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Information Competence for North American Studies

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1. Research process

The Big 6 Skills

1. Task Definition
- 1.1 Define the information problem
- 1.2 Identify information needed

2. Information Seeking Strategies
- 2.1 Determine all possible sources
- 2.2 Select the best sources

3. Location and Access
- 3.1 Locate sources (intellectually and physically)
- 3.2 Find information within sources

4. Use of Information
- 4.1 Engage (e.g., read, hear, view, touch)
- 4.2 Extract relevant information

5. Synthesis
- 5.1 Organize from multiple sources
- 5.2 Present the information

6. Evaluation
- 6.1 Judge the product (effectiveness)
- 6.2 Judge the process (efficiency)

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2. Information sources for North American Studies at Bonn University Library

2.1. Bonn University Library

- Access by Subject (*Facheinstieg*)
  - N.B.: Information sources for „North American Studies“ can be found under the heading of „English Studies“
- Bibliographic search (*Literaturrecherche*)
  - Main catalogue (*Hauptkatalog*)
  - Databases (*Datenbanken*)
  - E-journals (*elektronische Fachzeitschriften*)
  - E-Books (*Booksammlungen*)
  - Meta search engine NRW (*DigiBib-Suchportal*)

2.2. Databases for Primary Sources

- Primary Sources = Original documents (e.g. autobiographies, diaries, e-mail, interviews, letters, speeches) or creative works (drama, novels, poetry etc.)
- Full text databases (*Volltextdatenbank*)
- Examples of important collections:
  - Early American Imprints
  - New York Times Archive
  - 19th Century U.S. Newspapers
  - America‘s Historical Newspapers
- See also other disciplines for relevant sources

2.3. Bibliographies for English Studies

- Secondary sources of information (*Fachbibliographie*) = Literature about the original documents or creative works
- MLA International Bibliography
  - Main focus: literature & language, 1920‘s onwards, 2.3 million citations (updated monthly)
- JSTOR
  - Interdisciplinary e-journal archive with full text access, over 1 000 academic journals
- Project Muse
  - E-journal archive for humanities and social sciences with full text access, over 450 journals

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3. Research techniques and strategies

3.1. Free text search

- Often the default setting
- Searches all available fields of the bibliographic record
- Search category: any word, all fields, keyword (*Alle Felder, Freie Suche, Freitextsuche*)
- Advantage: a very comprehensive search → largest possible number of results
- Disadvantage: very unspecific → possibly a lot of irrelevant/unwanted results

Search by Title – Definition

- Searching with the meaningful words from the title of a book or an article
- Search category: Title, Search in Title, Title keyword(s) (*Titelwort, Titelstichwort, Titel, Titel Stichwörter, Stichwort*)

  Unspecific words (e.g. Articles, prepositions, pronouns) are not indexed, therefore irrelevant for search

For example:

A companion to Victorian literature & culture

Phrase search

- Searching for a number of words in an exact order
- Search category: Find … this exact wording or phrase (Google Advanced Search), Phrase search (*Titelanfang, Exakter Titel, Phrasensuche* ... **)**
- More often done by using quotation marks, e.g. „Victorian England“

An example from the main catalogue:

Crime fiction	Title search:	38 hits
	Exact title:	3 hits

Searching by subject (terms)

- Index term/subject term/subject heading/descriptor = Pre-defined "controlled vocabulary" words assigned to describe the content of each item in a database or catalogue
- Advantages
  - the results are really about your topic and once you know the subject term, everything about your specific topic should be listed under the same subject term
- Disadvantages:
  - The words used as subjects are often not what you would expect and you have to learn the “individual language” of a database
  - general in nature and cannot address the contents of individual sections of a work, such as collected essays in a book

Thesaurus

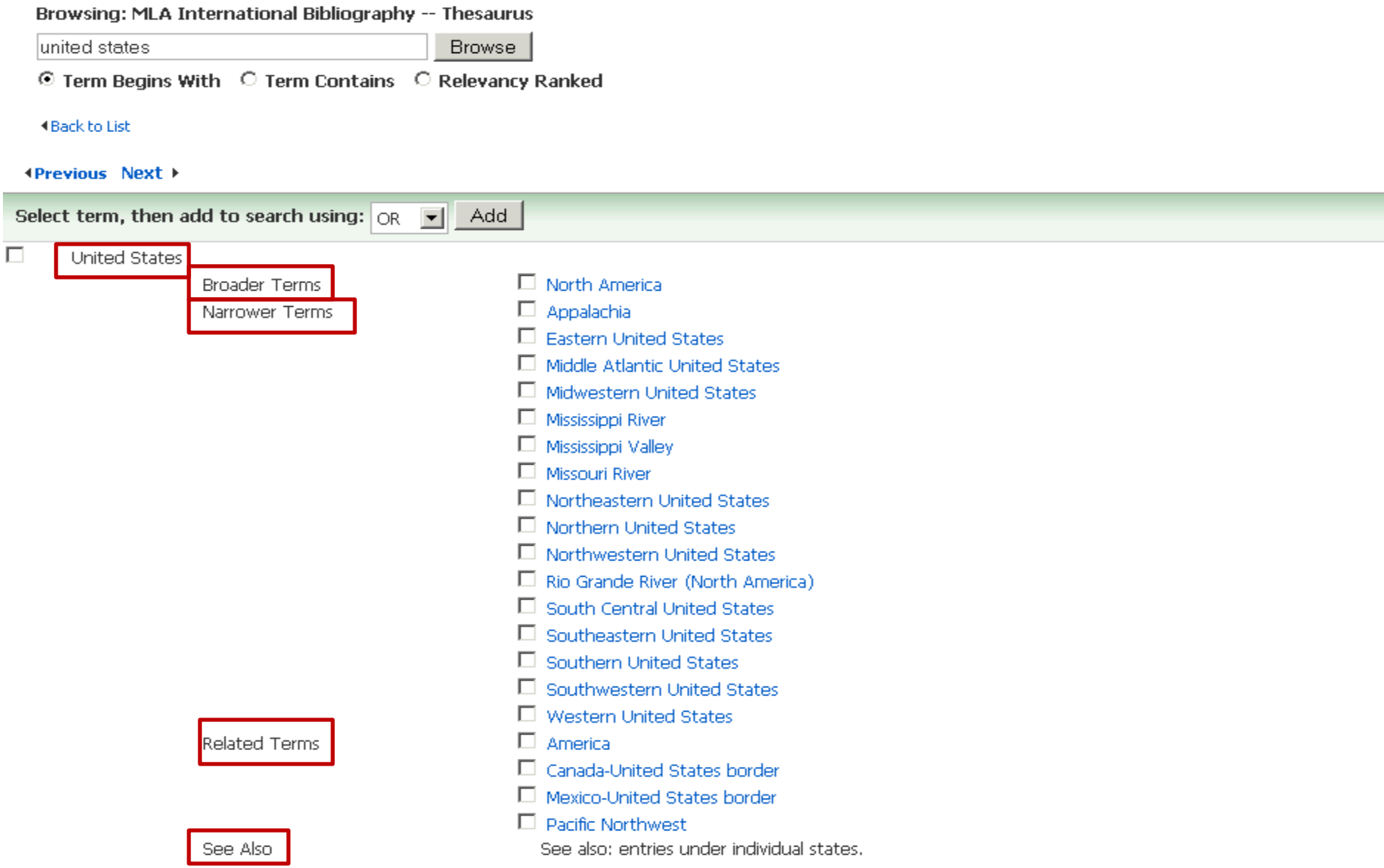
- Thesaurus = controlled vocabulary in which concepts are represented by preferred terms, formally organized so that relationships between the concepts are made explicit (e.g. Narrower Term/Broader Term), and the preferred terms are accompanied by entries for synonyms or quasi-synonyms
- In Germany *Schlagwortnormdatei (SWD)* is used for subject indexing in the university libraries as well as the German National Library (DNB)
- Good databases have their own thesauri

3.2. Subject terms for English and American Studies

- MLA Thesaurus structure:

Subject heading	The term or name chosen to describe the contents of the document
Used for	Alternative (nonpreferred) terms or names, which include synonyms, variant spellings, and older versions of the heading
Broader subject headings	More general terms or concepts
Related subject headings	Related terms or concepts
Narrower subject headings	More specific terms or concepts

MLA thesaurus example



Truncation (or wildcard)

Truncation assists in creating searches with unknown characters and multiple spellings

Sometimes the term wildcard is used for replacing a single character

The most common symbol used for truncation is * (but this may vary from database to database)

- Truncation at the end of the word:
  america* finds words america, american, americans, americana, america‘s …

- Truncation in the middle of the word:
  wom?n finds woman, women

Logical operators

AND: To retrieve records, where both of search terms are necessary
→ to narrow your search = to get fewer results

OR: To retrieve records, where both search terms are possible
→ to widen your search = to get more results

(AND) NOT: To exclude records with a certain term from your results

For example:

America **AND** 1930s

United States **OR** America

Cambridge **AND NOT** England

How to develop search strategies

- Analyse the components of your topic and find the appropriate search terms for these
- Use synonyms to broaden the search

Class presentation in American modern film		
Component 1: America United States	Component 2: Film Movie Cinema	Component 3: Social class Caste system Class*

