WHO WINS THE VISIBILITY WARS?

BACKGROUND
- Completed research publications need to be accessible.
- Academic databases do provide this access, but at a price.
- Researchers often use free-form searching to find publications.

PURPOSE
- To determine to what degree completed research publications are accessible and how visible the different types of publications are.

PROBLEM
- The use of search engines to find relevant information with a consistently high success rate is troublesome.
- Retrieving relevant full-text academic papers without payment and without using academic databases is difficult.

METHODOLOGY
- Data collection was done through a questionnaire.
- Data was requested on four types of publications: journal articles, conference papers, books or book chapters and student theses.
- Metadata was requested: Title, Year of publication, Author surnames, Abstract text, First paragraph body text and Keywords.
- The top three search engines (Google, Bing, Yahoo!) were used.
- Search queries were constructed to find these documents without using databases.
- A total of 3780 websites were visited and inspected.

RESULTS EXTRACT
- Book no. 21 had no visibility for all 3 x 3 search queries.
- Journal articles had an average visibility of 6.138/10 – the highest of all four.
- Books had the lowest average with 1.776/10.

CONCLUSION
- Journal articles had the highest degree of visibility to search engines.
- Conference papers were second, followed by theses and lastly book chapters.
- The increase in open access to research publications for journal articles is considered to be the reason behind their top score.
- Books have a low degree of visibility due to copyright and high price issues.

Academic researchers requiring a high degree of visibility to internet search engine crawlers are advised to concentrate on journal articles and conference papers for their research publications.

REFERENCES