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Using Google in Technical Services

Carol H. Jewell

University of Albany, cjewell@uamail.albany.edu

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Google a 'frenemy.'¹⁸ For me, that word describes Google perfectly.

Endnotes

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17. Burke, Timothy. "Research Using Library Catalogs." *Users and Uses of Bibliographic Data*. Public meeting of the Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control, held on March 8, 2007. <http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/meetings/> (accessed February 24, 2008). Links to the invitation, the agenda, the background paper, and the summary. A PowerPoint of this presentation can also be seen at <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/staff/kaantelm/LibraryOnePointOne.ppt>.
18. Auletta, op. cit.: 33.

Using Google in Technical Services: An Unscientific Survey

by Carol H. Jewell (University of Albany) <cjewel@uamail.albany.edu>

Public Services librarians use Google daily. But how many Technical Services (TS) librarians use Google, and, more importantly, how do they use it? In a recent search of the current literature, I was able to find only two citations which addressed this question: Jennifer Lang, "Have You Searched Google Yet?" Using Google as a Discovery Tool for Cataloging," in *Library Philosophy & Practice*, Summer 2007, Vol. 9, Issue 3, p.1-10, and Jin Qiang, "Creating Up-to-Date Corporate Name Authority Records by Using Official Corporate Home Web Pages," in *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly*, 2004, vol. 38, Issue 3/4, p.281-290. I often use Google in my cataloging work, as do some of my colleagues. I know that using Google has changed the way we do our jobs. I was curious to explore how our jobs have changed, because of Google, and the many ways in which librarians and other library staff in Technical Services use Google to inform and verify their work. I hoped I would learn how I could improve my own skills. I use the phrase "Technical Services" to include acquisitions, serials, cataloging and database maintenance.

I decided to conduct an informal survey. In February 2008, I posted the following query to five discussion lists, "For an article I am writing for *Against the Grain*, I would like the following information: If you are a librarian or library staff member working in a Technical Services position (i.e., database maintenance, cataloging,

acquisitions, serials), do you use Google in your daily work? If so, how? (Please be specific.)" Specifically, I sent this request to SERIALST (Serials in Libraries Discussion Forum), AUTOCAT (discussion list on library cataloging and authorities), LEZBRIAN (Lesbian and Bisexual Library Workers), SUNYLA-L (topics relating to the SUNY Librarians Association or SUNY Libraries) and SLAVLIBS (Forum for Slavic Librarians). I chose those discussion lists because I subscribe to all of them. I received over 150 responses. I expected to find that most catalogers who use Google used it for name/subject authority verification, as well as for classification purposes. I also expected publisher verification to be a very popular usage of Google, by acquisitions folks. Frequent use of Google to verify live URLs was something else I expected.

I received answers from people working in all sorts of libraries: academic, private, school, public, art, music, law, scientific, church, federal, medical, military, etc., and a few answers came from book vendors. Most of the responses came from North America, and there were a few from other parts of the world, as well. I was surprised at the variety of answers I received. (I should probably have been more specific and asked how people use the Google Search Engine in particular, as some people told me how they use other Google products. More on that later.) Most respond-

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The Acquisitions Category:

Finding small-press Websites
Finding out currency exchanges
Subscription information; chronology; format change
To determine latest editions of titles
To determine release dates, especially for best sellers
To find alternate vendors
To find license agreement terms
To find non-book vendors (i.e., specialty film distributors)
To find open access journals
To find publishers Websites, to check frequency information
To find staff members' names (on a journal Website) so that I can speak to an actual person and get an answer!
To find state agency field offices
To locate and price media
To search book values
To search for out-of-print material
Vendor: addresses, price, ordering information, phone number; saves money on long distance phone

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ers were more than happy to tell me about how they used **Google** in their work, daily or otherwise. Many used **Google** for more than one purpose. A handful told me they don't use **Google** at all, don't see any use for it, or don't use it because they wish to use search engines which contribute something to the greater good, i.e., **GoodSearch**, "a **Yahoo!**-powered search engine that donates money to your favorite charity or school each time you search the Web." By the way, I got that description from a **Google** search!