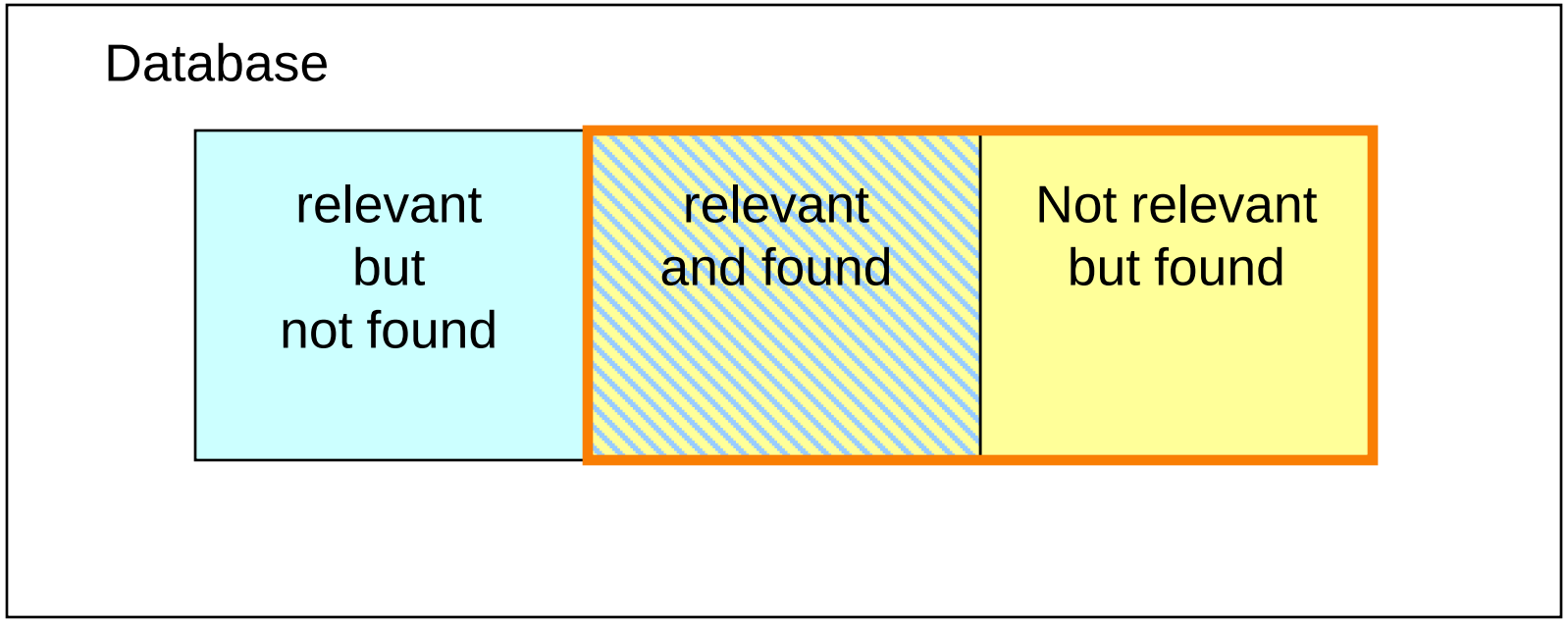
3.3. Evaluating your results

A search is always a balancing act between finding too much or too little.

$$\text{Relevance} = \frac{\text{Number of relevant retrieved documents}}{\text{Number of retrieved documents}}$$

$$\text{Recall} = \frac{\text{Number of relevant retrieved documents}}{\text{Number of relevant documents in the database}}$$

Relevance and Recall



- If all the your results are relevant, there are probably further relevant titels in the database
- The more complete your search, the more irrelevant results are included in your result list

3.4. Too many or too few results

1) Too few results

- **Check for source of errors**:
  - Spelling mistakes
  - Too „neat“ a truncation, too many logical operators, incorrect search logic
  - Truncation not at all possible

- **To expand your search methods and search instruments**:
  - Use all the possibilities of a the topical search
  - Find broader/related terms in the keyword/subject index
  - Consult further bibliographies

- **Screen your result list for relevant items**

  Adopt applicable kewords or subject terms

Too few results: Improve your search strategy

If you get too few results, you can further incorporate the following elements to your search:

- Synonyms, technical terms
- Multilingual terms
- Plurals or adjectives
- Different spellings
- Broader, narrower and related terms

Too many results

- **Screen your results for relevent items** :
  Are there keyword or subject terms that describe your topic better than the search terms you used?

  → Use a subject/keyword term search instead

- **Screen your results for irrelevent items**:

  Are there terms included, that do not match your topic?

  Use NOT-operator to eliminate unwanted terms (but remember that you could be getting rid of many relevant items as well)

- Redefine your topic by narrowing it

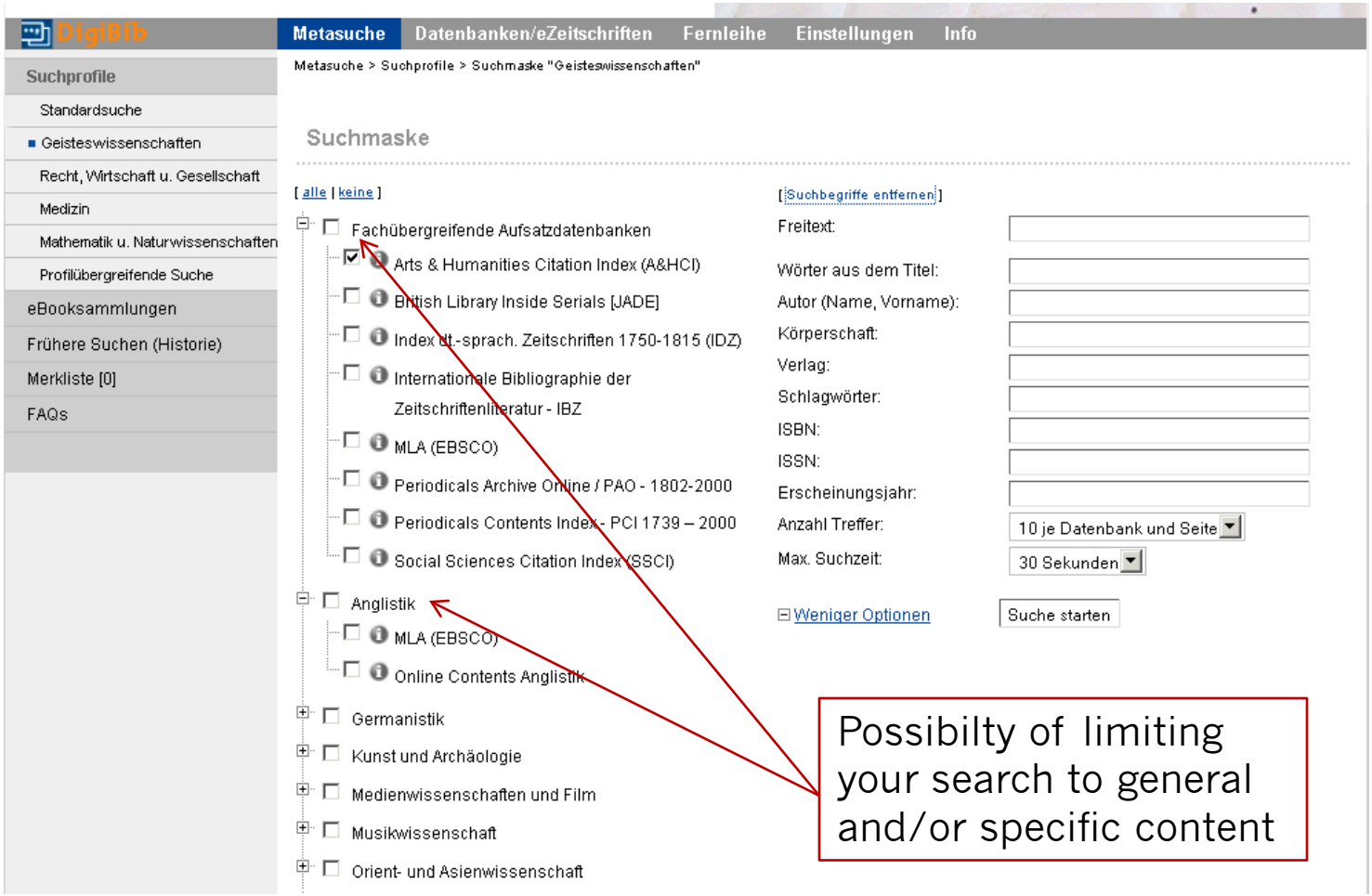
- Add a another search term by using AND

3.5. Metasearch

- The possibility to search several databases simultaneously

- Digibib:
  you are able to search databases, e-books, e-journals and other contents available in NRW simultaneously
  - Standard search
  - Searching according to your field of study

Digibib search interface



KVK – Karlsruhe Virtual Catalog

- The possibility to search simultaneously several library catalogues in Germany and/or abroad

