KEEPING CURRENT

Reviews and Analysis of Special Reports

This column provides an overview and analysis of recently issued white papers, research studies, articles, presentations, and special reports that the editor feels would be of greatest interest to academic librarians. This is a highly selective compilation, and the editor welcomes suggestions from readers. Leslie Stebbins is a library and education consultant and the author of: *Finding Reliable Information Online: Adventures of an Information Sleuth* forthcoming from Rowman & Littlefield, September 2015. Leslie_Stebbins@post.harvard.edu.

"The Future of Library Resource Discovery: A White Paper Commissioned by the NISO Discovery to Delivery (D2D) Topic Committee," by Marshall Breeding. February 2015.

Overview

This White Paper provides an overview and both short- and long-term recommendations through an extension and possible expansion of the NISO Open Discovery Initiative in order to enhance resource discovery for universal access to scholarly resources. Cooperative development of application program interfaces (APIs) for all discovery services including learning management systems (LMS) and resource management systems would be an important component of this process. This paper also explores the future of linked data models and technologies that might improve the user experience, and explores barriers to progress in the discovery services arena.

Key Points

- The paper elucidates categories of library-provided resource discovery products including Discovery Interfaces, which were originally called Integrated Library Systems (ILS). Functionality for Discovery Interfaces includes the web end-user interface, interoperability via a link resolver to connect to full text, local search and retrieval, and interactive communication with library functions such as holds, current status checks, and user fees.
- There can also be access to remote index platforms via API for non-local resources via open source and commercial products including Ex Libris Primo, SirsiDynix Enterprise/Portfolio, BiblioCommons/ BiblioCore, ProQuest AquaBroswer, and Innovative Interfaces/Encore. Open source university-based and foundation-funded discovery interfaces include Blacklight, VuFind, eXtensible Catalog, and Franklin.
- Index-based discovery services are similar to the above, but also provide a central massive index to scholarly resources. This area is dominated by commercial products including Primo/Primo Central, EBSCO Discovery Service, Proquest/Summon, and WorldCat Discovery Service.

- Discovery Services populate their collections with local index content from library ILS's, digital collection management platforms, and institutional repositories. They make these resources available in a variety of ways to specific audiences. Separate management systems are often set up for archival material, digital collections, and institutional repositories.
- Google Scholar and subject index services such as Medline and arXiv are also players in this market. Google Scholar functions differently from other resource discovery services that libraries use. They have specialized arrangements with publishers and use automated bots that can pull in and index content more quickly. Google Scholar plays a large role in the discovery arena and libraries use link resolvers within it to connect their communities with library owned or accessible resources. There are other tools that have been recently developed to help libraries make use of Google Scholar to connect to their own collections.
- Linked Data tools and technologies are reviewed and opportunities for enhanced discovery services hold promise for the future. It is likely that incremental steps will continue in this area, and large market disrupters that would impact the landscape – such as a dramatic shift toward greater open access – are unlikely though not impossible.

Analysis

This is a comprehensive and exhaustive report covering all areas relating to the future of library discovery, with exceptionally clear explanations of the many players, products, issues, and future possibilities.

Especially useful are Breeding's recommendations about future concrete areas of action for NISO. Convening a second phase of the Open Discovery Initiative would help facilitate discussions between A&I providers and discovery service providers, because currently A&I providers are limiting the ability of discovery service providers to access resources. Issues of bias in relevancy ordering also need to be reviewed due to concerns that some systems are providing higher rankings for their own resources. Breeding also points out that interoperability issues need to still be addressed between discovery services and resource management systems.

The report also calls for a study group to explore the issue of open linked data. This is a complex area that is still in its infancy. Also referred to as semantic web technologies, this approach could provide more powerful tools for accessing scholarly resources, but we are still a long way from seeing significant movement in this area. Closer to the horizon is NISO's role in further investigating the use of altmetrics (alternative metrics) to improve relevancy. Several vendors are in the process of incorporating altmetrics programs such as Plum Analytics (recently

acquired by EBSCO) and Altmetric.com that is being used by Primo. Another avenue for NISO to explore is working more closely with, and having libraries work more closely with, Google Scholar to improve its ability to access and index content. It is an enormous, popular, and free player in the market that should not be overlooked.

