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# LIS Open Access E-Journal - where are you?

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## Abstract

*Access to published information is of interest to many users. Library and information science (LIS) professionals are especially interested in gaining access and guiding users to all available information. Though they are often dependent on traditional subscription-based library resources, moving away from the costly ones and replacing them with usage of available open access sources, presents practitioners with a significant budget consideration in today's shrinking economy. This paper examines the availability of current LIS open access e-journals; their presence in well- and less-well known abstracting and indexing sources, their inclusion in standard library bibliographic tools as well as coverage by Google Scholar, a computer generated search engine.*

## Keywords

## Introduction

The mid-1990's witnessed an increase in the Internet popularity and with it a birth of a variety of open access electronic journals in the field of library and information science (LIS). As time progressed, some of the e-journals with earliest start dates have actually ceased to exist. These include but are not limited to: Public-Access Computer Systems Review (PACS Review), Review of Information Science, and Journal of Library Services for Distance Education.

However, a large group of open access LIS e-journals including titles such as *Ariadne*, *D-Lib Magazine*, *First Monday*, *Information Research*, *Issues in Science & Technology Librarianship* and *LIBRES*, continue to be published. These, and many other online journals, have been included in multiple abstracting and indexing sources, and so they have successfully reached the high status of "respectability" among library professionals.

Now, as we come upon the end of the second decade of open access electronic journals, researchers have an opportunity to examine how the landscape of online journals has changed. While previous studies ([Jacsó](), 2001; [Hawkins](), 2001) have documented and analyzed coverage by databases of LIS e-journals that began publishing in the 1990s, no one has reviewed the much younger group of open access LIS journals that began publishing in the 21$^{st}$ century. This study aims to fill that void and will explore (1) whether their existence is known, (2) if their content is easy to locate, (3) if they have gained acceptance among the producers of the bibliographic directories and indexing and abstracting tools, and (4) the extent to which they have established their reputation.

## Methods

To determine the journals to be considered for this study, various directories of open access e- journals were consulted. The following sites were of primary interest:

- [Aardvark]()
- [Academic Info]()
- [Directory of Open Access Journals: DOAJ]()
- [DMOZ]()
- [DoIS Documents in Information Science]()
- [E-LIS]()
- [LOCKSS]()
- [OAIster]()
- [Open J-Gate]()
- [PANDORA Australia's Web Archive]()
- [PKP Public Knowledge Project]()
- [Serials in Cyberspace]()

Subject selection for the core group of e-journals for this study, was limited to library and information science with inclusion of a few closely related disciplines such as archives, teaching and research. Every e-journal in this group had to meet the following criteria:

- free online access;
- began publication in 2000 or later; and

- frequency of publication covers any frequency up to and including those that are published annually.

The resulting list of e-journals was further analyzed and titles were excluded if:

- they are currently available in print;
- English is not the primary language;
- there has been no publication activity in the last two years; and
- any type of subscription or membership is required.

The accuracy of the author's established selection and exclusion criteria for each periodical title were checked against information provided in the following standard bibliographic sources:

- *Magazines for Libraries* (MFL) - "reviewing the best publications for all serials collections since 1969" ([LaGuardia & Katz](#), 2006).
- *Serials Directory* (SD) - "provides access to the most up-to-date and accurate bibliographic information as well as current pricing structures for popular serials."
- *Ulrich's Periodical Directory* (Ulrichsweb.com) - "the authoritative source of bibliographic and publisher information on more than 300,000 periodicals of all types" ([Frequently Asked Questions](#)).
- *WorldCat* - an OCLC catalog of books and other materials in libraries worldwide ([What is WorldCat](#)?).
- *DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals* (referred herein as DOAJ) - Though not yet an established library bibliographic utility source, DOAJ is a free and easy to use subject access to LIS e-journals. Since it aims at providing "a one stop shop for users to Open Access Journals" it is included in this section in order to examine the comprehensiveness of its coverage in relation to other sources ([Aim & Scope](#)).

