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IEEE Explore

G. Lynn Berard

Carnegie Mellon University, lberard@andrew.cmu.edu

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IEEE Xplore

by G. Lynn Berard

The new IEEE Xplore 2010 digital library is almost unrecognizable from its previous incarnation—and that's a *good* thing. A true collaboration between IEEE and its stakeholders, the product now drives like a fine sports car, the kind that may cost you a tidy sum to insure, but each time you take it out for a spin, you feel reimbursed.

The vendor's efforts to engage its client base by soliciting feedback on a global scale—a major overhaul that has taken years to perfect—has produced a product that incorporates an improved interface, deeper search options, expanded browsability, and the latest technology tools for both the novice and the advanced researcher. The redesign incorporates many of the features and functionality that information professionals and researchers have come to expect from quality scholarly search tools.

EXPLORING NEW FEATURES

IEEE's vision is to become both the publisher of choice for all technical information and the leading society in technology innovation. With full-text access to more than 2 million documents in the technology fields dating from 1988 to the present, the database delivers content that includes articles from the most highly cited journals as well as conference proceedings and industry standards.

Weekly database updates (not to be confused with alerts) include selected content dating from 1893 and are delivered in the form of bibliographic records from the INSPEC database. This is a quality addition to the content delivery because older materials, which are often hard to obtain in electronic formats, can reveal seminal articles for the topic being researched. Long-overdue personalization options are now available. I suggest you set up an account so that you'll have flexibility in capturing research data (you can create up to 15 saved searches) and in retaining search histories and preferences. You can also set up alerts, which can be delivered either to your email inbox or via an RSS feed.

The interface is designed to accommodate all levels of users. For the guest or novice user, the What's Popular? quick link is helpful when getting started. It offers a list of the top 10 search terms and displays the top 100 documents downloaded that month—presented like a David Letterman *Late Show* list, minus the schlock. The main search box is available on each page for quick input and changes to search strategies. The options boxes for selecting publication year, known authors, and subject discipline are equally easy to access. For the professional sports car driver/searcher who prefers the use of Boolean logic operators, this option is present at the advanced search page.



DRIVING WITH ADVANCED SEARCH

The advanced search option is the key feature of the new IEEE Xplore, in my opinion. It offers a wide selection of criteria for building an eloquent search strategy and, most importantly, for refining search results. At a quick glance, the main screen offers the option for searching only metadata or adding in full text with the metadata. To the left of the boxes where you enter search terms are prompts for the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT. A long pull-down list of potential search fields is located to the right of each search term box. Below the search boxes are options to limit by subscribed content, publisher, content types (journals, conferences, books, standards, educational courses, and early content), subjects, and publication year.

Results can display as 10, 25, 50, or 100 citations per page and can be sorted by relevance, in chronological or reverse chronological order, or alphabetically. Click on the magnifying glass to view the abstract. Use the facets to the left of the results to refine or expand results. Options are content type, publication year (which can be refined either by a slider or by entering dates in From and To boxes), author, affiliation, publication title, publisher, subject, conference country, and conference location.

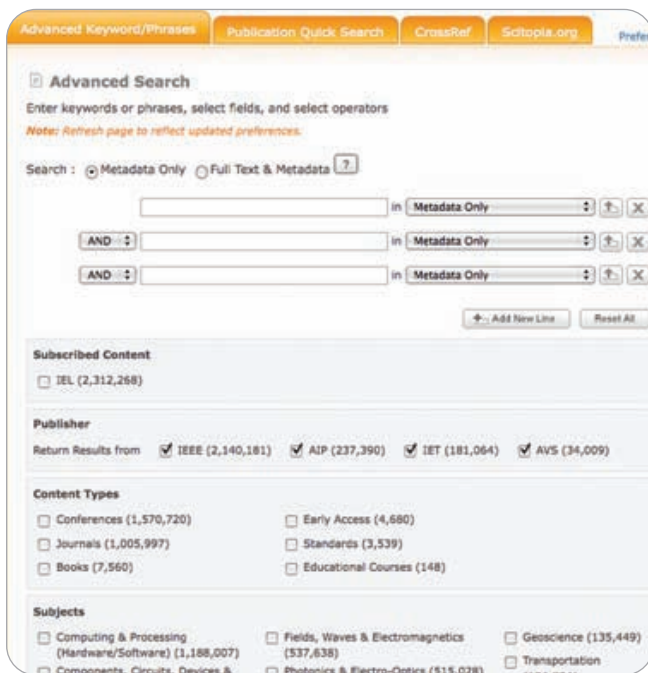
Saved search results can be downloaded, emailed, or printed. Search history can be saved. The Publication

Search form offers a search by a journal issue's table of contents or by single paper look-up. DOI's are listed in the abstract, and choices for delivery by abstract or PDF appear. IEEE has caught the media marketing fever and now offers institutional branding options for customers, as well as enhanced technical support.

