



Evidence Summary

Use of EBSCO Discovery Tool at One University Reveals Increased Use of Electronic Collections but Decreased Use in Circulation of Print Collections

A Review of:

Calvert, K. (2015). Maximizing academic library collections: Measuring changes in use patterns owing to EBSCO Discovery Service. *College & Research Libraries*, 76(1), 81-99.
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Abstract

Objective – To find out what the effects of a discovery tool are in relation to usage of print and electronic library collections, and with the aim to measure the effects in three specific areas: circulation numbers, use of electronic resources, and interlibrary loan requests.

Design – Comparative quantitative analysis of usage statistics and data sets.

Setting – A regional comprehensive university in the United States of America.

Subjects – Usage data from a university library.

Methods – The methods used were informed by three hypotheses stated at the beginning of the study. First, an analysis of usage data of e-resources tested the hypothesis that the introduction of a discovery tool would increase use of e-resources. Second, to test whether the use of print collections increased, circulation statistics including items borrowed via consortia and in-house use statistics were measured. Finally, interlibrary loan statistics from 2010 to 2013 were collated to test if the EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) led to a decrease in interlibrary loan requests.

Main Results – The introduction of the EBSCO discovery tool resulted in increased use of EBSCOhost and other databases at the library in question. However, the library's circulation

statistics decreased, with a drop of 28% of checkouts compared to the previous year. The drop is more pronounced with undergraduates, who checked out 39% fewer items after the EDS was introduced. There was a 30% decrease in requests for borrowing items from a consortia. There was insufficient data to support or refute the third hypothesis.

Conclusion – The implementation of a discovery tool at one library has had both positive and negative outcomes. An increase in the use of electronic collections was observed as a positive outcome, whereas a decrease in the use of print collections was a negative outcome. Due to the findings of the study, the library revised its policy on content inclusion to the EDS. Any new content is now screened for suitability before it is included. As a changing student demographic evolves at the library, with an increase in distance and online learners, the library will grow its collection in line with their needs. The author notes that a further study is needed to examine ebook usage, and recommends that the library consider a move towards ebooks for all collections.

Commentary

Discovery tools have become commonplace in academic libraries, yet a paucity of research addresses their impact on usage of electronic and print collections. This research addresses this deficit. While the details of the collections available at the primary library and other libraries included in the research are unique to those libraries, the methodology may prove beneficial to other libraries, especially those that have adopted EBSCO's Discovery Service. The findings are relevant for collection development librarians and systems librarians.

The limitations of the study are noted as being quantitative in nature. The usage statistics, as well as circulation statistics and interlibrary loans, are the main source of data. Overall, this study adheres to a fair level of validity when

checked against Glynn's (2006) critical appraisal checklist. However, there is little information provided about the study population. The author notes a changing student demographic, but there is no detail provided about the ratio of undergraduates to postgraduates, or distance learners to those on-site. The methods used to collect the data are described, including the use of standard COUNTER JR1 reports. The data is captured at a valid time both prior and post intervention of the EDS. It is unclear, however, whether all of the library's database subscriptions remained consistent for the duration of that time. The usage data was compared with similar libraries without discovery systems, which adds validity to the findings.

The aims are clearly outlined and reiterated with a discussion of the results. The results are presented using seven tables which assist the reader with visualisation of the data. It may have been helpful to include a screenshot of the discovery tool with a description of access points to the library's collections, since it is unclear from the study what the access points to the library collections are. For example, it is not stated whether the library has links enabled in Google Scholar, which may increase full-text usage of materials.

The author supplied sufficient detail about data collection to enable other libraries using EDS and EBSCOhost databases to replicate the study. For libraries with other discovery tools in place, modification to the data collection methods would be required.

As more libraries adopt discovery tools to enhance reader discovery of library collections, the research presented here may be useful for other librarians considering adopting a discovery system or evaluating their current system. The research methods are practical in nature and are of particular use to those libraries using EDS as their choice of discovery tool. Any library with a discovery tool in place may wish to examine its impact upon

electronic and print collections and use this research as a reference. Collection development policies could also be informed by this research.

Reference

Glynn, L. (2006). A critical appraisal tool for library and information research. *Library Hi Tech*, 24(3), 387-399.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07378830610692154>