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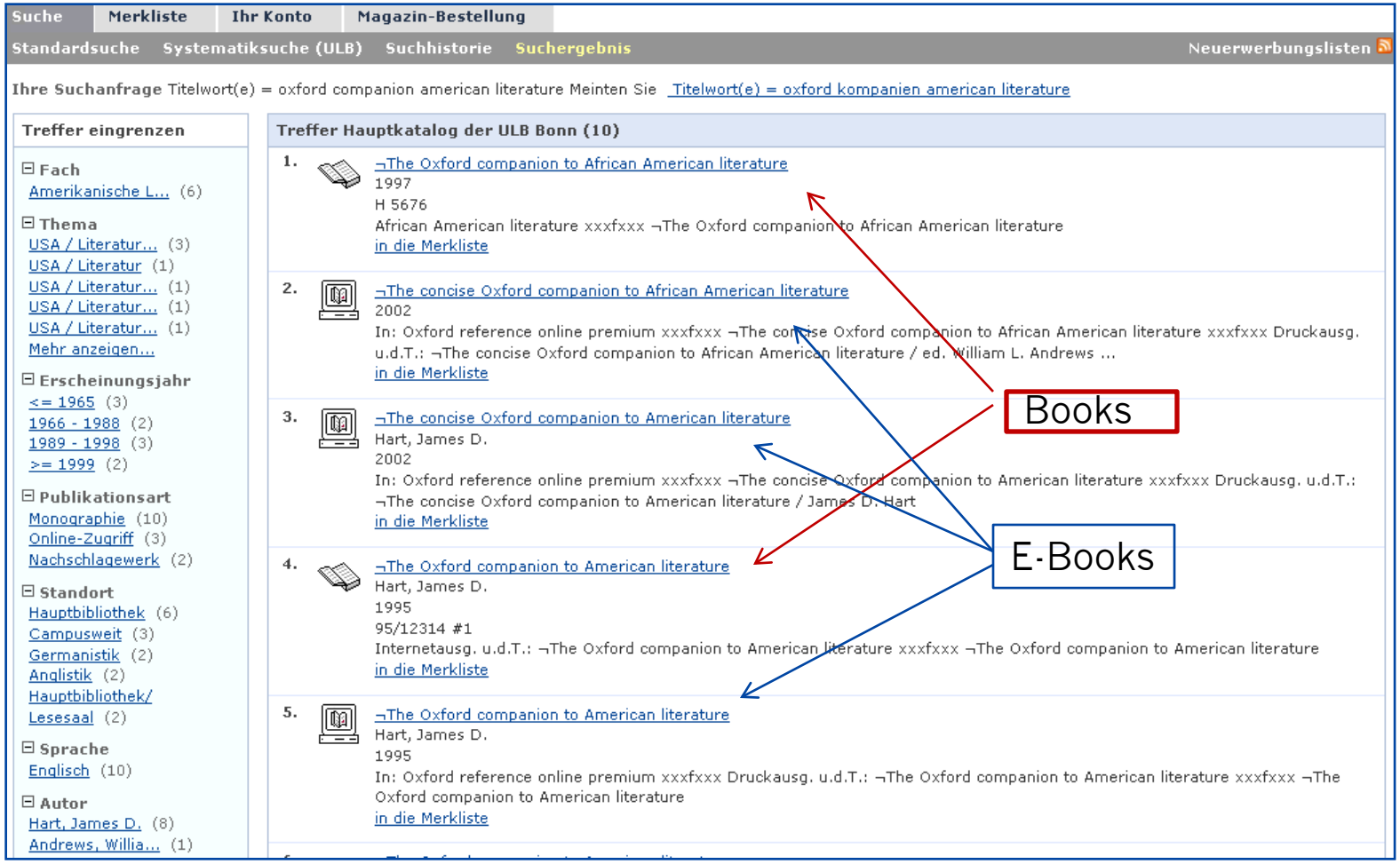
4. Availability

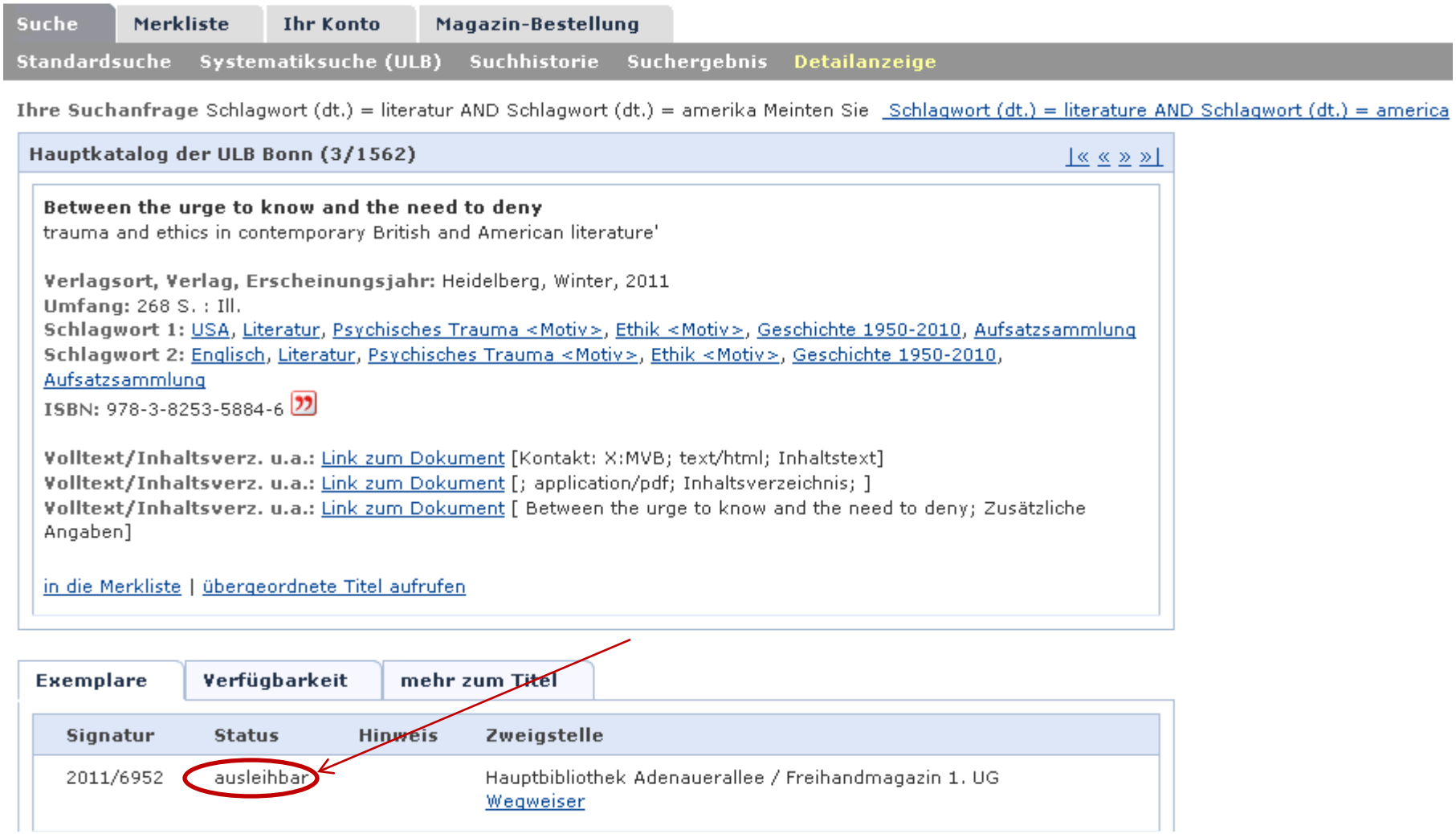
Availability

- 4.1. The main catalogue (Hauptkatalog)
  - Books, E-Books
- 4.2. ZDB & EZB
  - Articles
- 4.3. Link resolver
- 4.4. Interlibrary loan