"Educating the Research Librarian: Are We Falling Short?" By Deanna Marcum. Ithaka S + R Issue Brief, May 7, 2015. Available: http://sr.ithaka.org/sites/default/files/files/SR_Issue_Brief_Educating_the_Research_Librarian050715.pdf

Overview

This essay explores how to better define the goals of library and information science education and, connected to that goal, how to better define librarianship as a profession. Previous definitions focused on the librarian in relationship to the library collection, but now that collections are everywhere librarians are increasingly defining themselves by the services they offer. These services differ significantly between academic libraries involved in teaching, learning, and scholarship and public and school libraries that serve different communities. Required library school courses have failed to keep up with the changing roles of academic librarians and there is a widening gap between what is taught in school and the actual professional work of a librarian.

Key Points

- The author asserts that research libraries are becoming more focused on services than collections and library schools should focus more on discovery and use of information resources. For example, they should focus on being user-centric rather than collections-centric.
- There should be more specialization and separate tracks at library schools because the roles of school, public, and academic librarians differ substantially.
- Generalist librarians are far less in demand currently, though library school often focuses on educating generalists. Those with discipline expertise and technology expertise are in far greater demand and library education should better reflect workplace trends.
- Technology needs to become a foundational requirement and technical skills have become highly valued.

Analysis

The disconnect between professional duties and graduate level education is not specific to the library profession. There are many professions dealing with similar dilemmas, and in particular there is the ongoing challenge that whatever specific skills are taught in graduate school become rapidly outdated.

Marcum is wise to focus at the end of this essay on better connecting library school requirements to workplace needs, and perhaps we need to think even more broadly to models for lifelong learning and training for the profession. Blended and online learning situations are currently not robust enough, and are not as well connected to workplace needs as they could be, though they are trending in this direction.

Marcum's suggestion of using experts in the field to provide novices with online instruction is a good one, but not if that is limited to lecture capture and online discussion groups. Many completely virtual courses and MOOCs in higher education are not as successful as had been hoped, and new blended instructional models seem better suited for providing engagement and effective instruction. For technical instruction, personalized learning paths could be developed to meet each student at their point of need, but for broader career development some face-to-face or at least synchronous learning activities should be a required piece of any new learning program. Linking new librarians directly into the

workplace through mentoring and internships during education, and establishing badges and certifications for continuing education will help librarians keep pace with changing workplace demands.

"Keeping Up With... Library Value," by Kara J. Malenfant. Association of College & Research Libraries. Keeping Up with... series. Available: http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/value

Overview

There has been a shift in discussions about the value of higher education in the United States, especially in terms of affordability and accountability. A recent Association of College & Research Libraries report indicated that demonstrating the value of the library and librarians was the most important issue facing academic library institutions of all types.

Key Points

- Traditional measures of library value focused on statistics relating to inputs and outputs such as number of visits, books circulated, and instruction sessions offered. The concept was that the higher the number the better. But these numbers did not reflect value to users and were replaced in the last few decades by ideas about service quality and satisfaction.
- Satisfaction measures of library services are not that useful or meaningful to campus administrators. They are good internal measures of quality, but do not make the case for library value outside of the library.
- Financial value can explore value for money by using return on investment (ROI), cost–benefit analysis, and contingent valuation (willingness to pay if services were discontinued). ROI studies have been useful in showing that increasing a library budget can be linked to an increase in the institution receiving grant funds for research.
- Impact on outcomes is another way to measure value, and these studies often include measures that relate to student learning outcomes or student success. These studies measure changes in attitudes, behaviors or knowledge as a result of library initiatives. There are dozens of studies that have demonstrated some value in terms of student return rate and student grades connected to library visits.

Analysis

ACRL is currently in the third year of a grant-funded program to explore how to support value assessment projects. A report is now available synthesizing research from more than 70 studies, and there is also a database collection of project descriptions and analysis. Both of these items are linked from this report.

