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Literature search essentials

English version

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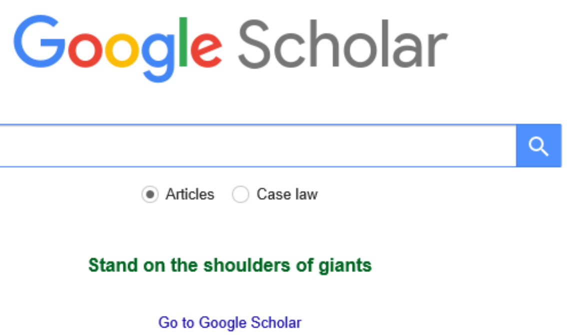
Why scientific literature?

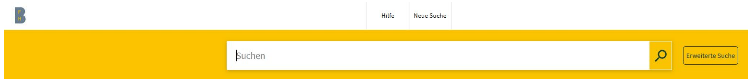
- Scientific findings are primarily recorded and passed on in text form.
- Scientific literature shows – in its entirety – the progressive development of human knowledge.
- The existing scientific literature on your topic reflects the current state of research.
- Ideally, your own scientific work contributes to the further development of knowledge.
- To a large extent, scientific work is work with scientific literature.
- Texts that do not refer to scientific literature are not scientific texts.

Why literature searches?

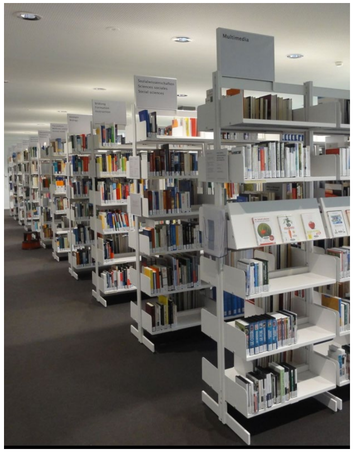
- To ascertain the current state of research, you need the relevant (= topically most similar or most frequently cited) scientific literature on your topic.
- To find the relevant scientific literature, a systematic literature search is necessary:
  - Use specialised search tools that find the relevant scientific literature independent of language and publisher.
  - Reflect on and document your approach.
  - Critically evaluate what you have found.
- If the scientific literature on which you rely is incomplete, you may miss on important findings and information.