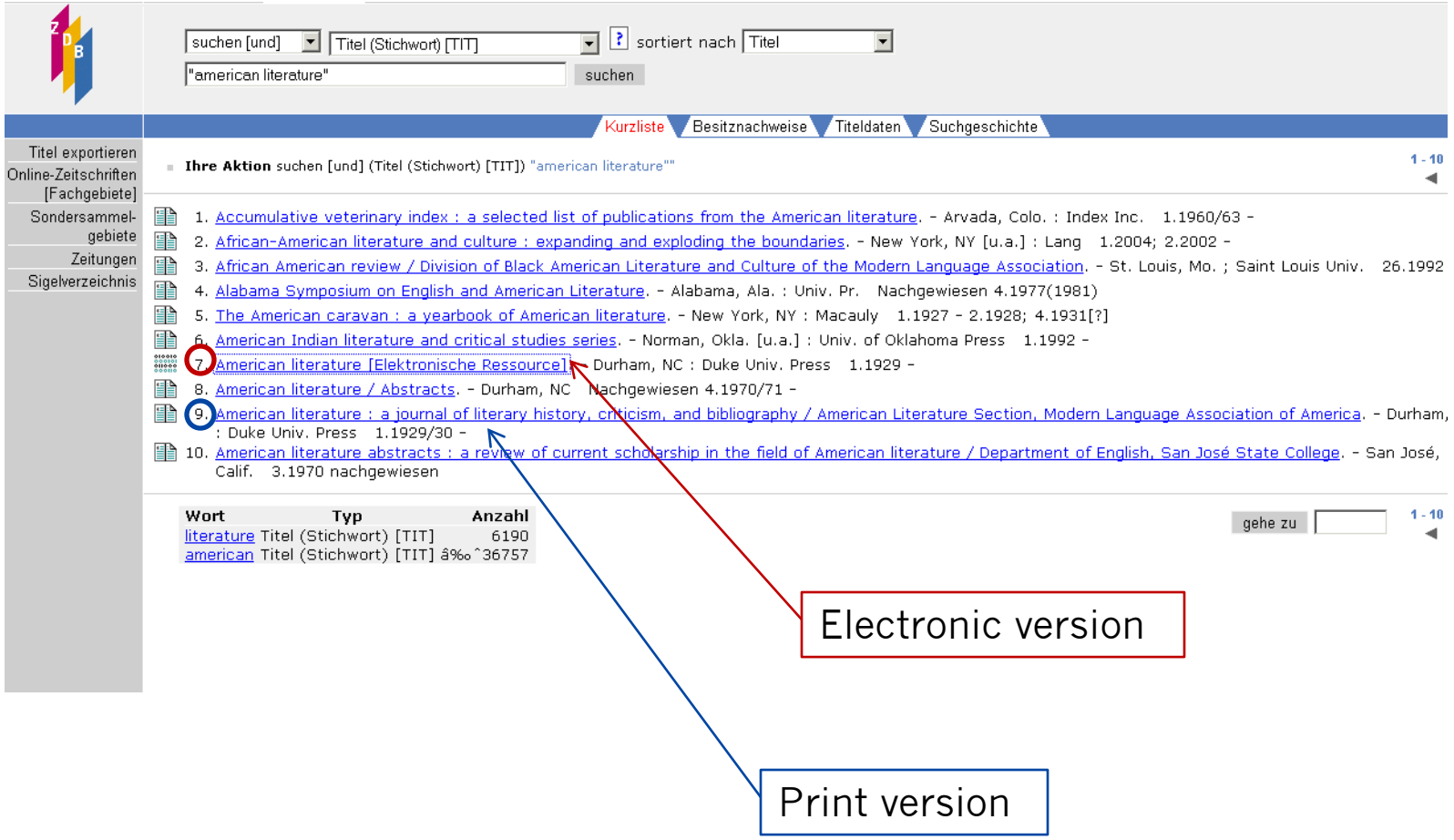
4.1. The main catalogue



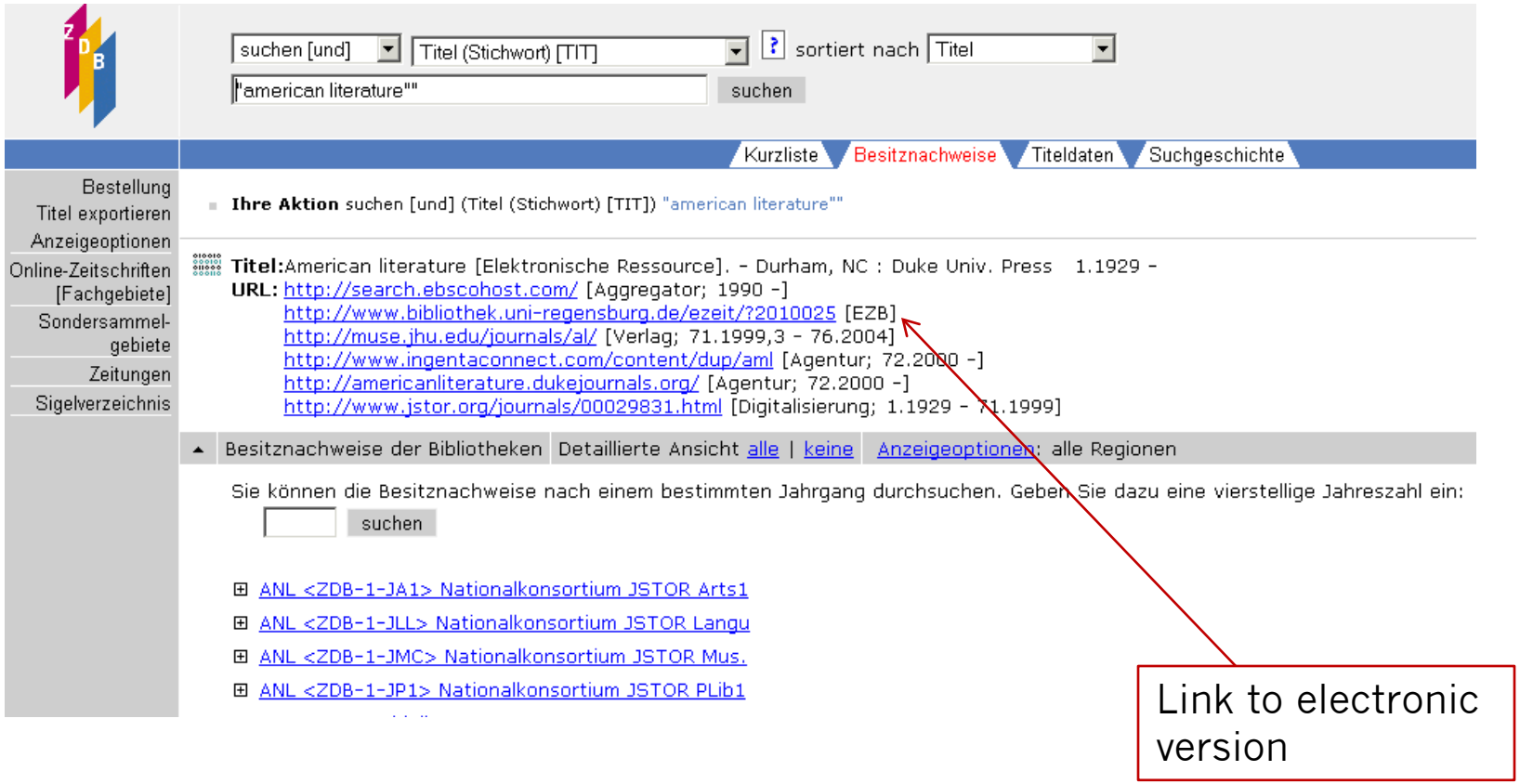
Availability of library holdings



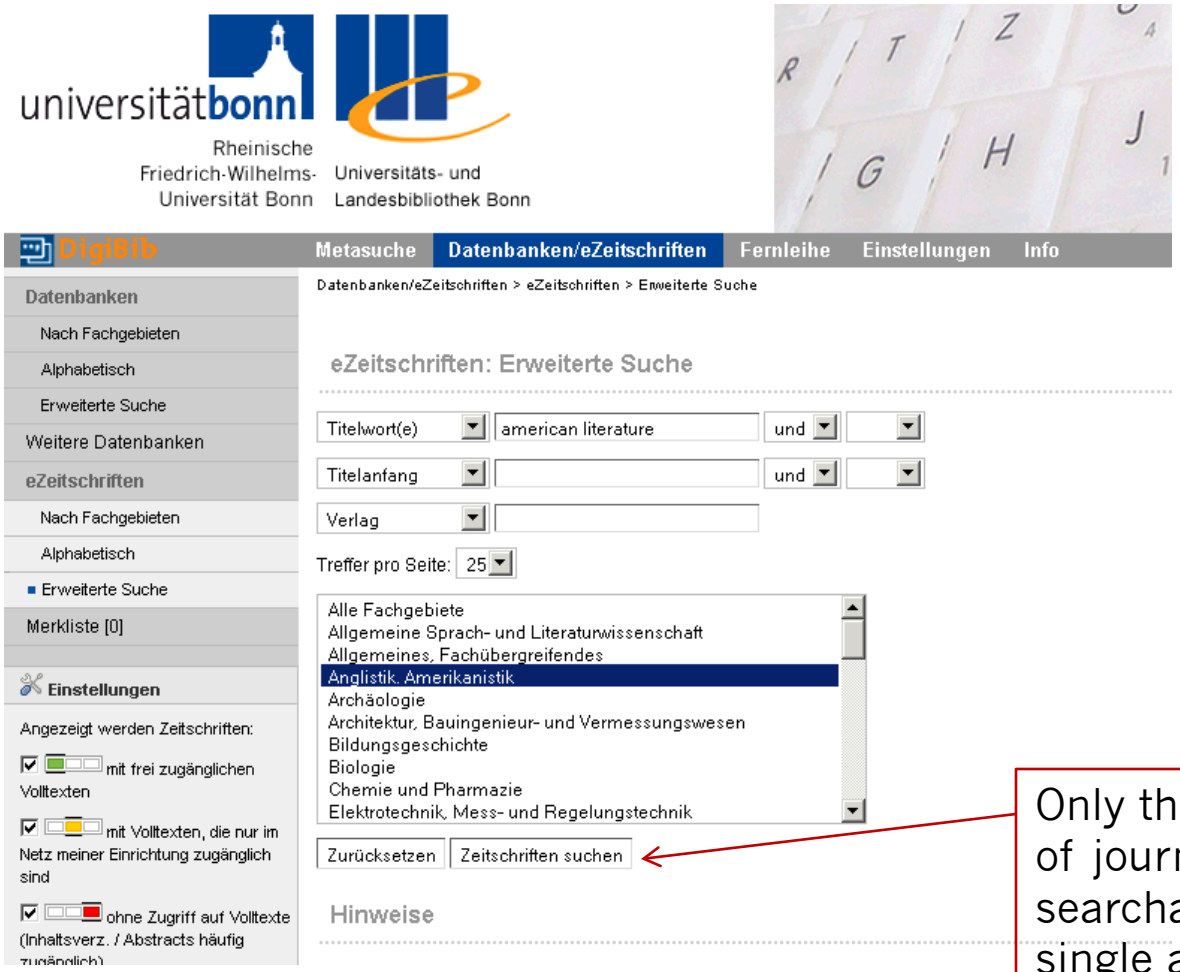
4.2 ZDB result list