Each selected e-journal was further evaluated for access and subject coverage in the following abstracting and indexing sources:

- *Academic Search Premier* (AS) - A subscription-based database produced by EBSCO, aimed at academic institutions, it is a "multi-disciplinary full text database containing full text for more than 4,500 journals, including more than 3,700 peer-reviewed titles" ([About Academic Search Premiere](#)). It is primarily for this reason that AS database was included in this study.
- *Library Literature & Information Science Full Text* (Lib.Lit) - Commercially-produced, subscription-based bibliographic database that indexes articles and book reviews in key U.S. and international library and information science

periodicals. This WilsonWeb fee-based product is one of the major LIS resources. ([About Library Literature & Information Science Full Text](#)).

- *LISA: Library and Information Science Abstracts* (LISA) - A CSA/ProQuest subscription-based international abstracting and indexing database is aimed primarily at "library professionals and other information specialists. LISA currently abstracts over 440 periodicals from more than 68 countries and in more than 20 different languages" ([About LISA: Library and Information Science Abstracts](#)).
- *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts* (LISTA) - A recent edition to free databases from EBSCO, it indexes over 500 core journals, more than 50 priority journals, and 125 selective journals, plus books, research reports and proceedings. Subject coverage includes librarianship, classification, cataloging, bibliometrics, online information retrieval, and information management. ([About Library, Information Science & Technology Abstract](#)(LISTA) ).
- *Google Scholar* (GS) - Though not a traditional database in "library" terms, this free web search engine is included in this study primarily to examine its claim that it "provides a simple way to broadly search for scholarly literature [and] from one place, you can search across many disciplines and sources" ([About Google Scholar](#)).

A final list of 31 e-journal titles was created and is presented in Table 1 below.
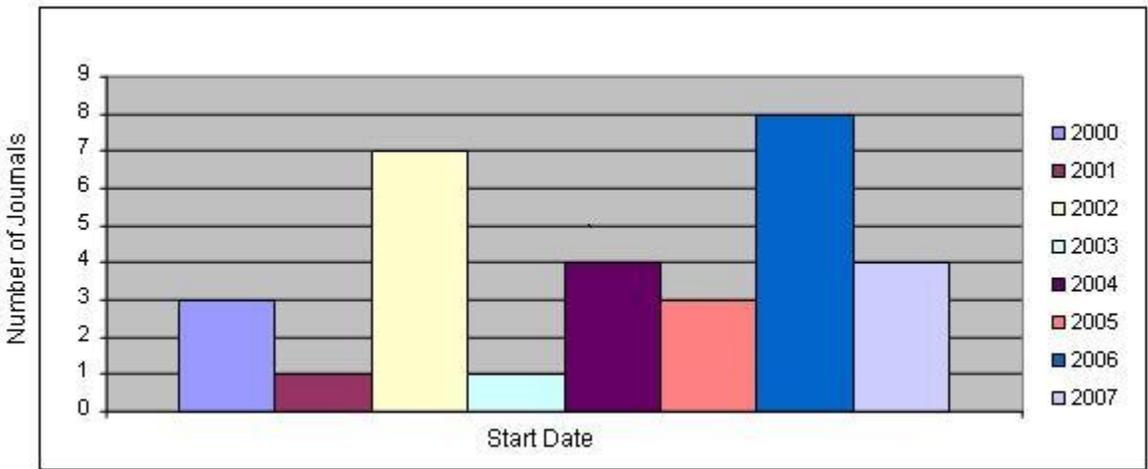
## Table 1. E-Journals Examined

| Title of Periodical | ISSN |
|---|---|
| Code4Lib Journal | 1940-5758 |
| Communications in Information Literacy | 1933-5954 |
| Contemporary Issues in technology and Teacher Education | 1528-5804 |
| EDUCAUSE Quarterly | 1528-5324 |
| Electronic British Library Journal | 1478-0259 |
| Electronic Journal for the Integration of Technology in Education | 1556-5378 |
| Electronic Journal of e-Learning | 1479-4403 |
| European Journal of ePractice | 1988-625X |
| Evidence Based Library and Information Practice | 1715-720X |