Demonstrating value by showing an impact on student outcomes is growing in popularity among academic libraries. In 2010 a lengthy report was published by ACRL that reviewed the ways libraries could contribute value to student learning. The report reviewed activities that have been in place in public, school, and special libraries to help inform the work of academic libraries. It also provides a research agenda for academic libraries engaging in library value projects.

Academic library value falls into three general categories. Student learning measures includes enrollment, retention, graduation, success, learning, and experience. Research measures include faculty research productivity and grants. The institutional prestige and reputation category includes activities such as librarians playing a role in faculty recruitment, winning library awards, being of service to the community, and having valuable special collections that provide the institution with unique and valuable assets for the wider research community.

The work of demonstrating value should not focus solely on how to demonstrate value that is already occurring, but to instead investigate how we can continuously increase our value to our institution. We are not just trying to stay afloat and boast about our achievements, but are instead looking to the coming years to figure out where we can jump in and address institutional challenges such as data management, peer review, open access, better discovery services, and journal publishing. There are many opportunities out there and putting energy into effectively shifting our scope will help demonstrate our value to our institutions.

"Grab and Go and the Gravitational Pull of Discovery," by Roger C. Schonfeld. The Scholarly Kitchen Blog. May 14, 2015. Available: http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2015/05/14/grab-and-go/

Overview

Facebook recently announced that it is starting an Instant Article initiative and will host news and magazine content on the Facebook site rather than linking to another website. Newspaper publishers are especially interested in this new program as Facebook has tremendous power over their readership via the Facebook newsfeed. But it is a double-edged sword: by housing content within Facebook in order to achieve fast load times and gain audience, newspaper and scholarly publishers lose the ability to generate loyal and committed readers to their specific brand.

Key Points

- News publishers, as well as scholarly journal publishers, are facing a challenge from "grab and go" behavior. A reader who uses a discovery service such as Facebook and pops into a news site, downloads an article, and then leaves will not be loyal to the publisher's website or identify with the publisher brand.
- Publishers are beginning to investigate strategies to lure readers in and give them incentives for staying. They want to build loyalty and strengthen their relationship with the reader. Currently, discovery services have stronger relationships with readers than do the content publishers.
- Publishers are attracted to Facebook's Instant Article initiative because Facebook driven traffic will provide them with advertising revenue and analytics, at least for now.
- Ebsco and Proquest are also trying to increase traffic to their discovery services rather than "losing" readers to other content platforms.

Analysis

The New York Times, *Buzzfeed* and *National Geographic* will participate with a number of other publishers in this new Facebook program. These publishers will enjoy a hefty initial benefit and an increase in readership for articles that are posted from within Facebook. But in the long term there are concerns about having one company exert a huge influence on what news articles are viewed in a feed that goes to millions of readers. As users become more reliant on their Facebook feed to provide them with news, and as the quality and load time improves through the rollout of this program, then over time news and journal publishers will lose their personal connections with their readers. Readers will be more inclined to view the discovery tool as the originator of content, rather then the news or journal publisher.

With more than a billion users, Facebook is becoming the world's most widely read daily source for news. The Pew Research Center has documented that about 30% of American adults get their news from Facebook, but there is a lack of transparency in how articles are selected for the feed. While some have voiced concerns about echo chambers, a recent Facebook funded peer-reviewed study demonstrated that Facebook is not responsible for people limiting their information diet by only reading articles written from a particular political party, but rather it is the choices people make about what to read on their feeds that is responsible for these filter bubbles. Other researchers have questioned these findings, given that Facebook is controlling the feed from the outset.

Libraries used to have a large public gatekeeping role in selecting high quality information, and there were certainly issues with librarians wielding so much power. The new gatekeepers include large companies such as Google and Facebook, as well as discovery services like EBSCO and ProQuest. As newspapers become swallowed up by Facebook feeds, librarians and publisher might want to become more involved in how scholars will access research in the near future. Disconnecting an article from its source and controlling what articles are more easily available to readers is not something that should be left in a small number of hands.