ZDB links directly into EZB

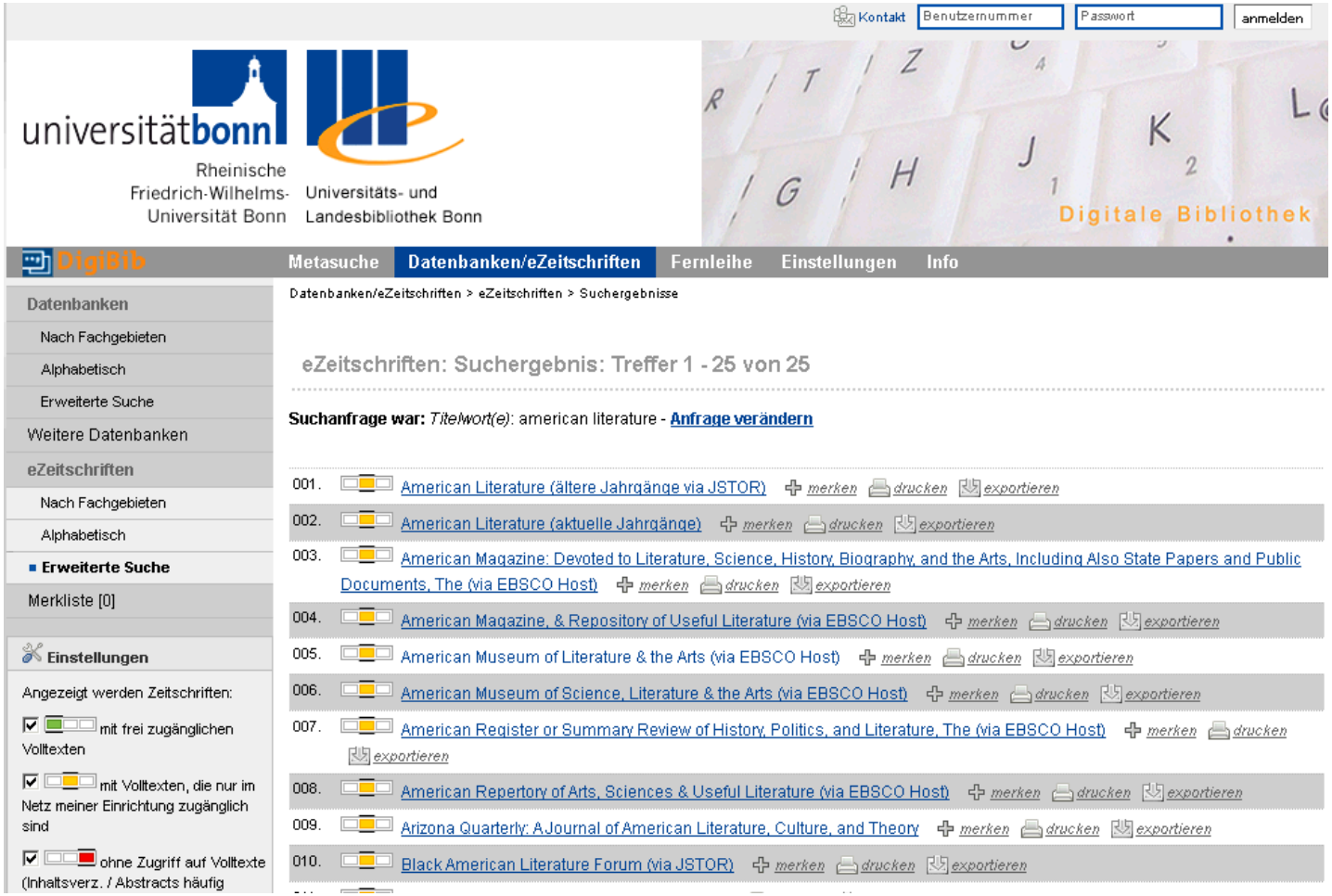


EZB search interface



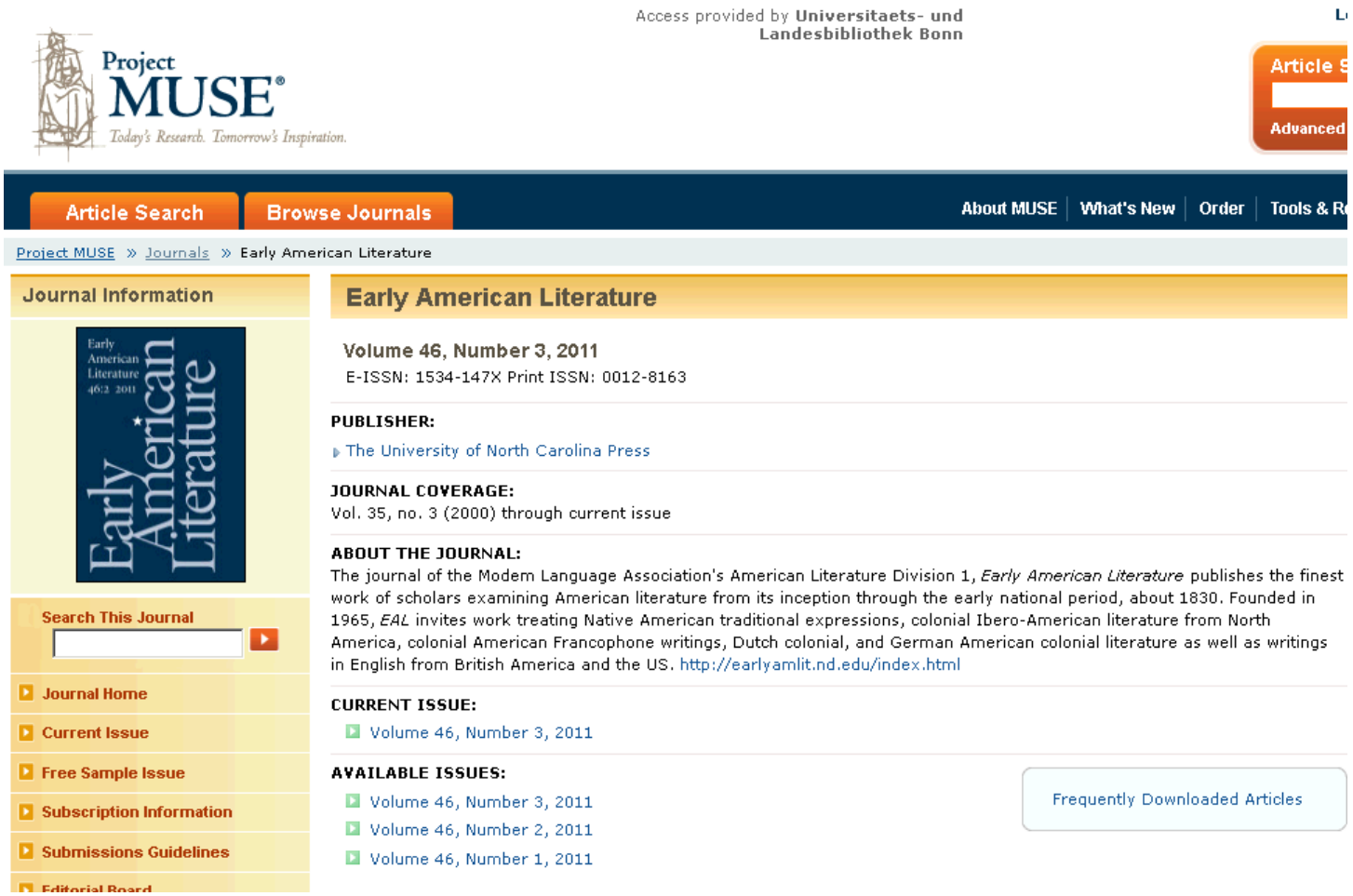
Only the titles of journals are searchable, NOT single articles

