

Faculty Interview Study

SEARCHING AND ACCESSING SCHOLARLY MATERIAL
ANALYSIS OF HEALTH SCIENCES PARTICIPANTS

Table of Contents

Background	1
Results Summary	1
Results Analysis	2
Demographics	2
1. What kind of things do you try to find?	2
2. What access tools do you use?	3
3. When you try to locate a specific piece of scholarly literature that you already know about but do not have in hand, how do you most often begin your process?	3
4. When you explore the scholarly literature to find new books and journal articles relevant to your teaching needs or research interest, how do you most often begin your process?	4
5. Could you show me the process you normally follow to locate a specific piece of scholarly literature?	4
6. Could you show me the process you normally follow when exploring scholarly literature to find new books and journal articles?	5
7. What do you normally do when you identify a book or article that is not available through Dal Libraries?	6
8. & 11. Do you have any other feedback/suggestions regarding accessing scholarly materials you need for your teaching and research purposes? & Any other comments?	7
9. & 10. Would you be interested in library instruction on best search practices and methods to access material? & What form would you like that instruction to take?	9
Appendix A: Accessing Scholarly Resources: Faculty Interviews script/documentation	

Background

This interview study was conducted to gather insight into faculty's perceptions and user behaviour regarding the activities of searching and accessing scholarly material. It was precipitated by the results of LibQual 2013 (which indicated that faculty in Arts & Social Sciences and Health Sciences were dissatisfied with "easy to use access tools that allow me to find things on my own" [question IC-6]) and the Libraries' ongoing commitment to support research. To prepare for this study, the Assessment Librarian consulted with assessment colleagues through the ARL Assessment listserv and reviewed the Ithaka Faculty Survey.

A Faculty Interview Study team was assembled to construct and test interview questions and to conduct the interviews. Membership consisted of Gwendolyn MacNairn (Discovery Team), Shelley McKibbin (Web Committee), Michelle Paon (Faculty Liaison), and Linda Bedwell (Assessment Librarian). An email invitation from the University Librarian was prepared and sent to the faculties. Subject liaison librarians were also encouraged to send the invitation to their departments. When very few volunteers came forward, subject liaisons were asked to suggest some faculty who may be willing to participate and the Assessment Librarian contacted these faculty members directly with an invitation.

Interviews were conducted April-June, 2015, in faculty members' offices, using a prepared list of questions (see Appendix A). The interviewers took notes and used an audio recorder (by permission) in order to capture as much data as possible. Ethics approval was not required as this study is for assessment purposes only (see article 2.5 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans); however, participants signed a statement that their responses would be anonymized in results reporting.

Although participation from the Health Sciences was low (11 interviews), there were common response themes in the data and a fair representation from across the disciplines. While the findings in the FASS report (February 2016) more conclusively support the findings of LibQual 2013, the results of the Health Sciences interviews are less supportive, except for one exception: difficulties with the sfx page. It is hoped that findings of this report and the FASS interview report will be taken into consideration by all Libraries' staff as they discuss potential changes and improvements and as they plan for more rigorous assessments of our services and resources.

Results Summary

The following are broad, common themes that emerged from the interview data:

- Health Sciences faculty have well practiced, reliable methods for searching and accessing scholarly information.
- Health Sciences faculty are fairly heavy users of the Libraries' website.
- Less than half of the respondents interpreted scholarly information to mean books; Health Sciences faculty seem to most often search for scholarly articles.
- Discipline-specific journal article databases (usually PubMed and CINAHL) are the most common search tools used to locate scholarly material.

- Because discipline-specific journal article databases are so heavily used, Health Sciences faculty gravitate towards access tools that feature quick links to databases, such as the Health Sciences Research page on the Libraries' website and the Dalhousie Drug Information Resources page on the university website.
- Document delivery is well used; however, several faculty complained that the service is cumbersome and not user-friendly.
- Additional comments were given (see analysis for questions 8 & 11 in this report). Further data gathering should be considered for some of the concerns raised, particularly regarding e-books, the Libraries' website, and the sfx page.

Results Analysis

(Please see Appendix A for the full questions.)

