



On March 21 - 23, 2011, I attended the 29th annual Computers in Libraries Conference* in Washington, D.C. The theme for this year's conference was 'Strategic focus and value for library communities'. I thoroughly enjoyed this conference and I would highly recommend attending.

There is a lot of information available at this conference and at times one can be torn on which direction to take. Rest assured - no matter which session you choose you will not be disappointed. There are 5 tracks of information each with a particular theme. There are also preconference and post-conference workshops that add extra value to this conference. Just over 1500 people were in attendance this year and although this was not record breaking, organizers were pleased with this year's attendance.

Each day began with a keynote speaker and each information track followed from there. We had ample breaks to visit the exhibitor's booths and stretch our legs.

Super searcher strategies and tips

Mary Ellen Bates, Bates Information Services Inc. <http://www.batesinfo.com/>

1. Google's "AROUND" feature

You need all caps for this feature. Compare this search with 'and'.

Results will be different and may show a different path to take for research.

2. Ngram viewer - data mining of Google Books

This feature shows word usage over time and can go back to the 1800's.

3. Google and content farms, aka garbage sites

On the search results page select 'block this domain'

Blocks sites from showing up in your search results. Note: seems to work best in Google Chrome. Will show results removed by personal block list.

4. Wikipedia

Considered by some searchers to be the 'dirty little secret' of research, this site can be useful when the topic is unfamiliar.

'Yahoo correlator' will only pull wikipedia content. This can be useful in getting keywords, phrases and leads. Yahoo distills the information from Wikipedia.

Concept mining - other connections maybe not thought of. Allows you to give more info back to the client.

5. Yahoo clues - demographics (only U.S. at this time)
Focuses on users on the web/ frequency of search queries and who is making queries.
Useful when you want to see who is talking about a particular topic/issue.

6. Bing <http://www.bing.com/>

Can limit results to pages from a particular site.

Example, Alzheimer's trials will bring up a lot of garbage information.

With Bing you can specify that search results only come from sites the Alzheimer's Society has links to. Your results will be from relevant sources and you won't have to wade through as much garbage

7. Duckduckgo <http://duckduckgo.com/>

Disambiguation - shows alternative uses of words, page is scrolling; no bottom page.

This site doesn't track your search results so it won't effect future searches by trying to link to previous searches. Every query is fresh.

8. Blekko <http://blekko.com/>

Eliminates useless content, fewer junk sites/ cleaner results.

Has specialized pages, 'likes', connections to people, groups, social network.

What are your peers saying? Can sort results.

9. Wayback machine.org

This site has been revamped, beta version. Easier to use. Useful timeline feature.

10. FaganFinder.com

This site can replace Google on a cleaner level. Academic, images, easy to use.

Search Engine Update

Gregg Notess, reference librarian, Montana State University <http://notess.com/>

Behavior of searchers is changing. Death of search?

Wikipedia dominance

content farming; ehow, wikihow

content scraping, duplication

Who are the content farmers?

123 people

allexperts.com

fix ya

answerbag

ehow

Writers are paid per article, some at very little money while others are making 5 figure incomes.

Writers are looking at Google trends for topics. Articles are poorly sourced, quickly researched, information is 'scraped' from other sites and recycled into new information. Republishing info - slightly updated, shows up as 'newer'. Google is trying to get rid of content farms, removing low quality content. Google is also reducing spam. Sites like e-how are trying to stay above the spam threshold by offering better quality articles. Google blocking - seems to only work with Google Chrome. This may not be the best option as sites change and you may be missing information.

Google now offers a sidebar which is left of your search results.

Images

Videos

Books

Places

Recipes

The left hand side actually has more options than the advanced search page.

Google instant - results are showing up as you type, can be distracting. This feature can be turned on/off.

Search: Quick tips for adding value

Panel discussion

Real time search, watching what's happening.

Twitter, Facebook

can narrow, nearby

useful timeline

Bing Social

-Twitter, Facebook

Public updates

Google books, full text searching, also has download and reader features.

Google language tools

52 languages can be translated, not legally exact but good.

translate.google.com

Webcite (free) www.webcitation.org

creates permanent link to URL

specific shortcut to URL ensuring your content is always there

Website watcher <http://aignes.com/features.htm>

shows minute web changes, will highlight change

Microsoft Academic <http://academic.research.microsoft.com/>

Google Scholar on steroids

TOPSY <http://topsy.com/>

real-time search for the social web and archive of real-time tweets, photos and videos

ticTOCS <http://www.tictocs.ac.uk/>

journal table of contents (consortium lead by U.K. university)

BASE (UK) <http://www.base-search.net/>

Bielefeld Academic search engine

scholarly internet resources

Google books project

Dr. James Crawford, Engineering Director, Google Books

Dr. James Crawford , Engineering Director from Google books gave some insight on the current project that Google is working on. Google's goal is to scan the world's books. Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it accessible, searchable and useful. If you have ever tried a search for a particular article connected with a particular author you can come to a quick conclusion that not everything is on the Internet.