EZB result list

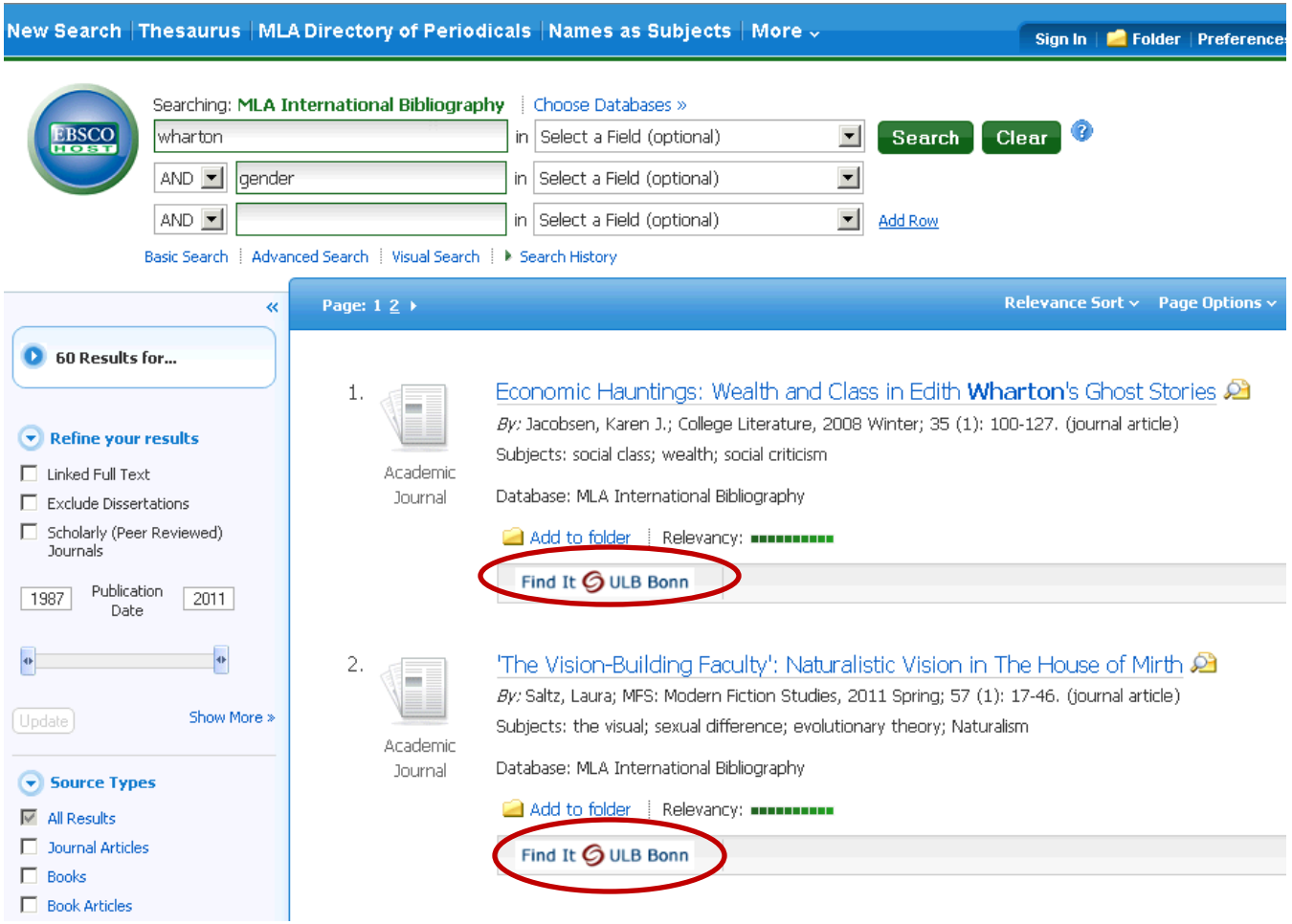


EZB single result

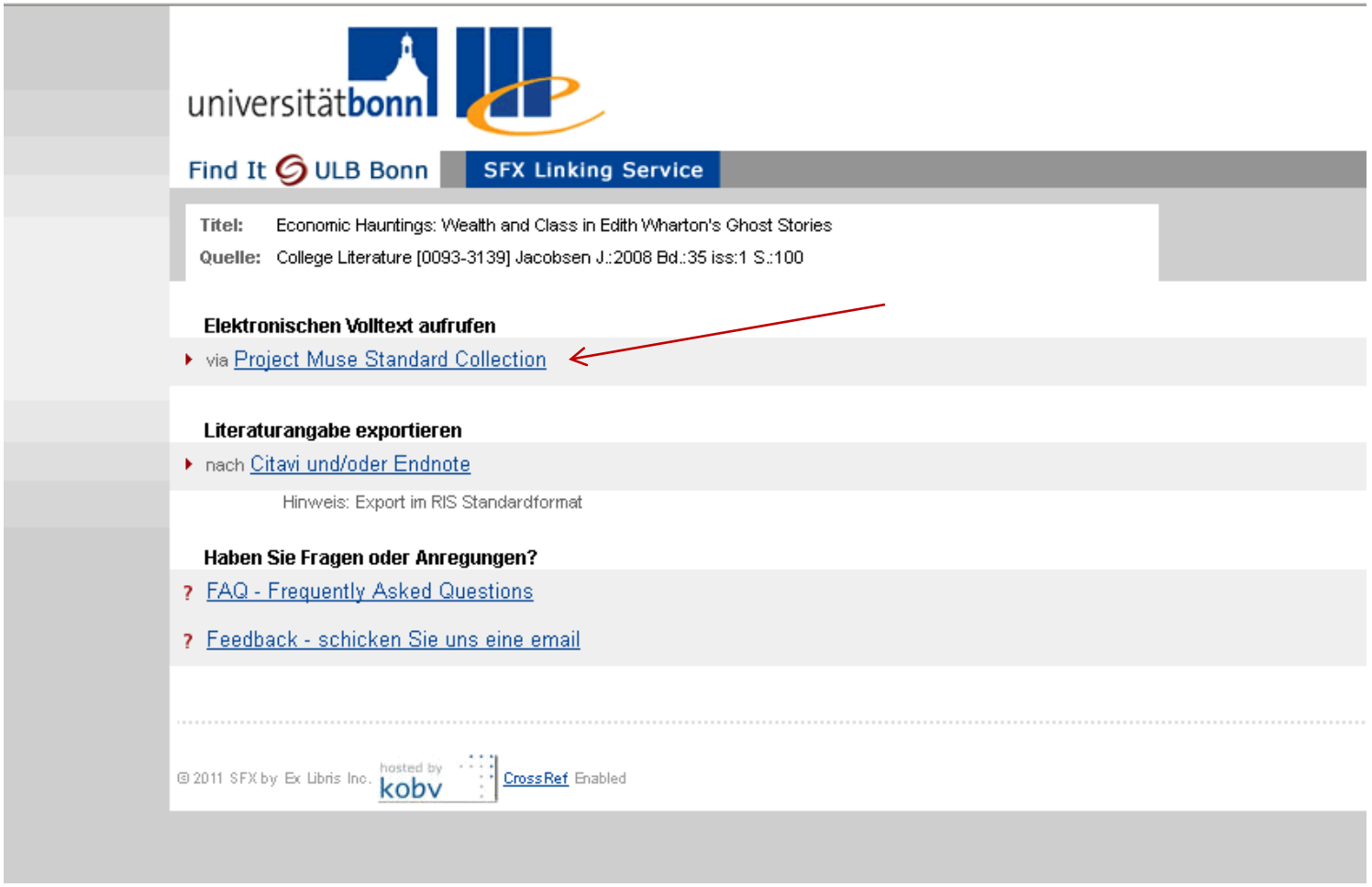
EZB link to the full texts



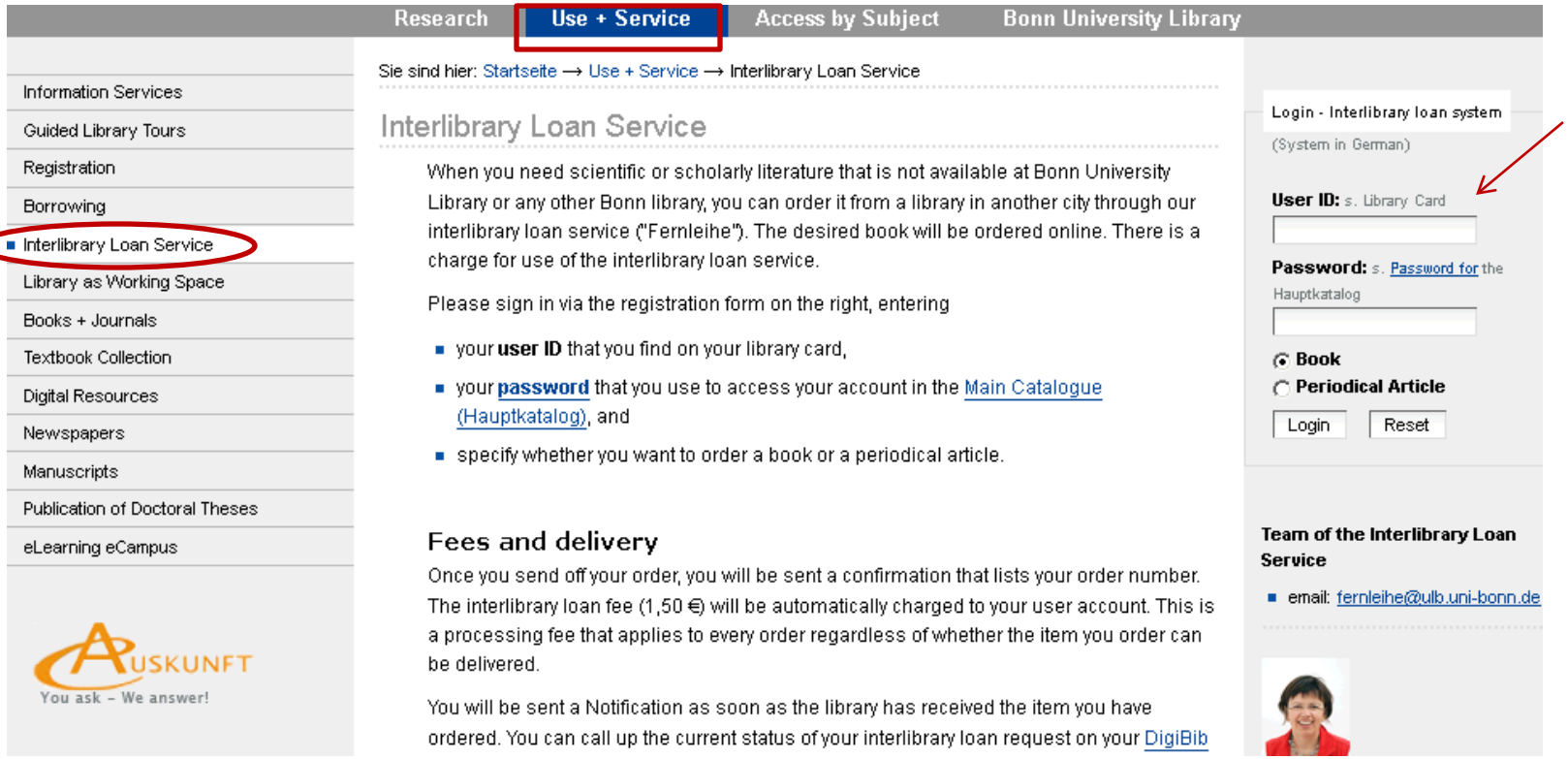
4.3. Link resolver



Following the link resolver



4.4. Service interface for interlibrary loan



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5. Evaluating information resources

5.1. Academic quality of publications

- Academic quality of printed publications:
  - Target group of the publication
  - Academic apparatus (e.g. footnotes, bibliography) present?
  - Is the information up-to-date?
  - Renowned author, institution or journal

Academic quality of websites

- Author or anonymous? What information is avaibable in website credits (mostly under the heading „About“)
- Website operator: Commercial or academic institution?
  (It might be possible to draw conclusions from the IP address)
- Academic level of information, up-dating?
- Where do the links lead?
- Adequate style of writing
- Clear layout? Are multimedial-elements functionally appropriate?

