Search Tool Activity Plan

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
- 20 or 30 minute session
- Instructor’s classroom
- Ask students to bring their own devices. This activity works best if at least half of the students have a device.
- 15-20 students
- Helps to have a room suited to group work (mobile chairs, etc.)

PREP FOR LIBRARIAN
- Bring one or two research topics for students to use. The librarian may want to use current events or a topic that corresponds with their research assignment requirements.
- Slides for this activity are available on the UCWR Research Guide Need Help page under my picture.
- Bring either paper or whiteboards with the different search tools (Library catalog, Academic Search Complete, Google and Google Scholar) and links (or directions) to access them. Librarian can also just quickly demo how to access the search tools.
- Optional: Create paper worksheet or online form where students respond to questions during the activity for assessment purposes.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME
Students will evaluate various search tools in order to determine the most appropriate search tool for an information need.

ACRL FRAME(S)
- Authority is constructed and contextual.
- Research as inquiry.
- Searching as strategic exploration.

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVE (GOAL)
The objective of this activity is to have students explore different search tools (Primo, Academic Search Complete, Google Scholar and Google) to determine the effectiveness of the tool for an information need. Students will also explore the various types of information available in each tools, as well as filters and limiters to refine their search results.

LEARNING ACTIVITY
Set the Stage
Engage students in a discussion regarding search tools. Questions to Consider:
- Where do you go to research “everyday things” like the weather, product reviews, etc?
- What research tools did you use in high school when you had projects that required research?
• How do you think college-level research will be different from the research you did in high school?

Present visual (available here) of differences/connections between the different search tools. Explain it briefly.

Explanation of Activity
As a group, use your assigned search tool to research a topic.
  • Another option is to have students suggest a research topic to use during the activity. If the group is not participating, you could ask for several topics and have them vote on which one they prefer to use to increase engagement.

Prep
  • Put students in small groups of 3-5 depending on class size, environment and number of laptops.
  • Assign each group a search tool – Library Catalog, Academic Search Complete, Google, Google Scholar.

While you’re searching, consider different search terms and then consider the results you get. Answer the following questions in your group:
  • What types of sources are in your results?
  • Do you feel like the results are relevant to the topic? Why or why not? (If your results aren’t relevant, consider changing your search terms.)
  • Choose 1 or 2 results that are relevant. Could you use these sources for an assignment for one of your classes?
  • What limiters are available to refine your search? (i.e. date, type of source, subject, etc.)
  • Do you have access to full-text (i.e. the actual article)?

Remind student to be prepared to talk about your findings.

Activity Time Duration
7-8 minutes. Warn students when they have one minute left.

Guided Discussion/Reflection
Ask each group to share their experience with their search tool. What types of sources? Were you able to find relevant results? What did you like about it and why? What challenges did you run into?

One way to encourage engagement during the discussion is to direct questions to specific student groups (i.e. Google Group - what types of sources did you encounter? Academic Search Complete Group - were you able to find relevant sources?)

Wrap-Up & Time for Questions
Things to consider when you’re choosing a search tool:
  • What kind of information do you need? Scholarly information? Background information?
• Do you want to browse for information on a topic? Or do you know what you’re looking for?
  ○ Google = great starting place
  ○ Google Scholar = browsing scholarly information and connects you to the library databases
  ○ Academic Search Complete = great general database and offers tons of full-text articles
  ○ Primo = one-stop shop for books, e-books & articles

ASSESSMENT (Optional) Informal: Gauge student participation/critical thinking during the activity and during the discussion. Formal: Librarian could use a paper worksheet or online form for students to write out their answers during the activity and collect the responses at the end of class. A rubric could be developed to assess students ability to evaluate the search tool.

IDEAS FOR ADAPTING THE ACTIVITY

Do the activity with entire group: Use the prepared graphic. Talk through Google and Google Scholar as a class. Briefly explain Academic Search Complete. Then focus on catalog as a search tool. Perform sample search and examine aspects of the results.

Entire group discussion: Demo searches in each tool and discuss results, types of sources, filters, etc.