Searching versus browsing

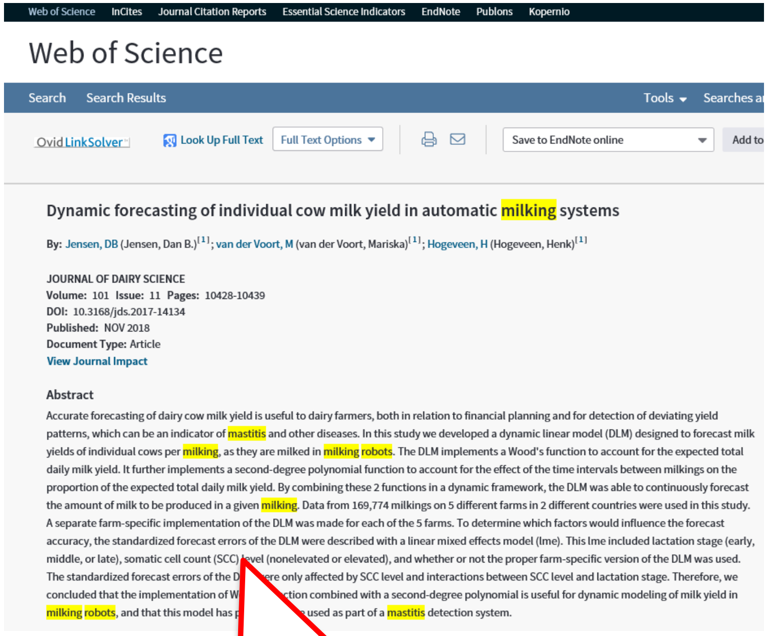


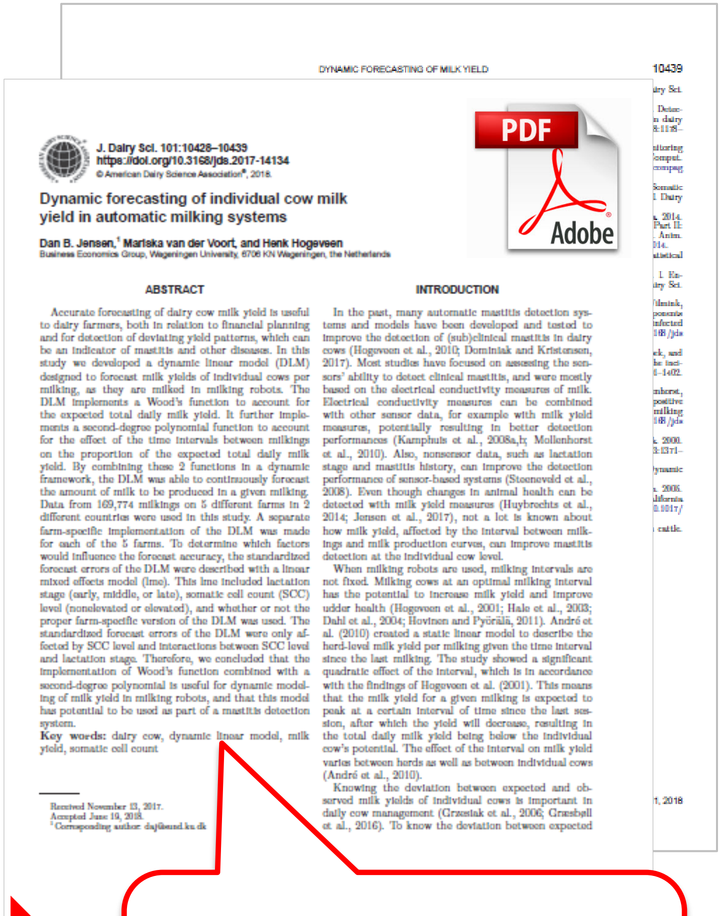


Wikipedia
The Free Encyclopedia



Searching versus procuring full text