Deep Web

- Definition: The amount of information, that cannot be found by using search engines
- Invisible net is several times bigger than the visible web
- Database contents (e.g. Library catalogues and databases) as well as other lincensed contents that are not freely available on the Internet

→ Search engines for academic search purposes have only a very limited use

5.2. The „Google Problem“

- **Advantages** for academic search purposes:

  Google analyses the table of contents, whereas the Bonn main catalogue does not

  → finds relevant titles not indexed in a database

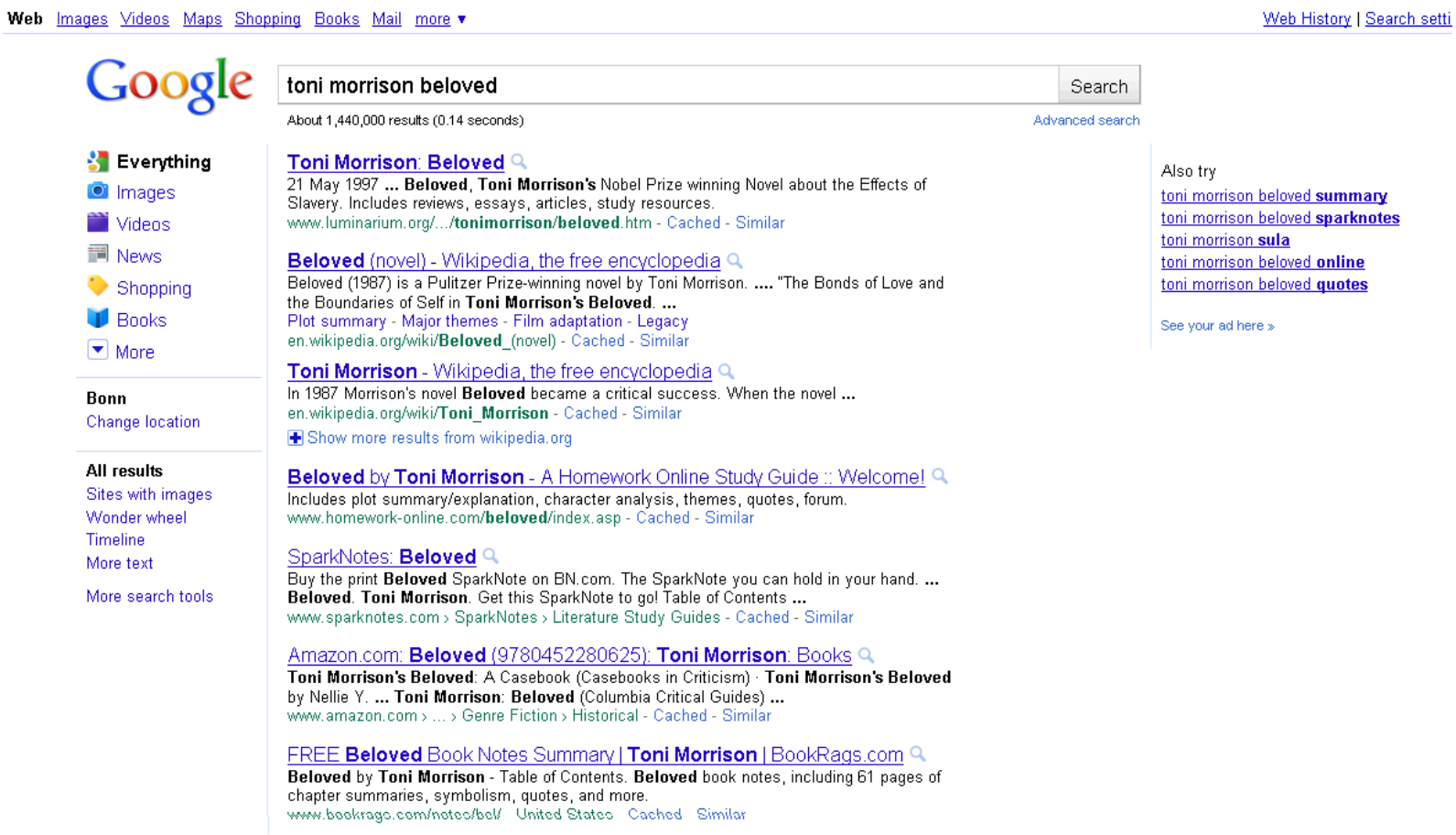
- **Disadvantage** for searching literature:

  - The results contain a lot of non-literature information

  - Rudimentary or incorrent bibliographical information that often complicate the localisation of the title in a library

Conclusion: A good tool for additional searches, but not as the main instrument

Google - Example



Google - Results

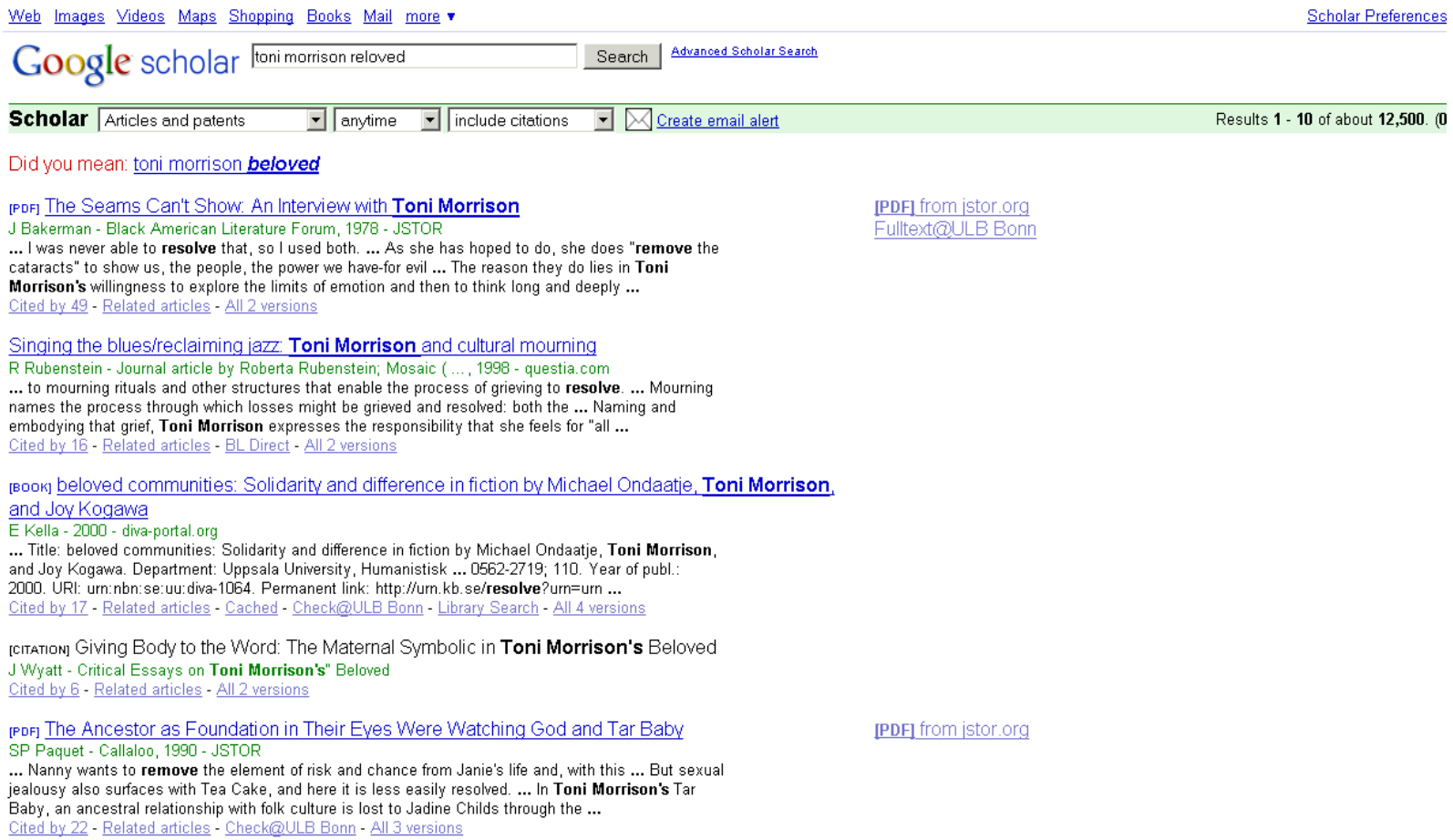
- Information about the author, interviews
- Information/Table of contents about the book
- Reviews
- Help for home work (abstract, analysis)
- Possibility to order from an Online-bookshop

→Lack of bibliographical information!