I used an **Excel** spreadsheet to compile a list of all the 74+ ways **Google** is used in TS, according to the replies I received. I broadly categorized the list into 4 areas: Acquisitions and Cataloging, Acquisitions, Cataloging, and Other. I had 2 items in Acquisitions and Cataloging, 15 in Acquisitions, 40 in Cataloging, and 14 in Other. Of course, some of these may overlap in different institutions, where job tasks intersect through more than one department. (*See Acquisitions Category List, pg.22.*)

The last item in the acquisitions category list pretty much covers everything that preceded it: prior to **Google**, it was often necessary to make numerous phone calls to ascertain the needed information.

In contrast, prior to **Google**, the items in the Cataloging category required many hours looking up information in print resources, and often fruitless searching in **OCLC**. (*See Cataloging Category List, this page.*)

The items in the other category ranged from designing Websites to writing procedures to finding sources for library supplies. (*See Other Category List, below.*)

There were two items in the acquisitions and cataloging categories, and they were: searching books that were not found in **OCLC**, and verifying URLs (and replacing dead links with live ones).

In analyzing the data, I found that the most frequent use of **Google** by catalogers was for authority work, classification queries, and URL verification. Acquisitions staff used **Google** most frequently for finding out publisher names, addresses, and phone numbers, URL verification, subscription information (including journal prices and chronology), and locating publishers' Websites. The **Google** search engine is also heavily used by libraries which cannot afford to subscribe to online databases, such as **ProQuest**, **Factiva**, **Lexis-Nexis**, **EbscoHost**, and the like.

The use of **Google** is not limited to the search engine. People use the **Google RSS Feed Reader**, **Gmail**, **Google Docs**, **Google Scholar**, **Google Calendars**, **Google Books**, and the **Google Desktop**. As these

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The Other Category:
To compile biographical and administrative histories related to the creators of archival material
To find other library websites, when designing ours
To find procedure manuals of other TS departments
To manage work-related RSS-feeds
To find cheap[er] sources of supplies
To find colleagues' (at other institutions) email addresses
To find documentation that I don't have the URL for (i.e., RDA)
To find policies and procedures from other libraries
To learn about obscure points of cataloging
To look up Unicode
To search for foreign national libraries' catalogs
To search for research ideas
To find translations
To find transliterations

The Cataloging Category:
To find award winning book information for a 586 field
To determine contents notes for a 505 or 520
To get definitions; to determine subjects and/or scope
To determine if book is children's or young adult in scope
To find cover images
To find book and film synopses in foreign languages (and occasionally using Google's translation feature)
For image searching, for cataloging visual materials
To answer geographic queries (i.e., where is X located?)
To find artist information for artists too current to be in reference books or OCLC
To find association Webpages to get the name of a foreign association in the language of that association, to add cross-references
To find author's Websites
To get info about actors and other film personnel, not found in IMDb
For authority work, especially for living composers who often have their own Webpages, but may not be listed in standard reference works
To find originals of reprints
To find production dates of films
Researching the history of a serial, especially government publications
To find reviews of films
For Subject Authority work, subject cataloging
To check spelling
To clarify 505 information in poetry collections, and anthologies on CD
To determine a conference site
To determine current titles of state agency officials
To determine historical contexts of maps, for map cataloging
To determine if an author is American or British (do I use PS or PR?)
To determine statements of responsibility from manuscripts that have none
To determine what genre of music a particular CD belongs to
To establish dates for undated monographs
To find dealer's descriptions of antiquarian titles
To find federal and state documents online
To find Nobel Prize award information
To find state government agency URLs
To find summaries of plays
To get the full names of journals when all I have is an abbreviation
To get to a specific page of a website
To locate county information for genealogy materials
To research a subject so as to add keywords to a 520
To see how other libraries have cataloged something
To see if a government publication has been scanned onto the Web
To track the origins of reprints
To try to identify initialisms on the back of photographs (for digitizing projects)

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and other **Google** products continue to develop, the usage of **Google** by Technical Services may increase or decrease, depending on the assessed value of the product. Much remains to be seen. It would be interesting to conduct future surveys of this type to find out what other interesting and creative ways there are to use **Google** in Technical Services. 🐼

Rumors from page 16

FeedYourPlayer.com. Reported in the *Post & Courier* (Charleston, SC), March 12, 2008, p.13B.