| | |
|---|---|
| Focus on Global Resources | 0275-4924 |
| High Energy Physics Libraries Webzine | 1424-2729 |
| Innovate: Journal of Online Education | 1552-3233 |
| Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management | 1555-1229 |
| Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects | 1552-2210 |
| Interface: The Journal of Education, Community, and Values | 1940-915X |
| International Journal of Digital Curation | 1746-8256 |
| International Journal of Doctoral Studies | 1556-8881 |
| JLAMS Journal of the Library Administration and Management Section | 1931-8936 |
| Journal of eLiteracy | 1745-4360 |
| Journal of Information Literacy | 1557-1319 |
| Journal of Information Technology Education | 1750-5968 |
| Journal of Information, Information Technology, and Organizations | 1547-9714 |
| Journal of Interactive Online Learning | 1541-4914 |
| Journal of Online Learning and Teaching | 1558-9528 |
| Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries | 0036-0473 |
| Library & Information Research : Research into Practice for Information & Library Services | 1756-1086 |
| Library Student Journal | 1931-6100 |
| MLA Forum | 1539-4123 |
| North Carolina Libraries | 0029-2540 |
| Partnership: the Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research | 1911-9593 |
| Webology | 1735-188X |

# Results and Discussion

The starting publication dates of each of the thirty-one e-journals that were established in the 21$^{st}$ century are summarized below in Figure 1. As shown, the years 2002 and 2006 saw an increase in the number of LIS e-journals. Despite these peaks, the number of emerging journals has been fairly steady from 2000-2007. Furthermore, interest in publishing new LIS e-journals has not declined; four new e-journals were created in 2007 alone.
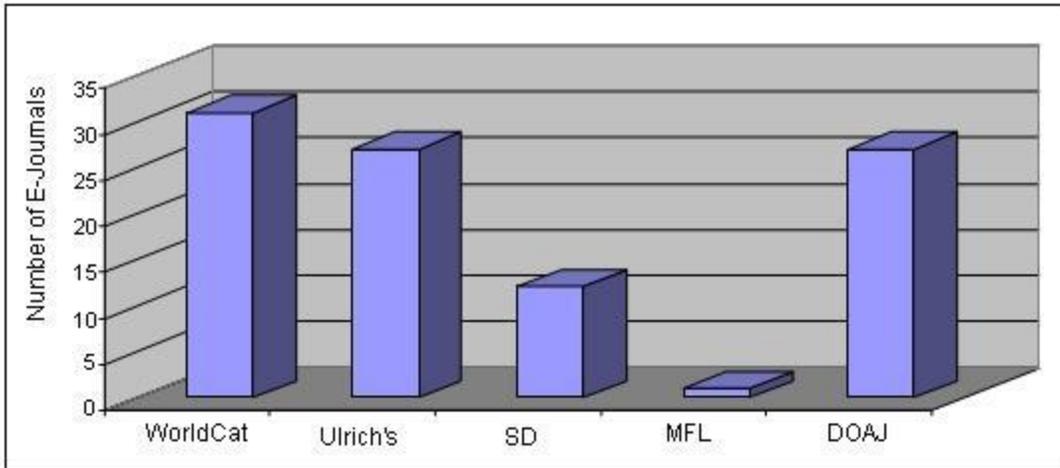
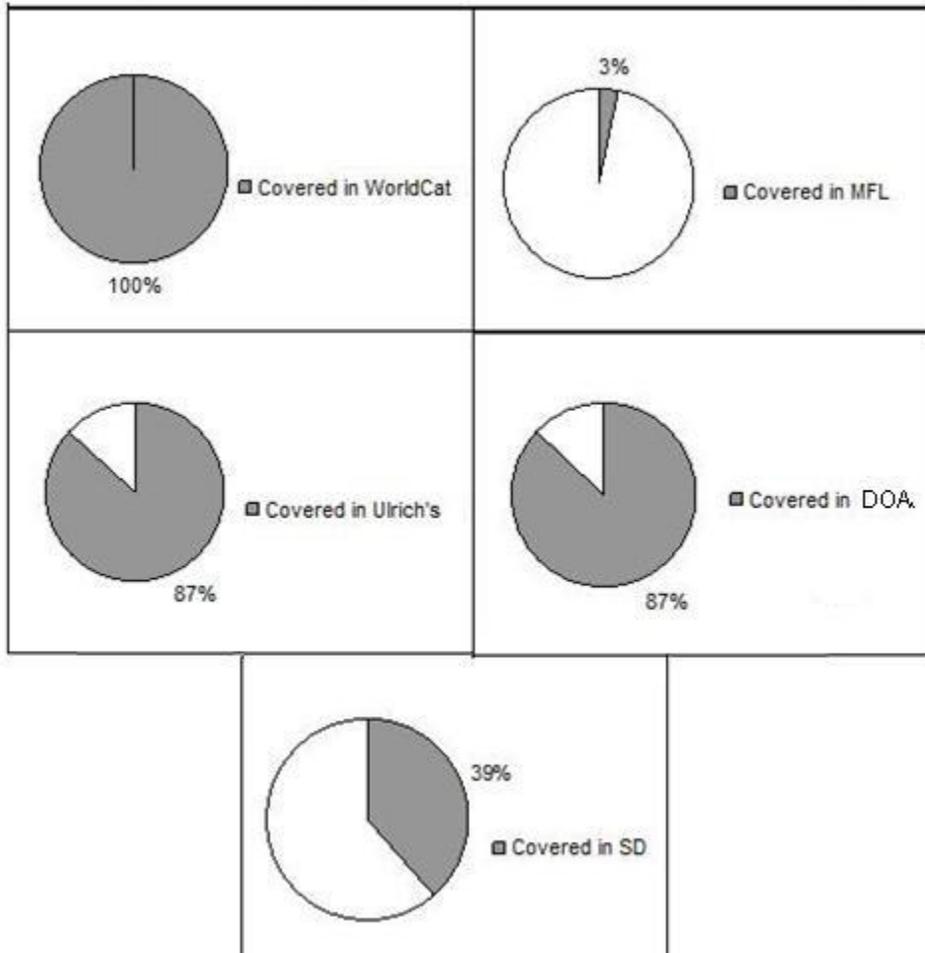**Figure 1. E-Journals Examined by Publication Start Date**



