Supporting Undergraduate Researchers

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Session Objectives

At the end of the session, you will be able to

• Describe the search practices of undergraduate students.
• Identify use cases where discovery searching is appropriate for undergraduate researchers.
• Identify strategies for utilizing discovery at the reference desk.
• Identify strategies for teaching discovery in instructional sessions.
How would you locate research articles on this topic?

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
How would you locate this article?

Librarians’ Search Habits

• Distinguish between known item and topical searches
• Start in specific databases or collections
• Construct complex searches

How would an undergraduate researcher approach the same searches?
Undergraduates are Exploratory Researchers

- Driven by course assignment
- Research multiple, new topics each semester
- May know very little about their topics

Undergraduates are Novice Searchers

- Limited experience with catalogs and databases
- Rudimentary search strategies
- Struggle to select keywords and structure queries

Undergraduates are Overloaded and Overwhelmed

- Busy
- Risk averse
- Library anxiety
- Time constraints

Dahlen and Hanson 2017; Head 2013
Undergraduates Prefer Library Resources

• Credible
• Meet faculty expectations

Head, A. 2013. “Project Information Literacy: What Can Be Learned about the Information Seeking Behavior of Today’s College Students.”
Librarians
- Targeted search
- Complex queries
- Faster, more successful, more persistent

Undergraduates
- Prefer familiar, predictable resources
- Seek general search box
- Simple queries
Undergraduates like discovery . . .
... but they don’t use it well.

• Simple searches
• Repeat searches, rather than revising
• Ignore facets
• Difficulty understanding results
Strategy 1

Teach students when to use discovery.

- Explain content
- Suggest a metaphor
- Compare with specialized databases
Compare Tools

- Select a search topic and divide the class into 2-3 groups.
  - Group 1 – search the discovery tool
  - Group 2 – search an appropriate subject database
  - Group 3 – search Google or Google Scholar
- Lead a discussion, asking students to report:
  - What types of information can you find with this tool?
  - What helpful search features are available?
  - How do you find the full-text from this tool?
  - When would you recommend this tool?
Strategy 2

Teach students to use discovery effectively.

- Construct searches
- Understand results
- Use facets
- Interpret citations
- Link to full text / find local resources
- Expand beyond local resources
Strategy 3

Help students evaluate resources.
• Understand relevancy ranking
• Evaluate resources for quality, relevance, etc.
• Explore critical perspectives in information literacy
Create a Search Engine

- Ask students to imagine they are creating a new search engine.
  - Brainstorm criteria for ranking results.
  - Discuss whether the system would be foolproof.
  - Compare to discovery’s relevancy ranking.
Classroom Activity

Evaluation Jigsaw

• Assign each group a source to evaluate.

• Recreate groups to share and compare sources.
Explore critical information literacy.

• Social, political, and economic contexts of information production and use.
Strategy 5

Introduce citation chaining.
Classroom Activity

Compare Citation Counts

• From the results list, identify a highly cited and a less cited article.
  • Discuss factors that influence citation counts.
• Follow each citation trail.
  • What additional valuable resources can you find?
Classroom Activity

Explore Altmetrics

- Using an article with altmetrics, break students into groups and assign each a “mention” to research.
- Discussion points:
  - Where is this work being discussed?
  - Why has the work garnered attention?
  - Does this coverage affect your understanding of the original article and/or topic?
  - How does research enter and influence the public sphere?
How else can we use discovery with undergraduate researchers?
Q & A
THANK YOU!

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