Full Text Hide and Seek: Why Our Students Are Printing Abstracts Instead of Whole Articles

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“Our stuff is hard to use and not very simple to navigate for answers or resources.”

Michael Stephens, “Office Hours” *Library Journal*  
June 15, 2011

Summary of student comments from Future of Academic Libraries Symposium presented by McMaster University & Library Journal
Our Motivation

✓ Large Piles of abstracts left at the public printers at the end of the day.

✓ Results of our previous study on student database use.
Our Questions

- How can we figure out what the students are really doing out there?
- Are they really as confused as we think they are?
- Are the databases as clunky and complicated as we think they are?
- Are they entering college with any previous database experience?
- How can we observe them without being obvious and without changing our results?
Screen Capture Technology

Advantages:

✓ Used Techsmith Morae software
✓ Does not require the observer to be in the room with the participant
✓ Captures all mouse movements, clicks and typing
✓ Movie can be reviewed many times
✓ Movie can be coded for common criteria
Surprising Aspects of Using Screen Capture for Research

✓ Using screen capture is really fun
✓ You will discover new links and new ways to print
✓ You will be able to tell if the student was “trying” or not
✓ Can infer emotional state of participants from watching mouse movements
Research Design

- Recruited first year students – no previous instruction
- Given 5 separate URL links directly to articles
- Instructed to print entire article

![Image of a computer screen with instructions for printing an article]
Survey

✓ Survey appeared on screen after all 5 tasks were complete
✓ Instructed to define abstract, full text and pdf in own words
Survey Results

✓ Survey results were better than expected:
  ▪ Twenty-one, or slightly more than half successfully defined the term “Abstract”
  ▪ Full text: 31 of 40, slightly more than 75% understood the concept
  ▪ PDF: 22 out of 40 (generous grading)
Abstract/Full Text Printing Results

- Abstracts Only: 40%
- Full Text Only: 25%
- 1-4 Abstracts: 35%
Why the Disconnect? 

Database Screenshots
What we would like to see

Click Here for Whole Article
Discussion

✓ What kinds of questions related to databases do you get all of the time?
✓ Can instruction make things better? Ideas for how?
✓ How do we best reach students who don't get instruction? Tutorials? Online reference?
✓ How can we help you to help your students? More course management interaction? Ideas?
✓ Would you use the databases or Google to do research?
Bibliography


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