

Thomson Scientific Redesigns ISI Web of Knowledge Interface

by [Barbara Quint](#)

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Ten years after its launch, the ISI Web of Knowledge from Thomson Scientific (from its ISI division, the Institute for Scientific Information) has a new interface, designed to provide easy navigable discovery for the end user, built around researchers' workflow. The development and design process started in 2004 and involved a network of several dozen partners, according to James Pringle, vice president of product development. Concepts for the design focused on three principal areas: "user-centered design and usability, workflow within the research community, and content organization with knowledge management." Though librarians in the 3,000 to 4,000 institutions using ISI Web of Knowledge can currently choose how and when to phase in the new interface over the old for the up to 20 million total users, Pringle said that probably by the end of the year or, in any case, the beginning of 2008, Thomson Scientific would discontinue support for the old interface. All the new features also work with Thomson Scientific's ISI Web of Science.

Built around the ISI Web of Science, the ISI Web of Knowledge extends its reach outside Thomson Scientific's ISI citation indexes by hosting outside databases, such as Biological Abstracts, CAB Food Science and Technology Abstracts, Medline, etc. In total, it tracks more than 22,000 journals worldwide, as compared to the 9,000 in the ISI Web of Science, including some 370 to 380 open access journals. It also handles 23 million patents (from Derwent, another Thomson Scientific subsidiary), 13,000 conference proceedings, 5,000 books, and some 7,300 evaluated Web sites.

In a separate beta project, according to Pringle, the company has been monitoring 50 to 60 institutional repositories—those covered in the Web Citation Index, such as the Cornell University Archives. The beta project has been active for more than a year with usage restricted, at present, to several hundred users. However, Pringle told me that any ISI Web of Knowledge user could request access to add the project content to their service. Keeping it in beta for now reflects Thomson Scientific "watching the new environment and testing our ability to do indexing, especially citation indexing. As it improves, we'll think about bringing it out of beta. Usage is already quite good."

Describing the new interface, Pringle stated, "Our new layout is easy for novice users to navigate, while providing the powerful capabilities that veteran users have come to rely on." Tabs at the top of the search screen allow users to choose All Databases, Select a Database, or Additional Resources. The search boxes include one general search, plus two narrower fielded search boxes, and an option to add even more. Once searchers retrieve their results they will find a Refine Search box at the left of the screen, which allows restriction to broad topical areas, authors, source titles, publication years, language, etc. Within a specific search result, searchers will find citation-driven connections to key authors and other discovery routes. In the new interface, said Pringle, "for any article, no matter what the source, you will find articles citing that article showing at a glance the most recent citations to the work."

The service also allows searchers to set up profiles covering citation alerts ("email me when someone else cites this cite"), personal journal lists, saved searches, and feeds of citations to the EndNote Web service. According to Pringle, the EndNote Web service has been available since late 2006. "With the

new interface, it integrates more fully into the workflow. For example, an undergraduate writing a paper who needs to store three to four footnotes has it right there always available.”

For researchers looking to publish, Thomson Scientific has made special arrangements through a subproduct of ScholarOne called Manuscript Central Optima. Under this arrangement, editors working with a submission from an author using EndNote Web can access ISI Web of Science directly, even if not working at a publisher that subscribes to the service. Again the emphasis is on workflow, Pringle pointed out. Other bibliographic database management software from Thomson Scientific, i.e., ProCite and Reference Manager, seem to be getting short shrift, compared to EndNote. Pringle responded that EndNote was the leading platform with more researchers using it, and EndNote Web was targeted at the academic user.

The content reorganization, cited by Pringle as one of the main accomplishments of the redesign, involves integrated searching across databases followed by faceted search results. In the course of integrating the file, Pringle told me that ISI has cross-classified and cross-mapped all the different thesauri and taxonomies used by the different databases. That handles subject searches, but Pringle admits that lots of work remains to be done, such as for authors. ISI still has to rationalize all the different format styles used in different files for the author fields (lastname-comma-space-firstname-space-middleinitial-period, lastname-space-firstinitialsecondinitial, lastname-comma-space-firstinitial-period-space-secondinitial-period, etc., etc., ad nauseam). Failure to allow for all the different modes in a search strategy will leave authors missing from the final results, effectively reducing the All Databases collection to “All Databases Using Authors Listed That Way.” Pringle told me that, having finished the work on the subjects, ISI’s next target was document type. As for improving author “disambiguation,” he described that as an ongoing project begun in ISI Web of Science that he sometimes doubted would ever be finished. He did say that the faceted search results showed variants and that the system carried warnings.

This all sounds just wonderful—good enough, in fact, to warrant the widest possible distribution, which brings up an old bugaboo of mine, namely, where are the bridges from campus databases to postgraduate venues, like inventor garages or Silicon Valley startups. I grilled Pringle on the problem of restricting marketing to institutions, primarily academic or large research establishments. He offered one interesting avenue of solution. If a university wanted to open access to ISI Web of Knowledge to its alumni, he thought Thomson Scientific would be amenable to the contractual adjustments necessary to support an alumni/ae outreach program.

For more details on the new ISI Web of Knowledge interface, go to the set of recorded training sessions (available in English, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish) at <http://scientific.thomson.com/support/recorded-training/wok>. In particular, I suggest you look at the Introduction to the New ISI Web of Knowledge and the All Databases Search training. For more background on Thomson Scientific and its policies, read Nancy Herther’s interview with two Thomson Scientific executives in the November/December 2007 issue of *Searcher* (“Thomson Scientific and the Citation Indexes: An Interview With Keith MacGregor and James Testa”).

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