A Case Study on the Impact of Web-Scale Discovery Services on the use of Reference

Doug Way, Grand Valley State University
A Case Study on the Impact of Web-Scale Discovery Services on the use of Reference

Doug Way
Grand Valley State University Libraries
Brief Background

• GVSU
  – Reference Collection
    • Electronic
    • Catalog as primary finding aide
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Brief Background

• GVSU
  – Reference Collection
    • Electronic
    • Catalog as primary finding aide
  – Discovery Service
    • Launched fall 2009
Collection Use after Launching Summon

• Examined three journal packages and three reference packages
Journal Use After Summon
Journal Use After Summon: Up 35% 

### Full Text Downloads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ProjectMUSE</td>
<td>13,467</td>
<td>15,495</td>
<td>18,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springer</td>
<td>24,079</td>
<td>32,248</td>
<td>34,656</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elsevier</td>
<td>48,202</td>
<td>63,248</td>
<td>119,959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reference Use After Summon

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Reference Use After Summon: Down 11%
What Questions does this Raise?

• Adding MARC records to the OPAC increased use of reference. But why after launching our discovery service did reference use go down?

• Do students have a need for background information?
Research on Student Reference Use

• Project Information Literacy study on students’ use of Wikipedia

Do Students Use Reference Sources?
Project Information Literacy Study

Sources Students Use for Background information

- Course Readings: 97%
- Google: 95%
- Scholarly Databases: 93%
- OPAC: 90%
- Instructors: 87%
- Wikipedia: 85%
- Encyclopedias: 61%
Do Students Use Reference Sources?

Project Information Literacy Study

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Do Students Use Reference Sources?

Project Information Literacy Study

Reasons students use *Wikipedia*

- Obtain Background Info or a Summary: 82%
- Get Started on Assignment: 76%
- Find the Meaning of Terms: 67%
- Citations at Bottom of Entry: 54%
Students Use Reference Sources?
Project Information Literacy Study

• What makes *Wikipedia* a valuable resource to students
  – Coverage
  – Currency
  – Comprehensibility
  – Convenience
  – Ease of use

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Ease and Convenience Matter

- Major reasons students use Google and Wikipedia
Ease and Convenience Matter

- Major reasons students use Google and Wikipedia.
Ease and Convenience Matter

• Major reasons students use Google and Wikipedia
• What Google offers vs. what the library offers
Search Results: Your search for **abraham lincoln** returned 189,290 results

**Abraham Lincoln: vampire hunter**
by Grahame-Smith, Seth
Vampires
[Book: DUE 10-14-11, Steelcase Bestsellers]

**Abraham Lincoln: great American historians on our sixteenth president**
by Swain, Susan and Lamb, Brian
Presidents, Anniversaries, etc
[Book: LIB USE ONLY, SEIDMAN Lincoln & Civil War]

**Abraham Lincoln**
by McPherson, James M
Presidents
[Book: LIB USE ONLY, SEIDMAN Lincoln & Civil War]

**Abraham Lincoln**
by McGovern, George S
Presidents, Politics and government
[Book: LIB USE ONLY, SEIDMAN Lincoln & Civil War]

**Abraham Lincoln: a life**
What does this all mean?

At GVSU, the implementation of web-scale discovery has not had a positive impact on the use of reference. Students still show a need for background information.
What does this all mean?

Do discovery services need to improve to increase access to reference sources?

At GVSU, the implementation of web-scale discovery has not had a positive impact on the use of reference.

Students still show a need for background information.
What can Vendors Do?

• Work Together to Improve Access to Reference Sources
Serials Solutions Summon™ Service Expands Content Available from Oxford University Press

September 20, 2011
Posted in: Press Releases, The Summon Blog

SEATTLE – September 20, 2011 — Serials Solutions, a business unit of ProQuest LLC, today announced that researchers will soon be able to discover content from Credo’s Acclaimed Content to Enrich Serials Solutions Summon™ Service.

Background Information and Reference Content Will Benefit Researchers When Exploring New Concepts

Serials Solutions, a business unit of ProQuest LLC, and Credo Reference, the award-winning online reference library, today announced that researchers will soon be able to discover content from Credo’s General Reference, Publisher and Subject Collections from the Summon™ service web-scale discovery service.

With this new agreement, the Summon™ service will now include results from Credo’s reference content—together with Credo Topic Pages—providing the overview and background information that researchers need when beginning to explore a new topic.

“The amount of information available online continues to grow while research options become more complex. That’s why it is important for Credo Reference to work with services like Summon,” said Mike Sweet, Credo Reference CEO. “General reference information is often essential to people as they work to develop a baseline of knowledge and information upon which to build. In addition, today’s library users expect general reference information to be readily available. Given this, we feel it is important that our acclaimed content is indexed in the Summon service.”
What can Vendors Do?

• Work Together to Improve Access to Reference Sources

• Meet the Google Standard
  – Easy & Seamless
What can Vendors Do?
What can Vendors Do?

- Refinements
- Full-text indexing
- Moving reference to the top
  - Adding weight to reference results
- Mirror the Google experience
What if we’re asking the wrong question?
What if we’re asking the wrong question?

What if it has nothing to do with discovery services and everything to do with user behavior?

Should we continue to build reference collections?

Whose behavior needs changing? Ours’ or our users’?

How do we meet users where they are at?