Demographics

Some participant demographic data was gathered to see if there were any commonalities associated with particular responses to questions. In general, there didn't appear to be any common characteristics among folks who answered a question a certain way. We did, however, gather the following information:

All 11 participants stated they used either a laptop or office computer for searching/accessing scholarly resources. None used a mobile device.

There was a fair mix of on and off campus users. 5 searched and accessed material mostly from on-campus, 3 mostly from off-campus, and 3 said they were equally on and off campus users.

Years at Dal ranged from 3 to 29 years.

Breakdown of respondents by department is as follows:

Occupational Therapy: 1
 Respiratory Therapy: 1
 Nursing: 1
 Human Communication Disorders: 1
 Social Work: 1
 Physiotherapy: 2
 Pharmacy: 2
 Medical Neuroscience/Psychiatry: 1
 Health and Human Performance: 1

1. What kind of things do you try to find?

Questions 1 and 2 try to mimic the wording of the LibQual question, "Easy to use access tools that allow me to find things on my own". The intention here was not only to ascertain the types of information faculty seek, but also to measure how respondents interpret the LibQual terms: "access tools" and

“things”. Only 1 of the 11 respondents asked for clarification of “things.” Another respondent adopted the language of the question, stating that he/she tries to find “things,” without specifying the nature of the materials. 10 out of 11 stated they try to find articles and 6 listed off other types of materials

Articles (or journals): 10

Books: 5

Databases: 1

“Things”: 1

2. What access tools do you use?

No respondents required clarification of “access tools”. The majority of participants listed off discipline-specific databases, as well as the search interface on the Libraries’ website to locate information in their field. Google and Google Scholar are also commonly used, and 2 said they use specific websites. In addition to these, 4 respondents listed off other access tools.

Specific databases: 9

Libraries’ website/single search: 6

Google: 5

Google Scholar: 3

Specific websites: 2

Libraries’ website – Health Sciences Research: 1

University website – Dalhousie Drug Information Resources (Dal DIR): 1

Subject Guide: 1

Novanet Classic: 1

Amazon: 1

3. When you try to locate a specific piece of scholarly literature that you already know about but do not have in hand, how do you most often begin your process?

Questions 3 & 4 mimic “Discovery” questions 1 & 2 in the Ithaka Faculty Survey.

For the most part, faculty answered this question by interpreting “scholarly literature” to mean articles. It seems that the Health Sciences are less book-focused than many other disciplines. Only 1 respondent interpreted “scholarly literature” to mean books and 4 out of 11 respondents explicitly stated during the interview that their use of books is infrequent.

Specific databases and the articles search option on the Libraries’ website were the most popular tools for locating specific items. The respondent who spoke of locating specific books commented that he/she uses the books search option on the Libraries’ website. 1 respondent did not list any specific access tools; instead, he/she spoke quite vaguely of opening up articles (without stating how or from where).

Articles

Specific database: 5

Libraries' website – Articles+ search: 2

Google: 1

Google Scholar: 1

Libraries' website – database search: 1

University website – Dalhousie Drug Information Resources (Dal DIR): 1

Books

Libraries' website – Books+ search: 1

4. When you explore the scholarly literature to find new books and journal articles relevant to your teaching needs or research interest, how do you most often begin your process?

All responded in general, rather than specifically for articles or books. 1 respondent commented that he/she “rarely” explores the literature.

It appears that faculty have well-worn, tried and true search behaviors. Most respondents stated they use specific databases for this type of exploration and there was consistent overlap in the databases cited: PubMed and CINAHL were common tools. Of the 2 respondents who did not use specific databases for exploration of the scholarly literature, 1 used specific journals while the other used the articles search on the Libraries' website.

Specific databases: 9

Specific journals: 1

Google Scholar: 2

Google: 1

“run across”/serendipity: 1

Publisher catalogues/emails: 1

Libraries' website – Articles+ website: 1

5. Could you show me the process you normally follow to locate a specific piece of scholarly literature?

Questions 5 and 6 are duplicates of questions 3 and 4, only the interviewee was asked to show us what they do, rather than tell us.

For question 5, only 3 of 11 respondents showed us a somewhat different route than how they answered in question 3. 1 of these 3 was the same respondent who was vague about their answer in question 3. The other 2 stated that they use specific databases to locate specific literature in question 3, yet while demonstrating this practice in question 5, both revealed an additional first step: one respondent first

used the database search on the Libraries' website to access specific databases and the other accessed databases from the Health Sciences Research page on the Libraries' website.

