REPORT ON THE INFORMATION SEARCHING SEMINAR,

HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT THE MERENSKY LIBRARY AUDITORIUM,

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Contents

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1. INTRODUCTION

There was a time when librarians had the monopoly on providing access to information. They were experts in searching all kinds of information and flourished on finding information in extraordinary places using sophisticated tools and complex search techniques. With developments in information and communication technology, the internet and the network society, information are more freely available today and information consumers do not rely on librarians for information anymore. The challenge with this ubiquity of information, however, is that it is increasingly more difficult to retrieve exactly what we need.

Developments in open access information; evolving interest in commodities such as data and patents; increased interest in bibliometric information and changing information seeking behaviour of information users are some of the challenges modern academic libraries need to align their support strategies towards. In the light of these, together with challenges related to the new, cloud based information discovery tool, WorldCat Discovery (on the OCLC WorldShare Management Services platform), the Library Technical Services (LTS) Unit decided to present this *Information Searching Seminar.*

The main aim of the seminar was to bring together a number of experts to address different aspects related to information searching and to share ideas, techniques and methods for more efficient, effective and productive information retrieval.

The seminar provided a valuable opportunity for all Department of Library Services (DLS) staff members, dealing with information seeking on a daily basis, to develop new skills and expertise.

2. SUMMARY OF THE AGENDA

2.1 Opening and welcome (Mr Robert Moropa: Director, DLS, UP)

Mr Moropa opened the seminar by welcoming all attendees. He stressed that the seminar was important as the Department of Library Services (DLS) is currently implementing a new strategic plan and has to embrace changes in the library environment in order to stay relevant. The only constant today is change. The challenge is to embrace this change. The library needs to align its' strategies towards the opportunities provided by the rapidly changing technology and the dynamic needs of library users born in a digital age. He thanked Marguerite Nel (Head of Library Technical Services) and her team for creating this opportunity to gain more knowledge and insight into the changing information world.

2.2 Setting the scene (Ms Marguerite Nel: DLS)

Marguerite Nel emphasised the fact that everything today is about change. Library information retrieval has transitioned from card catalogues to computerised catalogues and even further. Library users and students constantly interact and apply technology in their daily lives. The question, however, is: are *we,* as librarians and information specialists, keeping up with changes regarding the information searching process? We should be experts, but we sometimes experience problems with searching for and finding information.

The recently implemented WorldShare Management Service platform (WMS) has brought even more challenges. That is why different speakers have been invited to broaden our knowledge on the searching process and how to search even better.

2.3 SESSION 1 (Session chair: Ms Magdeline Gomba: DLS)

2.3.1 Good searching – playing the theoretical ball game (Prof Ina Fourie: Department of Information Science, University of Pretoria)

Prof Ina Fourie laid the theoretical foundation for information searching by using a sports analogy – skills for a ball game – as a way to discuss information searching behaviour and skills. She argued that we should fully embrace change, but there are still some basic principles that we are not always aware of, that have to be adhered to – like the rules of a ball game.

In the past only privileged people conducted searches for information, now there is literacy and computer literacy training for everyone. One must ask the right questions to get the right information. Sometimes library users or librarians do not really know what they are looking for. *Analytical searching* means breaking a topic down into concepts and synonyms. One can even use Wikipedia as orientation to find some search terms that might be relevant. Boolean operators can be used to make searching more efficient. Librarians and library users should make an informed decision what to use and what to disregard. Prof Fourie pointed out that library and information theory and background are still important. Time spent on searches for students may take two to three hours. Preliminary work should be done by students, but sometimes one needs a librarian, even if there are self-service modules.

Prof. Fourie concluded with the debate round **search skills** versus **subject knowledge**. If a librarian has subject knowledge and no search skills, there might be a problem in obtaining the most relevant information in a timely and efficient way.

2.3.2 Patron-initiated ILL requesting (Ms Leonie Muller: Sabinet)

Leonie Muller defined patron-initiated searching/requesting as "users searching without library staff helping them". The librarian simply processes the requests they receive electronically.

Patron-initiated interlibrary loan requesting on WorldCat Discovery is similar to the Pre-request option via the ReQuest system used previously. The ILL request form is available on the WorldCat Discovery platform and the following information has to be completed: bibliographic information of the item requested, personal/contact details of the person requesting the item, as well as acceptance of the necessary copyright policies involved. The patron does not need a login password as was the case on the ReQuest system

After submitting the request form, the user is issued with a request ID number. The ILL librarian receives the request electronically and processes it.