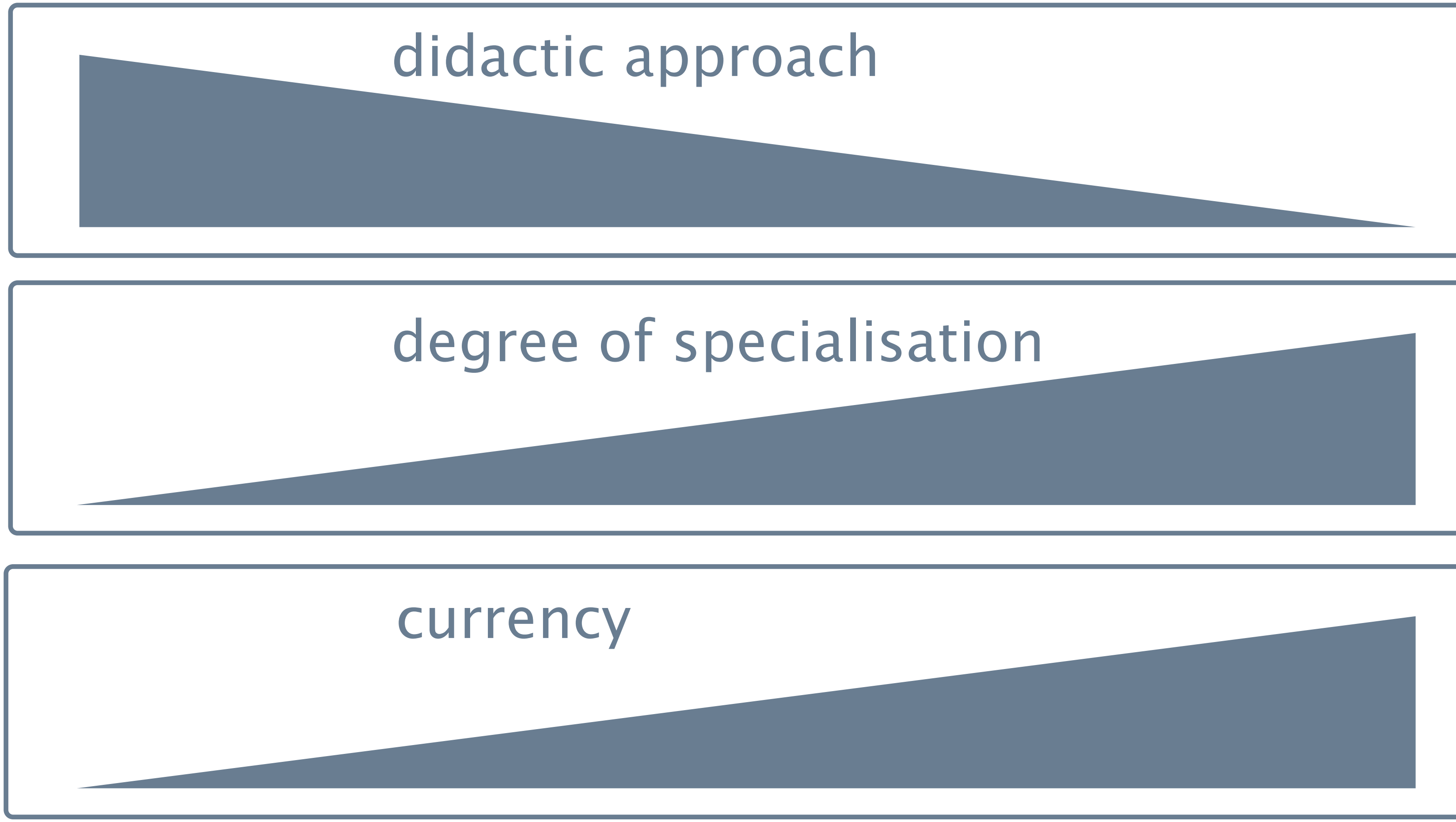




bibliographic description

full text

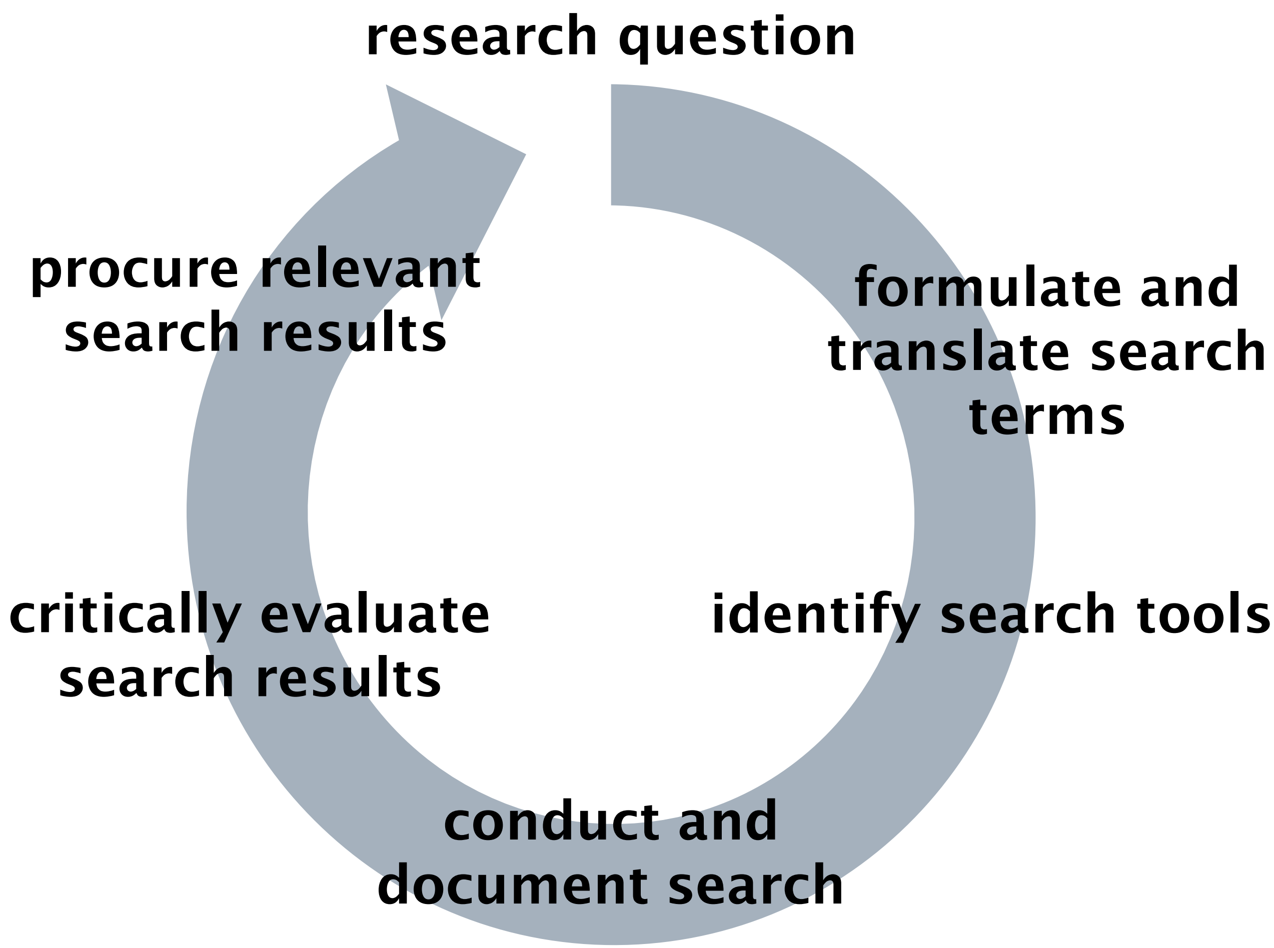
Book versus **journal article**



Discovery tool:
swisscovery…

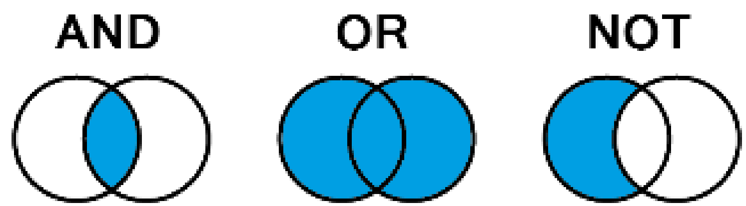
bibliographic databases:
OvidSP, WoS …

Literature search as a cycle



How to search?

Boolean operators



Truncation (*)