There is huge depth in books and texts can still be the best choice for information. Google wants to give the best answer possible and that is why books are so important. Currently Google has scanned over 15 million books, going back to 1473. A large portion of scans have come from European libraries where there are a lot of books in the public domain.

Newer books (under 2 years) are supplied by the publishers, the spine is cut and pages are scanned in a high end xerox machine. The process for older books is much more complicated. Older books are treated very carefully and receive the same treatment as if the book were being read by a person. The book is placed in a cradle where there is a camera on each side. Google uses optical character recognition to help with the quality of the page .This process is very challenging considering the distortion from some of the pages. Google works very hard to correct word errors in the books they have scanned. Metadata is also a huge part of the project -when we are looking for a particular book we need the know date published, publisher, author's name and so on. Dates are very important because they will determine if the book is in the public domain: can you read the whole book from end to end or just partial pages as determined by the publisher? Once Google has scanned a book the book is returned to the host library and that library also receives a copy of the scan for their own collection.

What are people doing with Google books?

- research use
- sample books
- looking for books to read

Of course this project is not without controversy. Google has been accused of copyright infringement on a grand scale. Google has scanned books without author's and publisher's consent. Many people see Google as swallowing up the world's books and having the ultimate

monopoly on the world's knowledge. At the time of the conference this Supreme court case decision was announced:

http://www.archive.org/stream/UsDistrictCourtNyDecisionAuthorsGuildV.Google/chin_asa_decision#page/n0/mode/2up

Dancing with digital natives

Michelle Manafy <http://www.econtentmag.com/About/AboutAuthor.aspx?AuthorID=1>

The term 'digital native' was introduced in 2001 by Mark Prensky, who said youth today 'speak the digital language'. The youth of today have had life long immersion in digital media. By the time kids finish college they will have spent more than 10,000 hours playing video games, they will have sent and received over 200,000 emails and texts and will have spent over 10,000 hours talking on their cell phones. Although many of us have embraced the digital technologies into our personal and working lives we are only 'digital immigrants', having taken up the technologies later in life. By 2018, digital natives will have transformed the workplace, allowing them to learn and work in ways that others cannot. Michelle went on to explain three keys to engaging digital natives.

1. Public opinion - not private lives

Kids these days are living their lives more publicly. The digital native is concerned about public opinion not private lives. Michelle went on to give examples of sites:

IJustMadeLove.com, Facebook and Twitter.

Police are now using such social sites to monitor gang activity because gang members like to talk about their activities.

In the library we need to allow patrons to sign on to log into our sites. This means creating a Facebook or Twitter page.

2. Knowledge sharing not knowledge hoarding

One of the interesting examples Michelle used was the Haul video series on YouTube where <http://www.youtube.com/> people share their shopping stories.

Shoppers share information on their purchases, where they got the best deal etc.

Another example was a site called 'Quirky' www.quirky.com where the community decides what products will be produced. The 'inventor' pitches his idea to the 'community' and if the idea is a winner the inventor will get paid and the idea gets put into production.

Large corporations have also recognized the value of knowledge sharing. IBM DeveloperWorks and P&G Connect + Develop also allow community input. Think of the possibilities! Your target market comes to you with their ideas and you can develop products/services they are already looking for.

3. Interactions - not transactions

This generation has been raised on social capitalism; things like ratings, reviews and followers on social sites. In relation to libraries this means we need to interact with our patrons. A library which does an incredible job of interacting with their patrons is Hennepin County Library <http://www.hclib.org/> and their BookSpace project.

In conclusion we need to be forward thinking and perhaps experiment with techniques necessary to engage our 'digital natives'. We can learn much from them.

Frankenbooks?

Stephen Abrams <http://stephenslighthouse.com/>

The following is a synopsis of the e-book presentation given by Stephen Abrams.

There is a lot to consider when we look at e-books. Studies have shown there are 7 styles of learning which is DNA coded into each one of us. How do we engage learners, researchers, teachers, curriculum heads to agree on reforming their textbooks to the e-book format?

We have the fiction versus non-fiction reading experience. Fiction reading is an end-to-end experience while textbook reading is usually selected chapters/ pages.

