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## Something to Think About -- New Styles for Old Problems

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point for students, since discovery and filtering are key elements of developing information literacy. Still, the fact remains that library directors are more committed to serving, and being seen as serving, as the discovery starting point or gateway in comparison with faculty member support for this function.

Indeed, many library directors are prepared to invest significant resources in this function in the coming years. More than 40% of respondents would direct additional financial resources towards providing more tools for discovery (the second largest priority of numerous budgetary possibilities the questionnaire proposed). There is an important difference among institutional types, with roughly half of baccalaureate institutions prepared to direct additional financial resources to discovery tools as contrasted with notably lower shared of master's and doctoral institutions, as illustrated in Figure 3. In the ranking of how respondents prioritize staff resources, building local discovery resources was fourth out of six choices.



Finally, we asked how much priority libraries place on local discovery tools versus those provided by an outside vendor (such as a Webscale discovery service), or those that might blend outside resources with local tools. While library directors see recognition for a starting point role as strategically important to the library, more respondents rated "facilitating discovery through outside resources" as important than rated local discovery tools as important. Virtually no respondents failed to select at least one of these three strategies as very important for their library.

These findings suggest that the environment for discovery is highly unsettled among academic library directors, at least. The flux associated with discovery has been great; Web search engines and their scholarly services have significantly displaced pre-existing dynamics, and now federated search and metasearch options appear to be giving way to "Webscale discovery services" as a possible solution for libraries. What strategy is your library pursuing for discovery? Do you have a single strategy for all user groups or differentiated strategies, for example, for faculty members and students? Will Webscale discovery services provide a compelling fit with user workflows that thus far

seem to be moving towards Web search engines as their default starting point? Is the discovery role really as vital as so many library director respondents indicate? If so, how can libraries work effectively with their user communities best to provision it? As many library directors have indicated that they are prepared to invest significant resources in discovery tools, this is probably a good time for many libraries to pursue a thorough assessment of their overall vision and strategy for content discovery. 🌱

#### Endnotes

1. The *Ithaca S+R Faculty Survey 2009* found that 47% of faculty members start their research with a specific electronic resource and 31% with a general-purpose search engine. **Schonfeld and Housewright**, 5. Broadly similar patterns were documented among undergraduates as well in **De Rosa et al.**, 1-7.
2. See the recent strategic planning exercise from the **University of Minnesota**, that culminated in **University of Minnesota Libraries**, "Discoverability: Phase 2 Final Report," September 27, 2010 (**Cody Hanson** and **Heather Hessel**, project co-chairs).
3. Available at <http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/ithaka-s-r-library-survey-2010>.

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We usually have a problem in libraries of making information available to many different patrons. I have seen libraries change from the card catalog to the online catalog, Dewey Classification to LC Classification to a myriad of mixed classifications, and still the problem persists. How do we provide information, and how do we make it more accessible to people? Changes have also occurred in the formats of information presentation. In the seventies and eighties, there was a predominance of print formatted materials with some microforms available. The nineties brought alternatives in media and a new adventure in the digital format. I have seen them come into use in libraries, and I think the digital has been received by patrons as a ready source and acceptable to their quick needs. The technology allows for home/office distribution through the Internet/emails and enhances delivery of information to patrons all over the world. At **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**, we have a 24/7 worldwide reference service. Special Internet messages/queries are received by Reference Librarians, who gather the information in many formats



and scan that information, where available, back to the patrons. The combination of digital replies, print and media loans, and Internet URLs makes a complete and timely package for the queries received. We have also experienced a number of instances when our Internet connections were not available, for example, after the tornado strike and the drowning of our server after a severe rainstorm. We have always tried to be prepared by purchasing a back-up system in print or microfilm/microfiche that covers the majority of important materials requested by users. This also helps when the library is busy with requests. We have even purchased a number of conference proceedings and archives on CD-ROM that allow us to access information through another format. We have even solved a problem when the U.S. government begins to stop print and produce serials solely online. A number of our classes require longer scrutiny of materials, so we have found that downloading these documents (where no copyright clearance is needed) from the Internet to CD-ROMs

gives us a back-up and protection against computer downtime. Some regular journals have given us permission for the in-house CDs as well. Our ILL Department is another area that allows for upgrades of technology and systems that create more speed and efficiency in the information delivery. With the advent of **Ariel** and management products such as **CLIO**, we have been able to enhance our ability to provide information to many. Another method of supplying offbeat information is our "vertical file" system that houses a number of items related to the aeronautical and aerospace industries. Sometimes fliers and other promotional materials account for knowledge that appears nowhere else in published form. There are personal items, such as diaries, letters, or logs that also provide substantiating information of a personal nature that cannot be found in the print format, and we keep these in the archives area. We look for information in many places and formats. As the world creates more of these to peruse, we continue to collect, organize, and preserve these materials for future generations. The trick is keeping your eyes and ears open to the changes and creative ways that are available. How many different ways do you have for backing up your information systems? This is probably something worth thinking about! 🌱