	Results
horse.af.	64263
horses.af.	97011
horse*.af.	123996

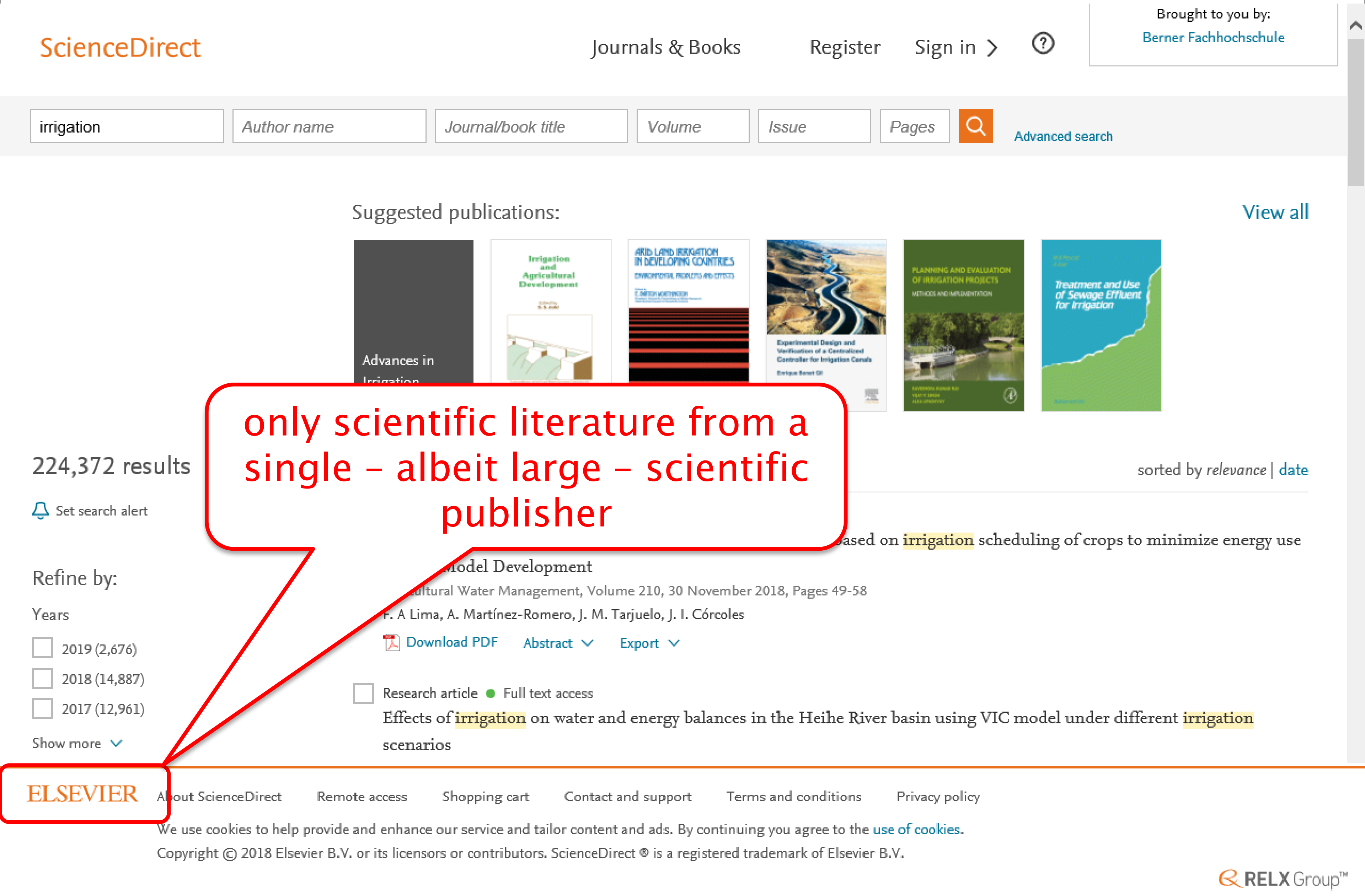
Phrase search (" ")

606	**TOPIC:** ("forest soil" degradation) *Indexes=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, ESCI*
595	**TOPIC:** (forest "soil degradation") *Indexes=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, ESCI*
4,442	**TOPIC:** (forest soil degradation) *Indexes=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, ESCI*

Why is Google Scholar not enough?

- Number of hits is hard to control: mostly tens, hundreds of thousands, millions of search results, of which only the first few are noted → questionable trust in relevance ranking of the search engine.
- Usually only yields results in the language of the search terms entered → relevant scientific literature in other languages may be missed
- Grey literature rarely found
- Limited search, filter and sorting options
- Suitable for initiating or supplementing systematic literature searches
- Still better than google.ch/google.com

Why is ScienceDirect not enough?



Questions?

- biblio.hafl@bfh.ch
- https://moodle.bfh.ch/course/view.php?id=13837
- https://intranet.bfh.ch/HAFL/en/Campus/Bibliothek/Pages/default.aspx
- www.bfh.ch/hafl/library