The data obtained in examining the bibliographic utilities sources and DOAJ (Figures 2 and 3) clearly show that WorldCat is "the" source to go to in order to verify bibliographic information about a LIS e-journal. Its 100% coverage of all thirty-one titles stands out in relation to other examined sources.

Though Ulrich's and DOAJ did not match exactly the e-journal titles coverage, Figure 2 shows that they each reached 87% coverage success rate. The lowest figures for inclusion of titles go to SD with 39% and MFL with only 3% of all titles. Though Ulrich's and SD sources are often viewed by library professionals as competitors for providing comprehensive bibliographic information, the SD's poor coverage of LIS e-journals supports previously reported analysis of this product by Jacsó (2007).

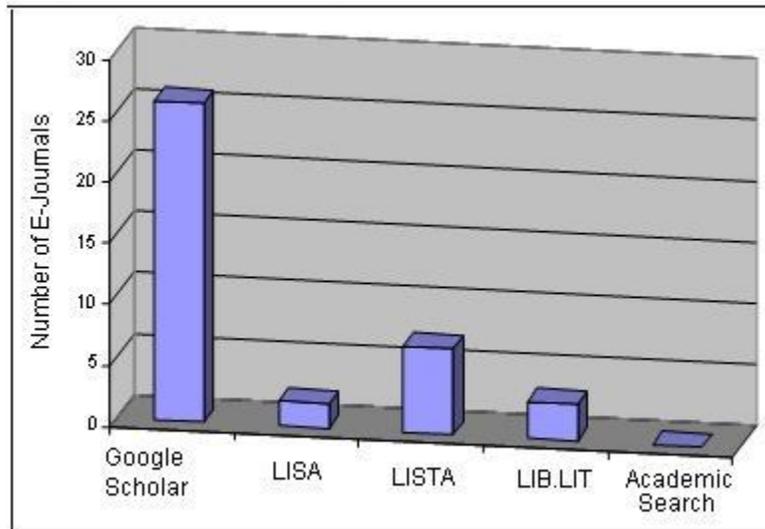**Figure 2. Inclusion of E-Journals by Bibliographic Utilities and DOAJ**

