Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Evidence Summary

Selecting Which Databases to Teach Students in Communication Disorders by Considering Database Pairs that Index Core Journals in the Field

Reviewed by:
Giovanna Badia
Liaison Librarian, Schulich Library of Science & Engineering
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Email: giovanna.badia@mcgill.ca

Abstract

Objective – There are two objectives in this research article. The first is to identify databases that librarians usually recommend to students for searching topics in communication disorders. The second is to compare these databases' indexing of core journals in communication disorders, with the purpose of ascertaining which databases should be taught first in a one-shot information literacy session.

Design – A comparative database evaluation using citation analysis.

Setting – 10 universities in the United States of America offering LibGuides for their audiology or speech language pathology programs.

Subjects – Six databases: CINAHL, ERIC, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), PsycINFO, PubMed/Medline, and Web of Science/Web of Knowledge.

Methods – The author selected 10 universities from the top 20 included in the graduate school rankings for audiology and/or speech language pathology from *U.S. News & World Report*. The 10 universities selected were chosen because their librarians published online subject guides using LibGuides that suggest databases students can use for searching topics in communication disorders. The LibGuides were then examined to identify the most popular recommended databases that

the author subsequently used for comparing coverage of core journals in communication disorders. The author generated a core journals list by selecting the top 20 audiology and speech-language pathology journals from Journal Citation Reports, SCImago Journal & Country Rank, and Google Scholar Top Publications. These three sources produced lists of influential journals in different subject areas by looking at the number of citations the journals have received, alongside other factors. The author searched for 33 journals in total in each of the subject databases previously identified.

Main Results – The author found six databases that were mentioned in the LibGuides of at least half the universities investigated. None of the 6 databases indexed all 33 core journals. The breakdown of the number of journals indexed in each database is as follows: Web of Science/Web of Knowledge indexed 32 of 33 core journals (97%); PubMed/Medline indexed 28 (85%); PsycINFO indexed 27 (82%); CINAHL indexed 25 (76%); LLBA indexed 23 (70%); and ERIC indexed 9 journals (27%).

Conclusion – The author discovered that pairing certain databases allows for coverage of all 33 core journals. These pairings are: PubMed/Medline with PsycINFO, PubMed/Medline with LLBA, PubMed/Medline with Web of Science, Web of Science with PsycINFO, and Web of Science with LLBA. The author suggests that librarians can create instructional materials for all recommended databases, "but use information from this study together with institution-specific factors to decide which databases to prioritize in face-to-face instruction sessions for speech-language pathology and audiology students" (Conclusion).

Commentary

Other studies have employed LibGuides for identifying recommended resources, or have used core journal lists for comparing database coverage. This study is unique in that it is the only one thus far that combines both methodologies to compare database coverage

of the literature in communication disorders for the purpose of helping librarians decide which databases to teach first in information literacy workshops.

The article scores well for the applicable data collection and study design questions in Glynn's (2006) EBL Critical Appraisal Checklist. The author provides a clear description of the steps used to conduct the research, cites other studies to support the appropriateness of the methodology used, and presents the results succinctly, making it easy for readers to understand and replicate the study.

Further directions for research are not included in the article, and this omission draws more attention to the limitations of the study. These limitations are the creation of a core journals list that concentrates on communication disorders in general, thus deemphasizing subspecialties of the field and excluding journals from related disciplines such as psychology and child development. Another limitation is the inclusion of database suggestions from only those top ranked universities that use LibGuides (10 of the 20 top ranked schools). According to the author, "it would also be possible to examine library web sites of all top ranked schools to determine databases recommended by any means and that method could produce different results" (Limitations). Similarly, all of the journals from the lists created by Black (2012) and Slater (1997) in communication disorders and speech language pathology, both of which the author cites, could have been used to create the core journals list the author utilized for database comparison, so that the sample list would have been more representative of the field of communication disorders. The number of journals checked across databases would also affect the results.

Furthermore, this reviewer has questions about the criteria the author used to determine whether a journal was indexed in a database or not. The author states: "indexing had to be current in order for the journal to be included" (Results). Did the author also take into account the database's depth of coverage for the

indexing of a particular journal title, specifically whether the database provides full or partial indexing of a journal and how far back the indexing goes for that journal? This information is not included in the article, and combined with the study's limitations, makes it difficult for readers to completely trust the results.

The easily replicable methodology presented in this article might be of interest to librarians trying to find an evidence based approach to help them decide which database(s) to teach in a one-shot information literacy workshop for a specific discipline. Readers should keep in mind that the core journals list used for comparing databases is the primary data source in this type of study and will directly affect the results.

References

Black, S. (2012). How much do core journals change over a decade? *Library Resources and Technical Services, 56*(2), 80-93. https://journals.ala.org/lrts/index

Glynn, L. (2006). A critical appraisal tool for library and information research. *Library Hi Tech, 24*(3), 387-399. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/073788306106 92154

Slater, L. G. (1997). Mapping the literature of speech-language pathology. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association 85*(3), 297-302. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/jou rnals/72/