While there was little overlap in responses to question 5, the Health Sciences Research page of the Libraries' website was the most popular starting point for respondents looking for articles. Those who started here explained that they appreciated the page's quick links to relevant databases and many had bookmarked the page for easy access. 1 respondent used the Dalhousie Drug Information Resources (Dal DIR) page, similarly stating that he/she prefers this page to the main Libraries' website because of its convenient quick links to databases. It appears that many faculty gravitate towards access tools that prominently feature their preferred databases, such as PubMed and CINAHL, to ensure quick and easy access.

Of the 11 respondents, only 2 demonstrated how they find books. Again, this is likely due to the fact that Health Sciences faculty are not heavily book-focused.

2 out of 11 ran into different problems as they showed us how they search and access material: reading availability details in New Novanet and navigating back to the Libraries' website from the sfx screen.

Articles

Libraries' website – Health Sciences Research – Select database: 3

Libraries' website - Articles+ search: 2

Specific database: 2

Libraries' website – Database search: 1

Libraries' website – eJournals search: 1

University website – Dalhousie Drug Information Resources (Dal DIR): 1

Google Scholar: 1

Books

Novanet Classic: 1

Libraries' website - Books+ search: 1

6. Could you show me the process you normally follow when exploring scholarly literature to find new books and journal articles?

4 respondents showed us a different process than their response to question 4. Again, this difference can be attributed to respondents introducing an additional beginning step when accessing specific databases: 2 respondents began their search with the database search on the Libraries' website, 1 used the Health Sciences Research page, and 1 used the Dal DIR page.

While most respondents showed us what they use when exploring *either* articles or books, 2 respondents explained a more general approach to exploration: 1 searched specific websites and 1 stated he/she tends to pass on exploration tasks to a Research Assistant. For exploring articles, specific databases were the most popular tool, often accessed through the Libraries' or university website. For exploring books, respondents revealed they use a variety of tools (there was no overlap between answers).

8 of the 11 respondents use the search/discovery tools supported by Dal Libraries and 1 uses a tool supported by the university (Dal DIR). The remaining 2 use external search tools: Google Scholar and specific websites.

General

Specific websites: 1

Pass work to Research Assistant: 1

Articles

Libraries' website - Articles+ search: 1

Libraries' website – Database search: 2

Libraries' website – Health Sciences Research – Select database: 1

University website – Dalhousie Drug Information Resources (Dal DIR): 1

Specific databases: 3

Google Scholar: 1

Books

Novanet Classic: 1

Libraries' website– Books+ search: 1

Browse physical library stacks: 1

Google: 1

Google Scholar: 1

Amazon: 1

7. What do you normally do when you identify a book or article that is not available through Dal Libraries?

For the most part, this question was already answered during the preceding questions. 9 of the 11 respondents indicated that they use document delivery/ILL. Of this 9, 2 stated that rarely use the service but have in the past, and 1 indicated that he/she uses document delivery/ILL all the time.

2 respondents said they never request items. One of these respondents complained that there are too many steps involved in requesting an item. When an article isn't available, this respondent explained that he/she is more likely to find another similar article that we *do* have access to or request an article from the Capital Health Library than to use document delivery/ILL.

Of the 9 who said they use document delivery/ILL, 4 had complaints: signing in with a barcode is cumbersome, the overall request process is not user-friendly, scanned articles are not always good quality (especially charts and graphs); however, 4 professed their love of the service; e.g., “an excellent service” and “very efficient”.

8. & 11. Do you have any other feedback/suggestions regarding accessing scholarly materials you need for your teaching and research purposes? & Any other comments?

This section combines the answers to questions 8 and 11 with random comments that came up in answers to other questions. Content in this section should be seen much as the responses in an open-ended comments box – this data does not reflect an adequate measure of faculty's satisfaction with the items they brought up. Rather it merely reflects what individuals thought of at the time to comment on. For example, 4 respondents thought to provide comments about e-reserves. If we had specifically asked all the interviewees about their satisfaction with e-reserves, we may have found that many more than 4 had comments. Data gathered in this section therefore may indicate that we should formally gather further data on some of the following topics in order to inform future planning/decisions.