Talk about **against the grain!** **Borders Group Inc.** plans to reduce inventory in order to increase the number of titles it displays with the covers "face out." Apparently, this is an approach that **Wal-Mart** has taken as well. I wonder if libraries should follow

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against the grain people profile

Carol H. Jewell

Instructional Support Technician, University Libraries
University at Albany, State University of New York
LI B35, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany, NY 12222
Phone: (518) 442 3628 • <cjewell@uamail.albany.edu>

BORN & LIVED: Born in Brooklyn, NY, and lived in Chapel Hill, NC, and upstate New York.

FAMILY: Partnered with one daughter.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Cataloging, subject access, and disability issues.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Making and listening to music, laughing, and movies.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Anne of Green Gables* and anything by **Rumer Godden**.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: I hate it when people fail to use their turn signals!

PHILOSOPHY: "Inner beauty"

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Earning my MLS while being a single parent, working full time, and not knowing how to drive! 🐼

Imperfect Tools: Google Scholar vs. Traditional Commercial Library Databases

by **Julie Arendt** (Morris Library, Southern Illinois University) <jarendt@lib.siu.edu>

Like every other resource that a library might offer, **Google Scholar** has strengths and limitations. Instead of rejecting **Google Scholar** because it does not do everything that the library or librarians do, **Google Scholar** should be accepted or rejected based on how well it assists in a particular step in information seeking. That step traditionally has been assisted by indexing and abstracting resources. In some circumstances **Google Scholar** is a better tool than the indexing and abstracting resources; in other circumstances it is not. This article examines the strengths and weaknesses of **Google Scholar** compared to subscription indexing and abstracting databases. It critiques college and university libraries' continued use of subscription databases that fail to provide a clear advantage over **Google Scholar**.

When **Google Scholar** was introduced, it initially met with some praise and a fair amount of criticism from the library world. Both the praise and criticism generally were deserved. Unfortunately, early responses sometimes compared **Google Scholar** to the library as a whole¹ or to an idealized vision of library databases² rather than to the real, imperfect indexing and abstracting databases offered through the library. Some of the faults that early commentators found in **Google Scholar** included lack of a controlled vocabulary, lack of authority control, incomplete or uneven coverage depending on discipline, and time lags

between publication and appearance in the database. These same faults could be pointed out for **Web of Science**, a venerable subscription database. Another criticism of **Google Scholar** was that its definition of "scholarly" includes materials that have not undergone peer review, so it may lead users to this unvetted material. Again, this criticism also could be leveled against a subscription database. For example, book reviews, editorials and commentaries regularly appear in search results from **Academic Search Premier**, even when the search is limited to scholarly (peer reviewed) journals. Instead of comparing **Google Scholar** to the ideal resource, a fairer comparison would be to actual subscription databases.

Some evaluations have explored whether a subscription database produces better results than **Google Scholar**. When librarians conduct test searches using advanced search features in library databases, they get somewhat better results with the database than with **Google Scholar**.³⁻⁵ When college students conduct the searches, the advantage for the subscription database evaporates. The sources students find from **Google Scholar** are as good as or better than those found through the library's databases.^{6,7} For these novice users, often subscription databases do not provide a clear advantage over **Google Scholar**.

Librarians may be able to use controlled vocabularies to produce more precise results from a database than from **Google Scholar** or

to find special materials that could not be found through **Google Scholar**, but library patrons are not librarians. Simply having a controlled vocabulary or special materials is not good enough for a novice user. If users cannot figure out the controlled vocabulary or find the special materials, they cannot experience these supposed advantages. For there to be a clear advantage of a subscription database over **Google Scholar**, novice users should be able to complete their work more easily with the subscription database than they can with **Google Scholar**. Many subscription databases provide a clear advantage by simplifying access to special materials or by leveraging their controlled vocabularies. The interface designs that highlight subject terms next to results sets, such as those in **EBSCOhost** and **Engineering Village**, should be commended for their effort to guide novices to controlled vocabularies without interrupting users' searches. Some databases and interfaces simplify users' work in other ways. For example, **Web of Knowledge** provides citation assistance through **EndNote Web**, and full-text resources like **JSTOR** provide easy access to complete documents.

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