Preferably use Google Scholar …

- An academic search engine for all the academic disciplines
- Offers source and full texts as well as bibliographical information from library catalogues
- Less inaccurate results than Google
- „Related articles“ = trying to find similar results → not always comprehensible
- Partially „Check@ULB Bonn“: Possibility to search the concrete collections of Bonn university library, but the results not always reliable
- Sometimes links to the full text

Google Scholar – Example



Google‘s weaknesses compared to information provided by a library

- Provides no or incomplete bibliographical information
- Does not distinquish between primary and secondary literature
- No sorting of the results possible, e.g. according to the year of publication
- Does not offer a topical search (no subject terms/ classification) or other specific search fields

5. 3. Portals (Fachportale)

- ViFa Anglo-American culture at http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/vlib/lit/
  - Responsible institution: Niedersächsischen Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen
  - Sponsored by the German Research Foundation (die Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)
  - Access to information and services regardless of the physical form of the information source
  - The most comprehensive academic collection of links in the field of English and American Studies

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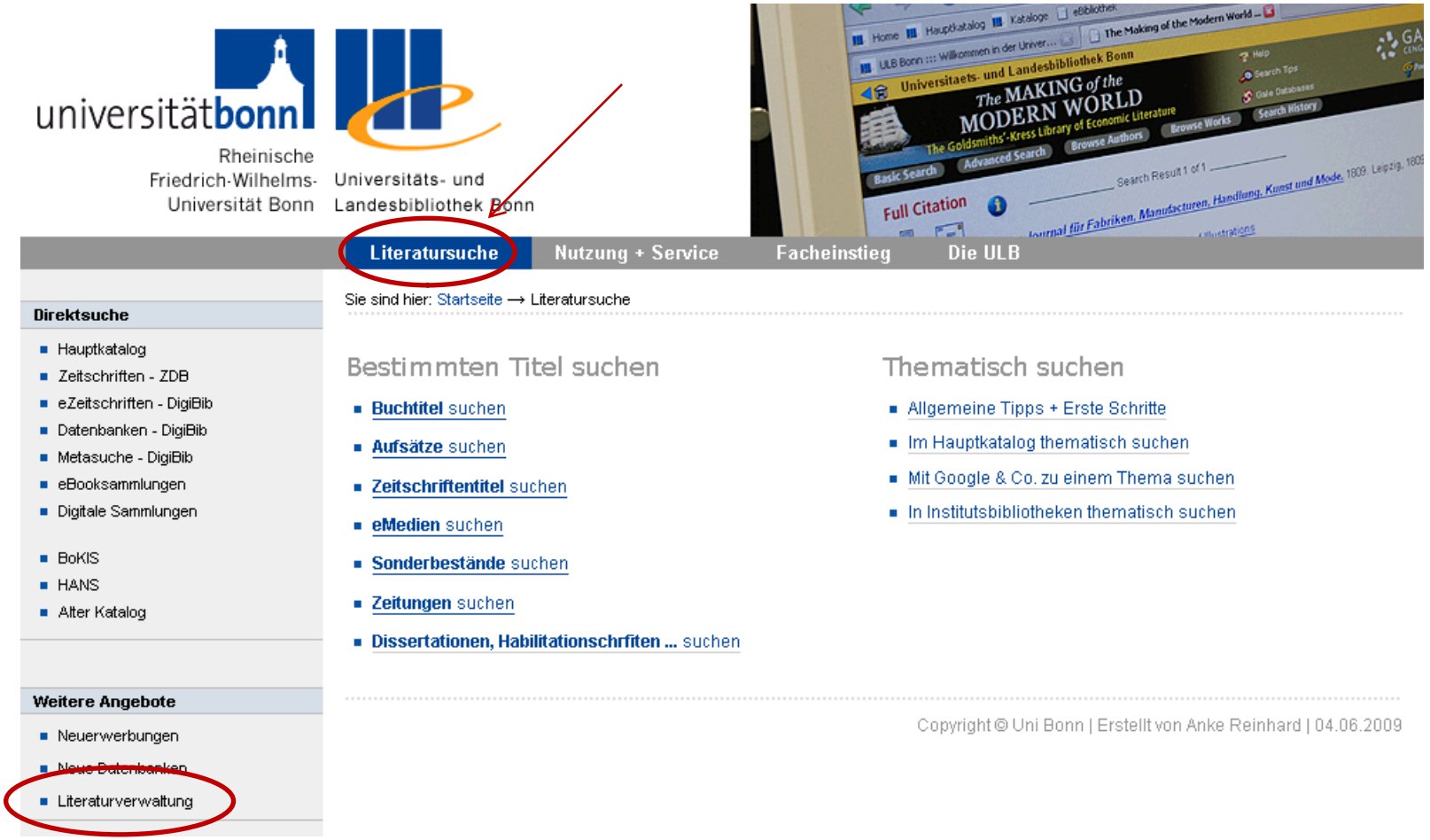
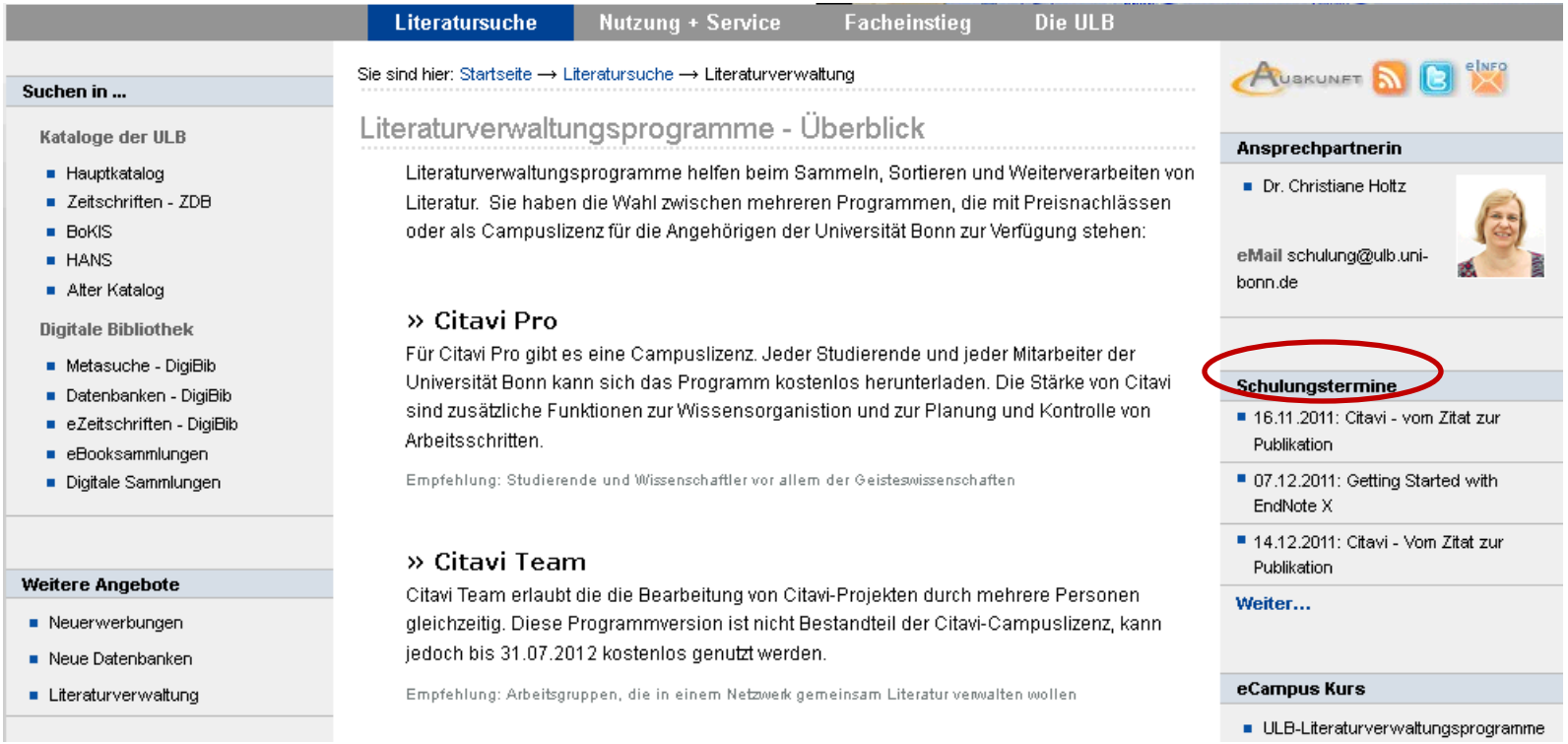
6. Processing bibliographical information

6. Further processing for your bibliographic information



Citavi and Endnote:
campus licence and instruction



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We will gladly help you with your literature search!