**Figure 3. Percentage of Bibliographic Utilities and DOAJ Coverage of E-journals**

In analyzing data obtained in examining the coverage of LIS e-journals by databases and Google Scholar (Figure 4), one observes complete absence of these journals in Academic Search. The other fee-based databases, LISA and Lib.Lit, do not fare much better.
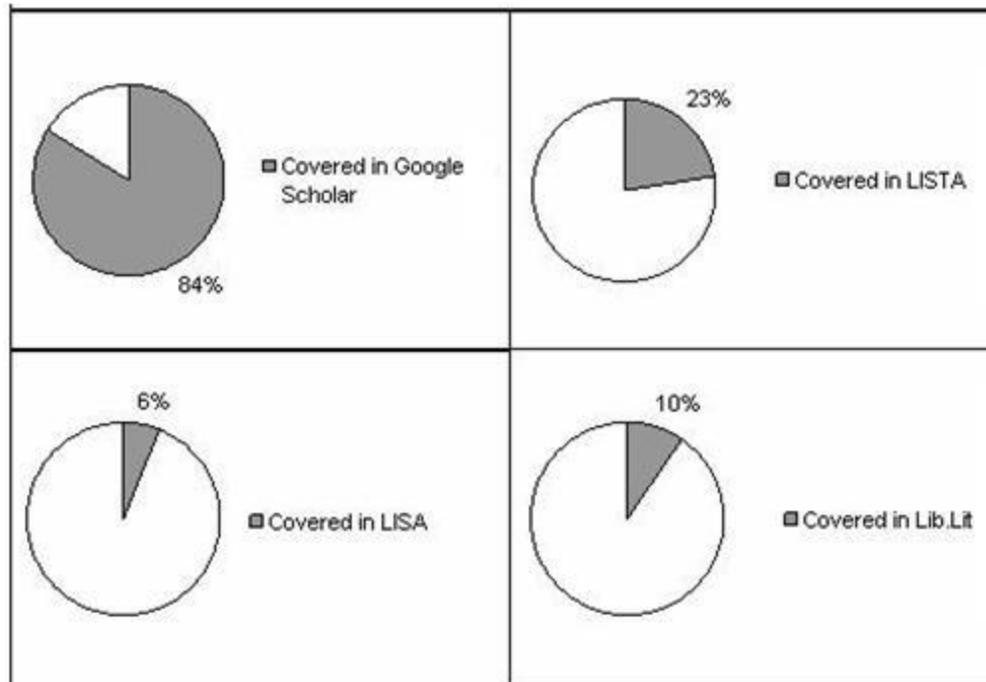
**Figure 4. Coverage of E-Journals by Commercial Databases & Google Scholar**



However, as shown below in Figure 5, EBSCO Publishing's free database, LISTA, does surprisingly well by providing indexing and abstracting for 23% of e-journals. The two major subscription-based commercial databases have a fairly low coverage, with LISA and Lib.Lit covering only 6% and 10% of e-journals respectively.

The data in Figure 5 show how Google Scholar outperforms all other databases by covering 84% of examined LIS e-journal titles. This figure confirms Hamilton's (2007) conclusion that "Google Scholar can pick up articles cited in journals that may not be well indexed or included in standard citation indexes." Furthermore, it supports Swan's (2006) analysis about open access material that identified Google Scholar as the search engine of choice by many users. Google Scholar "does not systematically index according to a set of structured fields, for example . . . it does use a Google algorithm that returns a highly relevant set of documents in response to a (usually amateur) user query." (Swan, 2006) Therefore, LIS students and practitioners can easily turn to this free source for bibliographic citations in the LIS field, as opposed to relying on expensive subscription-based databases.

**Figure 5. Percentage of E-journal Coverage by Databases and Google Scholar**

## Conclusions

Library professionals who want to refer users to the most appropriate sources will often gravitate to long-established indexing and abstracting sources, which also happen to be most often subscription-based. However, this study showed that there may be faster and easier approaches requiring fewer stops on the research road.

What are the best venues for users to find open access LIS e-journals that began publishing in the 21st century and to get access to the research that these e-journals provide? The findings reported above certainly point against the use of many traditional library resources such as SD, MFL, LL, LISA, and AS because they fail to cover a significant number of LIS e-journals examined herein.

There is no clear explanation as to what is to blame for commercial databases not covering a significant number of e-journals. Databases do not clearly explain on their websites the procedure and policy about how they select the journals they cover. Perhaps some editors actively seek inclusion in commercial databases, and are therefore more successful in getting their journals covered.

Regardless, the results of this research easily support Swan and Hamilton's findings about the effectiveness of Google Scholar. Furthermore, as shown above, there are other free resources to keep in mind when assisting users with open access LIS e-journals and

its contents: DOAJ, WorldCat, and EBSCO's LISTA. The data summarized herein show that users can easily bypass expensive resources, and go directly to free resources. This fact may be an important consideration for libraries that are facing tight budgetary climates.

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