2.4 SESSION 2 (Session chair: Mercia Moreana: DLS)

2.4.1 Getting the best from WorldCat Discovery (Ms Eleta Grimbeek: Sabinet)

In Eleta Grimbeek's presentation, the action of **searching** was opposed to **discovery**. When one searches, one has specific keywords, which is limiting. When searching for information one sometimes finds something one did not even know was available. **To discover is to explore!** Amazon and Google are regarded as

"search tools", but only a library can give a user full access to various kinds of relevant information.

Eleta continued to give some basic guidelines when searching on WorldCat Discovery. The **keyword** is the default search. The results are sorted by best match (title) and recency (date). For advanced searches the various indexes should be used. One can use as many as ten rows for advanced Boolean searches. A phrase search in inverted commas yields fewer results, but one must be careful of dates in square brackets. These brackets may cause a discrepancy. She also mentioned that the knowledge base comprised all electronic resources.

2.4.2 Finding journal articles : the pain and the pleasure (Ms Carin Bezuidenhout: DLS)

Carin Bezuidenhout stated that searching is a skill. While there are challenges using the recently introduced WorldCat Discovery, librarians just have to get used to the changes in the searching process. Due to today's "sea of available information", the role of the cataloguer is becoming more important, organising all this information and providing access to relevant information.

There are various available search boxes on the library's home page. Library users should be aware that different editions and formats of the item are included in the search results. Accessing a full text article can be frustrating, especially if the link does not work and the library is supposed to have access. The slow internet speed can contribute to the link not opening. Carin asked that all these problems should be reported to her immediately.

Unfortunately there are no hidden secrets with regard to searching on WorldCat Discovery. Carin advised librarians to stay calm and get to know their index labels to ensure relevant searches.

2.4.3 Navigating UPSpace (Mr Tlou Mathiba: DLS)

Tlou Mathiba explained that the UPSpace platform is based on the open source software DSpace and consists of different layers: faculties, communities, sub-communities, collections and items. One can *browse* or *search* and make searches more specific.

When searching for an electronic thesis, one can click on UPETD or on UP Post Graduate. To secure UP's research information, embargoed theses are not uploaded to UPSpace.

Conference presentations of Merensky staff members can be found by clicking on the UP library button on UPSpace.

Tlou believes that the UPSpace team needs the input of cataloguers to assist in streaming subject headings on UPSpace. Subject searching can sometimes be problematic due to irrelevant and incorrect keywords provided by students.

Usage statistics of a specific item can be viewed on UPSpace. Contact persons when experiencing problems on UPSpace: Tlou Mathiba or Hendriette Jansen van Vuuren.

2.4.4 Patent searching for dummies : why patent searching should be part of the literature review (Ms Sunette Steynberg: DLS)

Sunette Steynberg started her presentation by asking why it is necessary to search patents. The answer is that patents are the only research documents of a company. Researchers should search patents in order to find out whether their idea/research has already been patented. Patents should be searched as far back as possible in order to ensure that an idea has not already been patented.

A patent is all about protecting a researcher's intellectual property. Patents should be new, non-obvious and useful. There are three types of patents: utility patents, design patents and plant patents.

2.5 SESSION 3 (Session chair: Marguerite Nel: DLS)

2.5.1 Fly Merensky (Ms Lerisa Strydom: 4th-year theological student at the University of Pretoria)

Lerisa Strydom gave the delegates an interesting spin on a student's perspective of information seeking at the library – using the library to graduate "with flying colours". She compared the library to an airplane with efficient "flight attendants" – i.e. the librarians.

She continued to explain that the catalogue can be accessed via computer or mobile phone. A search box or search indicator is used to search. After typing in the relevant search terms, the student is directed to the WorldCat Discovery platform.

Lerisa emphasised that the various databases available in the library can enrich the research process, but contacting a librarian can be even more valuable. Additional useful tools can also be found on the library's home page.

She completed her short presentation with a request from the students to develop a video clip on "how the library works", to be shown at the beginning of each semester, "just to refresh our memories" after a long break/recess.

