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Title of Paper: Discovering scholarly resources: the student experience

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ABSTRACT

University students expect online scholarly resources to be clearly presented on the library website and easy to access. However, the myriad of navigation pathways on many university library websites often serve to hide the treasures in the library's collections and frustrate students. Evidence shows that many students resort to searching Google to find material for their assignments [1]. And libraries are trying to adapt and meet students' expectations for a clearer, simpler interface to online resources.

Library web scale discovery products have appeared in recent years to meet the demand for a simpler, unified approach to searching scholarly resources. They are being hailed as a game changer for university and research libraries that will bring students back to using the library's valuable online resources [2]. Several web scale discovery products have appeared on the market and promise a Google-type searching interface that will engage students. However there is, as yet, a dearth of end-user studies to confirm this promise.

In 2010 Edith Cowan University (ECU) Library introduced Serials Solutions' *Summon*, a web scale discovery product that was re-branded at ECU as *Library OneSearch*. During the implementation phase the library's website was redesigned and several database and catalogue search boxes were replaced with a single *Library OneSearch* box. Indications pointed to a positive reception by students, but the library needed to understand more fully how students actually behave when searching for specific information on the new platform. Therefore a series of end-user studies were embarked upon in which several groups of students were observed as they conducted some typical assignment topic searches.

This paper describes and reports the findings of these studies which were undertaken during 2010 and 2011. Specifically it is a study of how groups of undergraduate students navigated to and within the new discovery system and conducted some library searches. The paper presents and analyses the data, testing the hypothesis that a one search web scale discovery solution is simple to use, reduces student frustration, and delivers satisfactory results on a selection of typical library search tasks. The paper also examines whether providing one search box, with the library catalogue link made less prominent, provides an effective interface for users.

Additionally, during the studies the researchers noted particular in the student study groups that indicate that there is a need to re-evaluate what is taught to students in library research skills training. The paper also reports on this as an emerging issue — that is whether the content of future library research skills training should be altered to reflect changed information seeking behaviours of students searching on a web scale discovery platform.

REFERENCES

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