- Libraries' Website

negative: 4

positive: 1

All 4 respondents who made negative comments about the Libraries' website stated that they found navigating the website challenging. 2 of these 4 explained that they had to bookmark the Health Sciences Research page because they otherwise have trouble finding it. 1 respondent stated he/she finds the Dal DIR page to be more user-friendly. Another respondent complained that video tutorials on the Libraries' website are particularly hard to find, commenting that his/her students also have trouble locating them.

1 respondent spoke positively of the website, mentioning that it always meets his/her needs.

- Collections

negative: 1

suggestion: 1

1 respondent complained that book access is frustrating: often, the books the respondent wants are not available at Dalhousie Libraries and he/she finds document delivery/ILL too cumbersome to use.

1 respondent suggested that any textbook required for a course should be purchased as either an eBook or a print book.

- BBLearn/e-reserves

negative: 1

positive: 3

1 respondent complained that the process of requesting e-reserves online is too complicated and not user-friendly; he/she prefers to visit the library to make the request in person. This respondent also mentioned that, in the past, he/she has met the May deadline for fall term e-reserves requests but the

library wrongly assumed the request was for the summer term and the request was wiped clean by September.

3 respondents remarked that the e-reserves are an excellent and helpful service.

- eBooks

negative: 4

suggestion: 1

The negative comments for this item were fairly consistent: not user-friendly, interfaces vary and are frustrating to use, transition from print to digital creates formatting irregularities. 1 respondent commented he/she wished there was more explicit indication/explanation of access rules (how much can be printed and downloaded) for each eBook.

One participant suggested that the library should purchase as many books in electronic format as possible, stating that both students and faculty want access to resources but don't want to have to actually visit the library.

- Get it@Dal/sfx screen

negative: 4

Once again, the negative comments for this item were fairly consistent. 3 respondents complained that journal dead ends are very frustrating: for example, 1 respondent stated, "You can click, click, click, expecting to eventually get the article, and just when you think it will be the next click, you find out it will cost you \$30 to access the full text." Another respondent mentioned that sometimes the Get it@Dal icon does not show up. When this first happened, the respondent assumed that Dal did not have access to the particular article. He/she filled out a request for document delivery and then was informed that Dal did have access. This respondent commented, "PubMed doesn't seem to be fully connected with our library resources."

- New Novanet

negative: 1

positive: 1

1 respondent commented that he/she wished you could save search results in new Novanet; this respondent often loses track of results while clicking to get access to a particular item through sfx. 1 respondent liked using new Novanet's eShelf feature.

- Single Search (on Libraries' homepage)

negative: 1

1 respondent commented that the single search is ineffective when searching for articles and books and brings too many irrelevant results ("a bunch of stuff I don't want").

- Subject Guides

positive: 1

neither negative/positive: 1

1 respondent stated that the subject guides are very useful for both students and faculty, particularly when the guides include links to textbooks in the library catalogue. Another respondent explained that he/she thinks the subject guides are more appropriate for student use, but this respondent also mentioned he/she would like to see Dal DIR and the relevant subject guides more connected.

- Novanet Classic

both negative and positive: 1

1 respondent commented that keeping Novanet Classic is a good choice but the interface itself is not intuitive: despite using Novanet Classic quite frequently, the respondent is still unsure how to navigate search results.

- Library/Librarian

positive: 9

both positive and negative: 1

9 of 11 respondents remarked positively and enthusiastically about their general library experiences and interactions with librarians: 1 respondent described his/her librarian as “top notch,” 1 stated that he/she has never had a bad experience with the Kellogg Library, and 1 commented that he/she is in “disbelief about all the wonderful things the library and librarians do.” The only complaint came from 1 respondent who said that his/her subject librarian is “amazing and helpful” but also “so busy” that students often have to wait 2-3 weeks to see her.

9. & 10. Would you be interested in library instruction on best search practices and methods to access material? & What form would you like that instruction to take?

6 of the 11 respondents answered no. Of these 6, 5 stated they always appreciate library instruction for their students but do not need it themselves.

