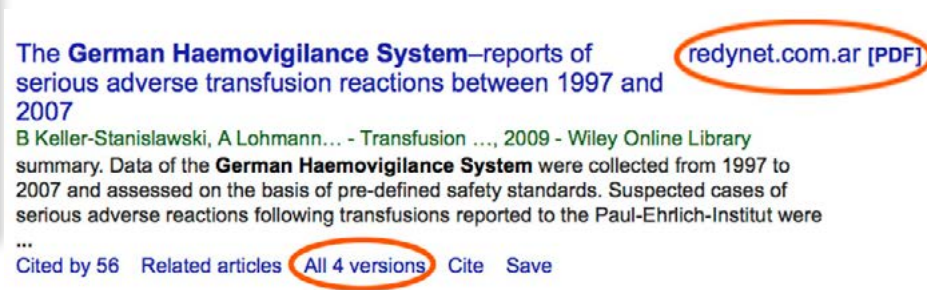
Search for images with an image

Search for an image using an image in Google Images by clicking on the camera icon at the right side of the Image Search box as above and uploading the image from your PC or inputting the URL of the image on the web. Google will find similar images and make a "best guess". This feature is great for finding clothing, identifying plants and tracking down items that may otherwise be hard to identify. Remember if you can do this – those who own the image can do it too and can see who is using their image without permission so for that reason it is important to give attribution and credit for any image

that might end up back on the web. There have been cases of photographers doing this in the past with wedding photos to see who is posting their work on the web without permission.

HOW TO FIND FREE ARTICLES

1. **PubMed and PubMed Central** If searching for a specific medical or scientific article – I would first search PubMed as any free articles will be tagged as **Free**. They are available through **PubMed Central (PMC)**, www.pubmedcentral.gov the free digital archive of biomedical and life sciences journal literature which now has over 3.3 million articles freely available. PMC also has many **author manuscripts** and will also link to free articles available on the publisher's site.
2. **Google Scholar** includes links to free articles in university repositories or an open access site **NOTE: Free or open access material in Google Scholar is often found in a link to the right of the search result –**



It is also worth checking the **All * versions** link under each search result as there may be more free articles available there especially if there is a high number of versions.

3. **Google and other general search engines.** Searching the main Google search engine with the title of the article and filetype: pdf may bring up the full text of an article that could be on the author's own site or on their organisation's website so is always worth a try.

TIP

Online articles usually have a default filename when you save them – this is often a number or code which can be difficult to find at a later date on your PC. It is advisable to change the filename to something that makes sense to you. We tend to give articles the same filename as the title of the article but if you copy the title from a PDF for e.g. you may not always be able to paste the copied text into the filename box by using the right click paste option. If this happens try Ctrl V instead to paste – this also works for most web forms when the right click paste option is greyed out.

Remember that Windows does not accept colons: in a filename, but will alert you to that. It also does not accept question marks but does not alert you and will not save the file.

4. **Request a pre-print or author final draft from the lead author.** It can sometimes be difficult to get an article from another library or from a document supplier like Subito if the article is epub ahead of print. In this case – I would email the corresponding or lead author and request their **author final draft** or **pre-print** from them. If they send this version to you – they are not breaking Publisher copyright and I have found that the scientific community are usually willing to share their work with others especially if you give them some background such as where you're from and why you are requesting a copy of their article. To save time (and typing) I have set up a signature in MS Outlook which works as a template when requesting an article from an author so that I only need to change the author name and article details.

You can also contact authors through research sharing sites like **ResearchGate** at www.researchgate.net/ which is a network site allowing you to connect, collaborate and discover scientific publications for free once you have registered. You will sometimes find the author manuscript on the site itself or you can click on a button to request the full text of an article from the author but from past experience I find that you get a better result if you email the author directly yourself.

You can also search free medical/scientific article sites such as

- **Free Medical Journals:** <http://www.freemedicaljournals.com>
- **Biomed Central:** <http://www.biomedcentral.com>

- **Directory of Open Access Journals:** <http://www.doaj.org>
- **HighWire Press Stanford University:** <http://highwire.stanford.edu>
- **Plos (Public Library of Science) Medicine:** <http://medicine.plosjournals.org>

To save time, you can **search** only the free sites above by setting up a Google Custom Search at <https://www.google.com/cse/create> and inserting the URLs above. I have also set up a Google custom search to only search free image sites listed previously.

As the internet evolves and new solutions are developed to take advantage of published content, it is important to regularly check for new applications and to keep up to date on new resources. Most importantly, you need to figure out ways to utilise these resources to best advantage for your Library users. Be brave, experiment. Test them out to see if and how they work for you and your library. In the words of Teddy Roosevelt "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are". The web resources highlighted here are only a small selection of what is available but I hope it will inspire you to find and use others.

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