2.5.2 Sci-Hub and other pirate academic websites : the right to access to information or a justified act of civil disobedience (Ms Marguerite Nel)

Ms Marguerite Nel told the gathering how a Kazakstan computer science student created *Sci-Hub*, a pirate article database, providing access to more than a million academic articles. The reason for this is that students and researchers are paying a lot of money for access to academic journal articles, provided by large companies like Elsevier. Elsevier makes a 35% profit while a mega company like Walmart shows a profit of approximately 3%.

The huge number of Elsevier articles being downloaded resulted in a court case but the site popped up again, under a different domain name.

A different publishing model is being considered where the author has to pay the publisher for an article to be published, but that the article is made available to everybody through open access (gold open access).

Marguerite provided an example where medical practitioners in Peru rely on these pirate sites, because they cannot afford other access and in so doing save countless of lives through accessing information through *Sci-Hub*.

She emphasised that librarians need to be aware of ethics and should inform students and users on the ethical use of information.

Discussion and debate on Sci-Hub issue

During the following discussion about *Sci-Hub* and similar pirate journal article sites, the delegates were divided between the illegality of using the site, resulting in unethical behaviour on the one side and helping students and researchers to obtain information fast and easily. Most library staff members however seemed to think that policies are there to be adhered to and unethical behaviour is unacceptable. *Sci-Hub* should therefore not be promoted. The library can be held liable for the distribution of illegal electronic articles.

2.6 Wrap-up and closure (Ms Hilda Kriel: DLS)

In her closure Ms Hilda Kriel warned staff not to use *Sci-Hub* because "digital interruption has moral implications".

She mentioned two current world trends:

a) Decoupling (to disengage two things that usually go together)

b) Digital twins (to have a digital replica of the other, e.g. 3-D printing)

Empowering the students and outsourcing are examples of ***decoupling*** and this is a positive trend. A negative aspect of ***decoupling*** can be that the client may become independent and that the librarian then has no role to play. UPSpace decoupled from the input of the cataloguers can be negative. Balance is important.

Regarding ***digital twins***, Hilda asked what our physical layer was and what our digital layer was. She explained that we do not live on an island. We need to change and keep up with the rest of the world.

She concluded by saying that librarians have unique skills and therefore a unique contribution to make. WorldShare Management Services (WMS) and WorldCat Discovery are only tools. Our responsibility is to *use* these tools. We have to practice; otherwise we shall not master the challenges and opportunities provided by the new digital world. We need expertise to efficiently search for information.

3. Evaluation and feedback

A total of 91 DLS staff members registered for the seminar. Attendees were requested to complete an online evaluation form after the seminar. This form was completed by 37 staff members, resulting in a response rate of 41%.

Comments on the seminar were mostly positive, with 32 from the 37 respondents (86%) indicated that the seminar met their expectations; 30/37 (81%) found the content helpful and 34/37 (92%) indicated that the presenters had a good understanding of the topics. Delegates appreciated the various searching techniques that were demonstrated and agree that they are informed about the skills necessary for efficient information searching.

Two topics caught the attention at the seminar: ***patent searching*** and information on the pirate website for journal articles, ***Sci-Hub.*** For several colleagues these were new to them.

In an open ended question, respondents were asked for suggestions regarding changes and enhancements to be made to future seminars. Most delegates felt that the seminar had been informative and insightful. Some thought a more hands-on, practical session, like a workshop, instead of a seminar with presentations, as well

as more practical demonstrations might be better for future gatherings. Several respondents indicated a need for an annual seminar, addressing relevant topics.

At a meeting where members of the organising committee reflected on their own experience of the seminar, most members agreed that they experienced the organising process as very positive. They also developed additional skills, such as skills related to project management, event organising, application of technology in different areas, communication and presentation – to mention only a few.

4. Conclusion

Information users are living in a world where change is a constant. In this dynamic environment, technology plays a huge role in finding the right information. With rapidly changing technology, it isn't always easy to adapt and implement changes and enhancements regarding methods, techniques, tools and platforms without challenges. To ensure their relevance, librarians need to constantly update their skills in order to implement technology to align with information support. This will ensure efficient and effective information need support.

The main aim of the information searching seminar was therefore to equip librarians at the DLS with new skills in information searching. Several presenters provided useful ideas, methods and techniques to assist librarians in more focussed, effective and satisfying information retrieval.

Feedback on the event was overall positive and a need for an annual seminar on different topics relevant to librarians was raised.