Device issues are huge with the amount of devices offering e-readers. How would you enhance a book? What framework would you use? We cannot take the old format and just convert it to electronic. Can we make learning more intuitive with ebooks? We need to look at the reading experience itself - not the device. Mobility is key, people want to be able to read on their iphone, ipad, ereader, etc. Another problem is monopolization of the world's books. Google has offered a 'single station per library' model. Can you picture how useful this would be in a university library setting?

As librarians we need to be mindful of mobile dominance, wireless as a business strategy and that the largest generation is here and using this technology now. Multimedia and integration is the future. What is a book? Why do people read? How do we engage with all the technologies we have in front of us now? Serve everyone! We need to move faster!

Thinking Strategically and Critically: Seeing Possibilities

Rebecca Jones , Dysart & Jones <http://dysartjones.com/>

"It's too risky to NOT be different in this economy", Stephen Abrams

Rebecca has developed a process she calls 'Stand in the Future'. This process is about creating new thought processes and getting people involved in change.

The group is asked to close their eyes and imagine the ideal workplace situation in 3 years.

Rebecca actually marks the floor into a rectangle with masking tape and labels the floor '2014'.

Part of the group is asked to move into the area and describe 2014 to the rest of the group in the present tense. This results in getting input from all levels in the group. Blocks of action are put together and everyone sees how their work fits together. Not everyone is comfortable with change. Don't focus on the 20% who are whining - go with the 80% who are happy.

Look at retail models for ideas. Be a listener. Develop your curiosity!

Organizational intelligence: raising library value

Sabrina Pacifici, bespacific.com

Four approaches to orgintel:

1. Search for clues - who owns what? intranet, email forwarding
2. Finding the pulse of your organization - where, what, are the conversations? Facebook, Twitter, blogs?
3. Go beyond the organizational chart - what can you find out? Social tools, who needs content? Marketing? HR?
4. Visibility and openness - who else should know about us? What else can we give you? Participate in the social web - don't be a lurker! Step out and share information.

In short, make use of the beauty of being Switzerland! The library is a neutral entity, non-threatening and is in an advantage point in your company. Illustrate your expertise; own and act on it! Direct specific information to specific people, don't wait for someone to ask - just give! The Canadian Federal Government has an internal twitter account allowing for interaction between employees and departments. Make use of your firm intranet and have a link to your library.

Effective workflows for multi-gens

Colleen Harris, Head of Access Services, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga.

<http://utc.academia.edu/ColleenHarris>

I attended this session thinking it was about working with different generations on a client/lawyer basis for example. This session was actually about workflows in your library and how to be effective incorporating all levels of your staff. Although a lot of this presentation relates to larger staffed academic libraries, there are a few nuggets which can be applied to any library.

Generally there can be four generations in your library staff. Not to generalize by age but there are a few characteristics attributed to each generation.

Veterans - time based work, job well done, dedicated to organization.

Baby Boomers - original workaholics, status symbol oriented.

Gen-X - work/life balance, free agents, no long term loyalty.

Gen-Y - multi-taskers, like to work in teams, tech savvy, high need for praise.

Stressors

There are many stressors facing libraries today. We have budget issues, digital format uncertainty and technology is moving faster than ever. Our staff is over extended with increased work loads and the need to learn new technologies fast. We need to negotiate with staff as to who does what. Don't make generational assumptions. For example, your twenty-something library assistant may not be tech savvy but your 50-something researcher has a keen interest in social websites. We need to talk to our staff and try to ease them into change and new technologies. In dealing with rapid change there will often be a skills gap. You cannot hold people accountable for performance if they have not received training skills to perform those tasks. Cross-training is very valuable and can ease the stress of new situations and applications.

Miscellaneous blogs and websites of interest

bespacific.com Sabrina I. Pacifici

Accurate, focused law and technology news. Can sign up for email updates.

librarianinblack.net blog by Sarah Houghton, assistant director, San Raphael Public library

Ontario Library Service <http://downloadcentre.library.on.ca/B511D8C8-4065-48E0-8922-4884F5E6071D/10/644/en/default.htm>

State of the art library - check it out! Sponsored by the Ontario Minister of Culture.

overdrive.com ebooks, digital rights management, making choices available for libraries.

State Library of Western Australia <http://slwa.wa.gov.au/>

This library offers live help for users as well as an option to leave feedback.

IssueMap.org

Upload your raw data and create thematic maps. Can also share online.

Bitly <http://bit.ly/>

Shortens long urls. Share, track and analyze your links.

Canadian politics - join the conversation!

<http://politwitter.ca/canadian-government>

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