Evaluating the digital library: 2: Use of electronic search engines by academics in their research

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Users and uses of digital library module:

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Introduction

- Reason for evaluation
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion

Reason for evaluation

- Wide range of commercial (expensive)   databases
- Wide range of free databases (including Google Scholar)
- Specific search skills needed
- MetaLib portal provided by University Library
- Demonstrate Library is involved in research process

Methodology

- One to one interviews with 10 academic researchers

- Semi-structured interview template covering :

1. Understanding of term 'electronic search engine'
2. Where searching the literature fits into their research
3. Search strategies with search engines
4. Views on search engines

- Questions piloted first with Library staff doing interviews

Results (1)

- All researchers were experienced with search engines
- All used Google a lot but also used commercial databases
- Recognition that never had access to so much information before
- Most often used at the beginning of research project

Results (2)

- Most just used small number of databases/ search engines
- High level of awareness of search strategies
- Wide range in time periods searched (1940 - compared to 2006)
- MetaLib met with mixed reception (difficult to use)
- Google seen as being good because of ease of use and speed but…..
- People aware of its deficiencies

Library

Loughborough University

Discussion and conclusions

- Academics would like single search engine for everything
- Search engines are important in research
- Access to full text from search engines is important
- Need to make sure new researchers are aware of Library portal
- Importance to increase researchers' awareness of databases and search engines
- Important to work with MetaLib supplier (ExLibris) to improve service

Survey can be found at…

- http://www.lboro.ac.uk/library/about/PDFs/elecsurv.pdf