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## CHAIRPERSON'S CORNER

# INFORMATION DISCOVERY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: HOW EBSCO CAN HELP YOU BUILD YOUR OWN INFORMATION PYRAMID

By Larry Zhao

As investment professionals, we all know that information is costly to discover, collect and implement. On the other hand, we can be too easily overwhelmed by noisy information and risk not being able to see the forest for the trees as a result. Therefore, we need a balanced approach that can help us both discover information and manage our knowledge bases efficiently.

In the past, investment professionals primarily relied on business newspapers (such as WSJ, FT and Barron's), books and libraries. But today, as technology has revolutionized the media itself, as well as how people consume and utilize information (e.g., smartphone apps, YouTube, wikis). The supply and demand for information have shifted to a new equilibrium where the best minds and thought leaders interact more directly with their readership via new platforms (e.g., blogs, tweets) that offer faster, wider and more immediate impact. We need to be cognizant of these new emerging trends and markets. The first layer of my information pyramid includes blogs, tweets, equity analyst reports, investment bank research reports and updates, as well as Bloomberg terminal news and market colors.

As trained and credentialed actuaries, we have gone through a rigorous curriculum when preparing for our examinations that greatly helped us build a solid foundation and knowledge base. I still regularly rely on lots of these materials. These textbooks and research papers, along with global body of investment knowledge (GBIK) from the CFA program and the FRM (Financial Risk Manager) program, serve as the third layer of my information pyramid.

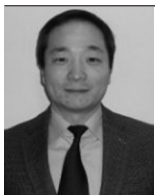
For the second layer, when researching topics that require deeper understanding but have not yet been formalized in textbooks, I used to use Google Scholar, a freely accessible search engine that indexes scholarly literature across diverse formats and databases. The frequent issues I have with Google Scholar, however, are its accessibility, quality and inefficiency. By accessibility, I mean that the full texts of articles in Google Scholar are quite often not freely available, because the hosting sites require either subscription or purchase. By quality, I mean that a whole range of qualities are associated with search results, from poor, to good, to excellent, which subsequently leads to inefficiency in that much time is spent without a good return in finding the most relevant and useful articles.

Recently I switched to EBSCO Business Source Corporate Plus (BSC+), a portal that provides full-text access to thousands of journals, magazines and newspapers. Due to a joint effort spearheaded by our past chairperson, Tom Anichini, and the Society of Actuaries (SOA) last year, Investment Section members now enjoy free access to numerous investment-related periodicals via EBSCO. Our main goal is to help improve the return on investment (ROI) of your time and help increase productivity by simplifying your research process.

Features	EBSCO (BSC+)	Google Scholar
Number of items	Hundred of thousand articles published in journals, newspapers, magazines and ebooks.	Billion of articles or webpages created by individuals and organizations
Ease of use	Easy	Easy
Access to publication	Free access to hundred of thousands peer reviewed, investment related articles.	No automatic free access to publications at subscription sites.
Publication quality	Very good to excellent.	Quality varies widely from poor, to good, to excellent; sometimes inadequate and less often updated.
Vulnerability to advertising	No such vulnerability. Clean scholarly work.	Vendors potentially can include advertising and product brochures among the search results.
Vulnerability to spam	No such vulnerability. Clean, reliable, authoritative, scholarly work.	Citation counts, impact factors and ranking algorithms can be gamed such that nonsensical articles can be indexed and included in search results.
Search settings	Can limit search to peer-reviewed only articles. Can create search profiles and retrieve search history.	No such capabilities.

Based on experience using both EBSCO and Google Scholar, I have found that, if used properly, the former is far more efficient. For example, when I type in “two factors Hull White,” EBSCO immediately delivers the paper I want in full-page PDF, while Google Scholar points me to many red herrings. EBSCO has since become a useful tool for building the second layer of my information pyramid.

Information is costly to discover, collect and implement, yet with the right tools and technology, the process can be made relatively easier. Inevitably, the information “arms race” simply ratchets up to another level. The issue of efficiency and competitive advantage will never go away. Be prepared to seek out better solutions and continually adapt. **3**



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