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People Profile: Susan Rector

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largely mirrored the targets chosen by all libraries with frequent occurrences of the library catalog, Website, and article metasearching. The two targets which were more common in this group of twelve libraries were incorporating a journal/ejournal search (75% vs. 25.23% of all libraries visited) and a local knowledge base (16.67% vs. 2.7%). Conversely these libraries were less likely to include Google options: Google Scholar (8.33% vs. 11.71%), Google (0% vs. 8.11%), Google Books (0% vs. 2.70%).

Conclusion
The diversity of search approaches on academic library Websites also raises the question of how the success of these search boxes might be evaluated. Much of the literature on searching has primarily focused on how to design a federated search box. While some usability studies (e.g., Augustine,’Tallent’) highlight difficulties in federated search design, few perform log analysis of the searches being entered. It would be interesting, for example, to find out how searches may differ that begin outside of the native application. The future of library search may rest outside of the native interface or even the library homepage. With the emergence of new tools such as openURL resolvers, toolbar widgets, Worldcat.org, and Facebook applications, many users are connecting into the library resources without drilling down through the traditional library homepage navigation.

This study does not attempt to scientifically determine the reasons behind any of the design or policy decisions for search usage on library homepages. However, in surveying current practice, the authors believe that the homepages of libraries offer some barometer of technology and search emphasis. The survey reveals a wide range of approaches, indicating that consolidating library search presents ongoing challenges. At opposite ends of the spectrum roughly ten percent of the libraries offered no search functionality on their homepages while a parallel ten percent had allocated resources to develop technologies to create a Google-like federated search. Somewhere in the middle, the emerging prominence of some type of search option on the homepage reveals an acknowledgment of the ease of most commercial Web search engines and a desire to replicate that experience in library search. As we move into the future it will be interesting to see if this variety of external library applications continues to take a more prominent and/or consolidated role in library Web presence.