



# 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?**

Ford, M.J., et al. 2018. “Inbreeding in an endangered killer whale population.”  
Animal Conservation 21 (5): 423-32.

# Librarians' Search Habits

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

Turner, N. 2011. "Librarians Do It Differently."  
*J of Web Librarianship* 5, 286-98.





## 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

Fallas, A., and S. Tatham. 2017. "Evidence-based Design for Discoverability." *Learned Publishing* 30, 55-64; Head, A. 2013. "Learning the Ropes." Project Information Literacy



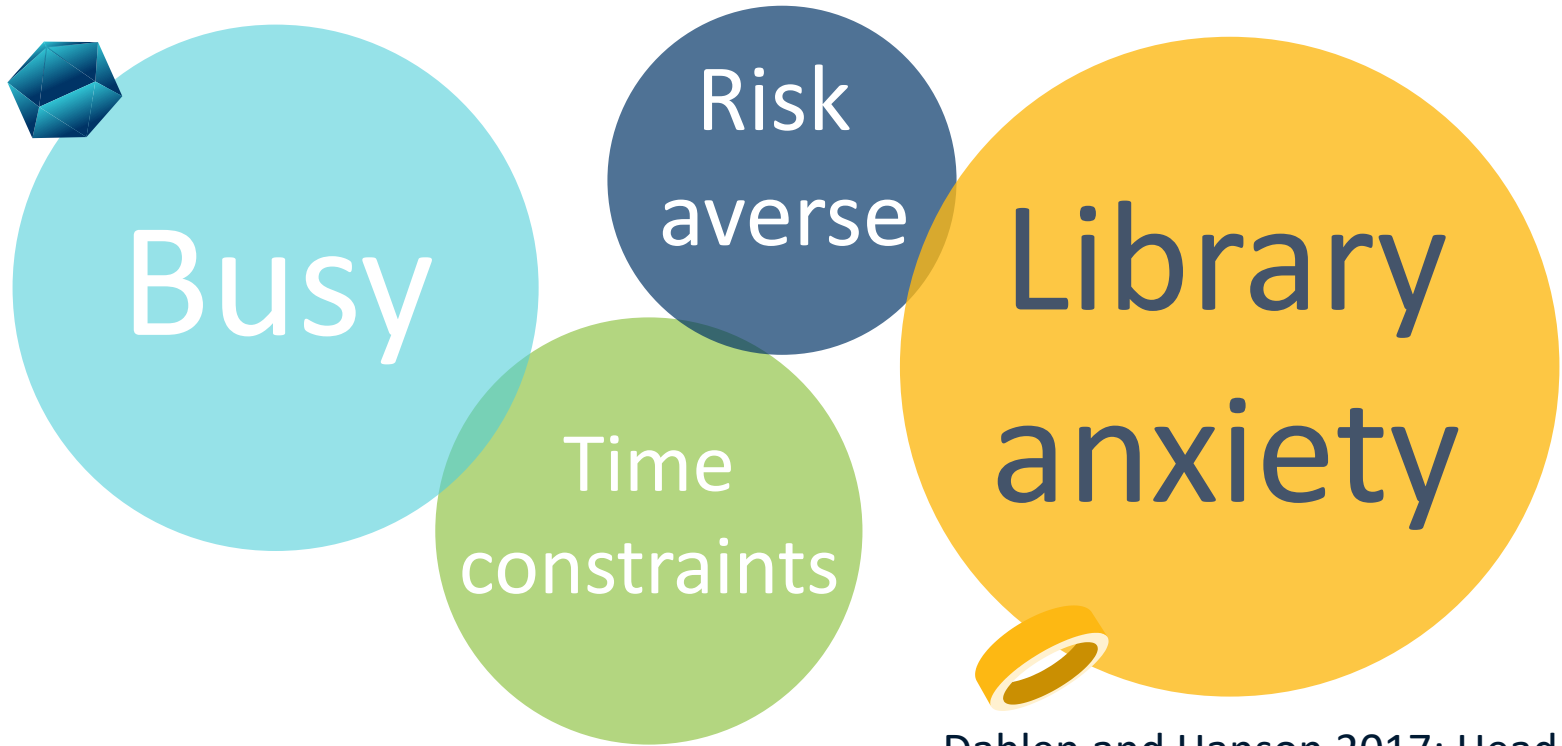
# Undergraduates are Novice Searchers

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

Dahlen, S.P.C., and K. Hanson. 2017. "Preference vs. Authority."  
*College and Research Lib* 78, 878-897; Head 2013.



# Undergraduates are Overloaded and Overwhelmed



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



# Classroom Activity

## 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



## Classroom Activity

### Create a Search Engine

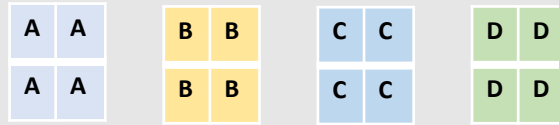
- Ask students to imagine they are creating a new search engine.
  - Brainstorm criteria for ranking results.
  - Discuss whether the system would be foolproof.
  - Compare to discovery's relevancy ranking.



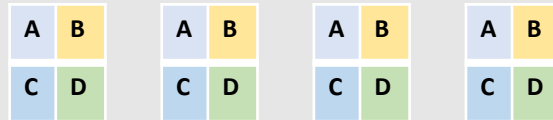
# Classroom Activity

## Evaluation Jigsaw

- Assign each group a source to evaluate.



- Recreate groups to share and compare sources.





## Strategy 4

### **Explore critical information literacy.**

- Social, political, and economic contexts of information production and use.



## Strategy 5

Introduce citation chaining.



Cites / Cited by





## 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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