5 answered a definite yes; and from the choices of instruction offered in question 10, 1 chose “one-on-one”, 1 chose small group instruction, 2 chose online instruction, 1 chose video tutorials, and 1 chose “pop-up tips”. 2 respondents emphasized that online instruction materials, which can be accessed and utilized by faculty and students at their convenience, are strongly preferred.

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29 June 2016

Linda Bedwell

Assessment Librarian

Accessing Scholarly Resources: Faculty Interviews

- Remind participant of purpose of the interview. (Original invitation is attached.)
- Have participant sign the consent form (attached).
- If off-campus user, and you have not already reported IP address of device they most commonly use to LITS, obtain and report IP address now. (David’s number: 902-471-0207)

Fill in as much as possible ahead of time:

Department: _____ example of a specific book/article: _____

Position: _____

Years as faculty at Dal: _____ example of a search topic: _____

On/off campus user? _____

Device most commonly used to access scholarly resources: _____

QUESTIONS

Warm-up:

1. What kind of things do you try to find?

2. What access tools do you use?

Tell Me:

3. When you try to locate a specific piece of scholarly literature that you already know about but do not have in hand, how do you most often begin your process? (prompts: for example, you know the book/journal/article title, or author’s name?)

Appendix A

4. When you explore the scholarly literature to find new books and journal articles relevant to your teaching needs or research interests, how do you most often begin your process? (prompts: search for both simultaneously?, use different search tools?, other publication types?, library-provided search tools? non-library search tools?)

Show me:

(use the device the faculty member most commonly uses)

(look for unavailable items within results to see if the interviewee uses document delivery)

5. Could you show me the process you normally follow to locate a specific piece of scholarly literature? (follow interviewee's process up to successful completion – i.e., they download the article/record call no. location of item available in library/complete an ILL or doc del request).
- Follow process for both a book and a journal article (if applicable). (prompts: if necessary, provide an example of a suitable book/article title)

6. Could you show me the process you normally follow when exploring scholarly literature to find new books and journal articles? (follow interviewee's process up to successful completion – i.e., they download the article/record call no. location of item available in library/complete an ILL or doc del request).
- Follow process for both a book and a journal article (if applicable). (prompts: if necessary, provide an example search topic)

Appendix A

If the interviewee does not encounter a situation where the item is only available through document delivery:

7. What do you normally do when you identify a book or article that is not available through Dal Libraries? (prompt: do you request the item?) _____

Wrap-up

8. Do you have any other feedback/suggestions regarding accessing scholarly materials you need for your teaching and research purposes? (prompt/follow-up: When you are accessing material do you run into dead-ends often? Please describe.)

9. Would you be interested in library instruction on best search practices and methods to access material? _____

10. What form would you like that instruction to take? (check all that apply)

One-on-one

Group sessions

Video tutorials

Print instructions

Online instructions

Pop-up tips

Other:

11. Any other comments?

Copy of Invitation:

Dear

The Dalhousie Libraries are seeking your assistance with the assessment of our resources and services to ensure that we are doing our best to meet your needs. In the 2013 iteration of our LibQual+® survey, it was clear that faculty respondents from Arts & Social Sciences were not satisfied with the Libraries' access tools that allow you to find scholarly resources for your teaching and research needs. For this particular assessment effort, we are asking you to volunteer for a 15-30min interview survey, to take place in your office at a time that is convenient for you. We intend to conduct the interviews during the months of April and May. Your interview responses will be held in confidence and no personal identifying information will be included in our reports. We really appreciate your assistance with this effort.

To schedule an interview, please send an email, ASAP, but no later than Friday, April 17th to: Carol.Richardson@dal.ca

If you have any questions about this effort, or library assessment efforts in general, please contact Linda Bedwell, Assessment Librarian at linda.bedwell@dal.ca

Thank you,
Donna Bourne-Tyson

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Faculty Interviews – Accessing Scholarly Resources

Dalhousie Libraries

By participating in this interview I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous and will be recorded through note-taking and a digital audio recorder. The audio recording will be deleted immediately following transcription. My participation is completely voluntary and I may opt out at any time.

No personal identifying information will be included in the assessment project final report. This report will be posted to the Dal Libraries' website and I can request a copy to be delivered to me by email.

(Signature)

Copy of report? Yes / No