IS THIS ARTICLE A CREDIBLE SOURCE?

THE DILEMMA POSED BY FULL TEXT INDEXING

TUTORIAL PRESENTATION

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Full text indexing and archiving of periodical articles is not the wave of the future. Rather, it is the format of choice and availability for many college students. University libraries are spending large sums of money to subscribe to periodical indexes that provide online access to full text periodical articles. This format of choice makes it easier for distance education students to access periodical literature and on site students to quickly download information without leaving their desks.

Implications of this trend include students' preference for and choice of full text articles more often than those available in print. Experience has shown that students would rather quickly download or print information than search for a print copy of an article in a library collection. Despite the fact that libraries often provide direct links to subject specific online periodical indexes such as ERIC and Sociological Abstracts, students prefer to use general databases that index fewer periodicals in a given field for several reasons including:

- It is easier for students to learn a single search strategy that works well in a multidisciplinary index. Knowledge of the idiosyncrasies of a specific database make it attractive to the user.

- General databases with large numbers of subscribers are best able to provide features attractive to users including the ability to e-mail the full text of an article to one's self.

- Students can complete several assignments using one tool—often referred to as one-stop-shopping.

Although ease of use is an attractive feature of full text indexing of periodical literature, additional screening and evaluation skills are necessary when one chooses an article from a full text index rather than a print copy of a periodical. When the user doesn't have access to a printed copy of a periodical, information such as the publishing company responsible for the periodical and the credibility of the literature contained in the publication are not readily available. An online version of a periodical eliminates advertising and other clues that signal to readers that they are using a magazine rather than a scholarly journal.

The presenters will demonstrate ways in which full text periodical articles can be evaluated to determine the credibility and reliability of information, the biases of the authors, and the type of periodical where they were originally printed. A rubric for students and instructors to use when selecting a judging the quality of periodical literature will be demonstrated. Specific features providing clues to the quality of a publication will be highlighted and demonstrated. Participants will be asked to evaluate the full text of several periodical articles, using only the information available in a full text periodical index and the criteria highlighted by the presenters.

Class assignments that require students to evaluate the scholarly nature of periodical articles and justify their use for academic assignments will be summarized. Observations of the ways in which these evaluative assignments change student performance and selection of periodical literature will be provided. As more periodicals become available on-line it is important that these skills are taught and reinforced to become lifetime skills allowing professionals to evaluate the source and validity of current and future electronic information delivery.