

Helle Lauridsen and John Law

ProQuest, Aarhus, Denmark

How Do You Follow Google? Providing a High-Quality Academic Library Search Experience

CHALLENGE:

University students at all levels are confronted with numerous access points within the library that are non-intuitive, esoteric or just plain confusing. To compound the problem, the number and type of library resources are growing and the library's current search tools do not reflect user expectations of a Google-like unified search experience. The fractured search experience is problematic also for technologists who must support these disparate systems and attempt to create a uniform experience for library researchers.

This talk will explore the issues related to academic search and discovery, the results of our research into what makes and breaks a quality research experience, and the challenges of providing the highest quality search experiences to a new generation of academic researchers. This talk will also examine solutions that will enable library technology personnel to provide and support a quality search experience for academic researchers on campus.

METHODS

Exhaustive research was conducted using focus groups of researchers at all academic levels, including faculty members and librarians that target the problems student researchers face when attempting to locate high-quality academic information among a large number of library resources. Also conducted were extensive anonymous ethnographic observations of student research behaviors, the typical search methodologies employed by student researchers, and the typical student research experience. In addition, we have conducted follow-up surveys of student researchers at all academic levels regarding their research experiences with existing library search tools.

CONCLUSIONS

Library users expect a search experience that rivals that of Google and other modern Web search engines. The search tool must provide unified access to the library's entire traditional collection, as well as all of the electronic resources to which the library subscribes while at the same time being fast and easy to use. Also, it must not dispossess the more sophisticated search tools with which experienced researchers are familiar.

Helle Lauridsen is Market Manager for Serials Solutions, and has been working for various parts of Proquest since 2006. Prior to this Helle worked as head of Serials and Electronic Acquisitions at the State and University Library in Denmark. End-user behaviour and end-user competency has always been of interest. John Law is Vice President of Discovery Services, Serials Solutions.