TEACHING THE EBSCO DISCOVERY SERVICE
Experiences at UGA

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• UGA brought up the Ebsco Discovery Service in November 2010, naming it Multi-Search
• Multi-Search became the default search tab on the Libraries' homepage in August 2011
EDS @ UGA

- Multi-Search gets novice users to our resources quickly and easily.
- Multi-Search makes answering reference questions via chat, email, and phone much simpler.
Student and faculty reaction has been generally positive:
"I was able to find a wide variety of things. I liked the refining options. It's very straightforward" (undergraduate).
"It's right there on the homepage. I like that it covers journal articles and books and websites... more than just research articles. It scans different databases so I don't have to do same search in lots of databases" (graduate student).
"I'm beginning a new project--and in a few seconds I got a good sense of how much of relevance we have in our own collection, much of it in pdf or html files. Very fast and efficient" (faculty).
"I hate multi-search with the fire of 1,000 suns" (staff).

A small percentage of survey respondents and usability participants disliked Multi-Search. The most common complaints were from patrons who found the mixture of result types confusing or had difficulty in locating some items.
Teaching Novice Users

Teaching search strategies in Multi-Search requires only a few pointers:
- Use quotation marks around phrases
- Use asterisk for truncation
- Similar to Google and GIL-Find searching

No real need to teach Boolean or subject headings.
Teaching Novice Users

- Point-of-need for instruction is in the results instead of the search interface.
- Simple search, but results may land novice users in the deep end of the pool.
Teaching Novice Users

English 1102 examples:

- **The Good**: Flannery O'Connor's "Good Country People"
- **The Bad (but Teachable)**: Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest"
- **The Ugly**: Susan Glaspell's "Trifles"
Teaching Novice Users

IL Competencies:

- Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus
- Identifies formats and publication types
- Describes general v. subject-specific information sources and differences among disciplinary approaches to a topic
Strategies for Teaching:

○ Start the session with an evaluation exercise such as comparing a scholarly and a popular article before going online.
○ Borrow a student's search that didn't work well in the discovery service and show the class the same search in a single database.
○ Don't get bogged down in explaining the "why" of baffling results.
Teaching Novice Users

You're not required to use it! (But your students will be using it).

A more targeted database may be a better resource for some classes and assignments.

A discovery service can be a gateway to subject-specific databases.
Teaching Advanced Users

Instruct advanced users in pros and cons:

- **Pros**
  - Vast amount of information indexed
    - Get a feel for "what's out there" in multiple fields
    - Can better search for narrow topics
  - Save time repeating searches in different databases
  - Helps advanced users broaden their awareness of other sources of information
Teaching Advanced Users - cont

- **Cons**
  - Vast amount of information indexed
  - Multi-Search deceptively inclusive
  - Lose database-specific capabilities
  - Advanced search is very limited
    - subject searching not advisable
    - loss of specialized limiters
  - Less familiar than tried and true databases
  - Catalog issues
Teaching Advanced Users

- Basics still important: selecting keywords, using Boolean
- Discuss when discovery service or subject database best choice
  - Search strategies are different depending on choice
  - Explain what is included and what isn't
Graduate/Faculty Users

- Exhaustive Lit Reviews for Theses and Dissertations
- Tenure Reviews
  - Full text searching can locate citations.
  - Especially useful in the humanities and other disciplines not well represented in Google Scholar and WoS.
- Searching for collaborators in other disciplines
Mining the Multidisciplinary

Particularly useful for grad students/faculty with multidisciplinary interests:

- Size and scope a + for literature reviews
- Example: school gardens and childhood obesity
  - Search one instead of many, i.e. ERIC, Education Complete, MEDLINE, CAB Abstracts...
- Does not require knowledge of controlled vocabulary for specific subject disciplines to find results
Conclusions

- Not a "silver bullet"
- Students are going to find and use it no matter what
- Lots of grey area when teaching EDS
- Need to integrate into instruction from the beginning
Questions?

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