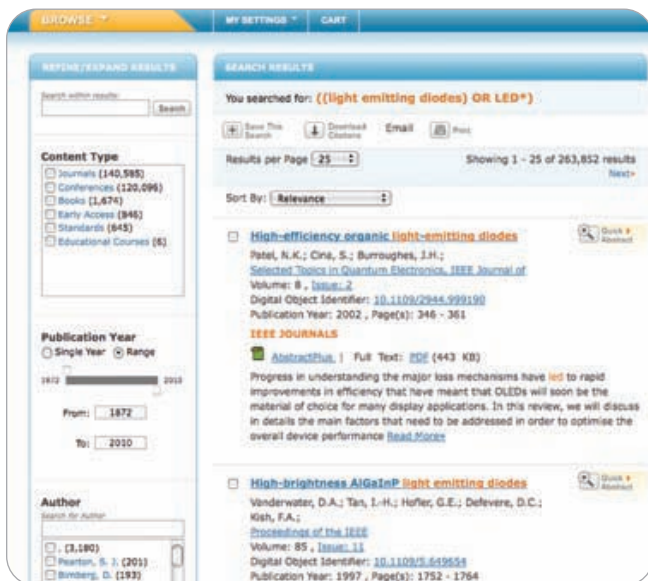
COLLABORATION AND COMPETITION

IEEE has expanded its thinking beyond its own society publications. It participates with Google's CrossRef Search pilot project, enabling users to search IEEE content directly through the gateway, thus avoiding having to perform messy general web searches. The linking of Scitopia's content to the advanced search page provides federated access to societywide and government content that includes patents saving the researcher valuable time. For an additional fee, subscribers can also access full-text IEEE-Wiley ebooks—another effort by the publisher to offer a gateway to all forms of technology scholarship.

The majority of the improvements to this new product release are not surprising and include the functionality that today's client has come to expect. This product makeover mirrors Thomas Reuter's ISI Web of Knowledge platform but with less complicated search screens—a major plus for



Advanced search offers a wide selection of criteria for building eloquent search strategies.



At the results list, use the facets on the left to refine or expand results.

the user. IEEE offers far-more access points to vendor content, while recognizing the need to point to related nonproprietary works and open access web content. Free searching capability is a real draw for guests and those new to the technology literature. Combined with the hits found via Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore should be a real seller for IEEE, as its Pay-as-You-Go feature invites a new customer base to open the car door. The addition of RSS feeds and personalized workspace is a real boon, although they're not uncommon features for today's information delivery.

IEEE Explore
www.ieee.org/web/publications/xplore
 Web Platform; IP authentication
 IEEE Operations Center
 445 Hoes Lane
 Piscataway, NJ 08854-4141
 Phone: (732) 981-0060
ieeeusa@ieee.org

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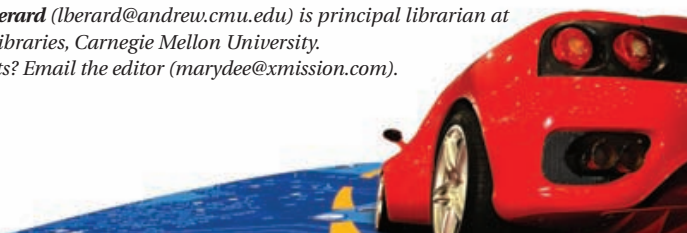
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PRODUCT IN BRIEF

I'll happily step out on a limb here and state that all sci-tech reference collections worth their salt should include access to IEEE publications and products. Engineers and computer scientists are well-served by having access to this body of work. And now, with cross-collaborations among major information providers imbedded in an easy-to-drive search engine, IEEE has designed and is delivering an exciting and highly productive tool that facilitates cross-disciplinary research. This is a sports car that belongs in your information garage.

The mega-improved search functionality and delivery options set the pace for future innovation at the researcher's workbench. Kudos to IEEE for working so closely with its base clientele to address their needs and to implement necessary changes based on their feedback.

G. Lynn Berard (lberard@andrew.cmu.edu) is principal librarian at the science libraries, Carnegie Mellon University.
 Comments? Email the editor (marydee@xmission.com).



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