Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Looking to the Literature: Domains to Help Determine Where to Look

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Last time in EBL 101, we looked at matching question types to study designs. The process of determining the type of question you've asked can point you in the direction of the research design best suited to answering your question. This time around, we'll stay with the question in order to help determine where to look for evidence in the literature.

It's been suggested, and further confirmed through research, that many if not all questions generated in librarianship fall under one or more of the following six domains:

1. Collections
2. Education
3. Information Access and Retrieval
4. Management
5. Professional Issues
6. Reference/Enquiries

This classification scheme was originally proposed to deal with published research in order to make it "easier to map sources, study types and search strategies pertaining to each domain" (Koufogiannakis, Slater, and Crumley 228). Deciding in which domain your question belongs is helpful in the EBL process. The domain can point you to the type of literature likely to contain articles pertaining to your topic.

As an aside, there is a bit of discrepancy around the domains in some EBL literature that was published around 2004. For example, in Booth and Brice's *Evidence-Based Practice for Information Professionals: A Handbook*, reference to the six domains includes Marketing as a separate domain. Koufogiannakis, Slater, and Crumley, in their content analysis of librarianship research, tested the six initially proposed domains, and found that evidence for marketing research was limited and removed it as a separate domain from the list, including it instead in the Management domain. Additionally, based on the results of their content analysis, they added a domain: Professional Issues. So 2004 saw the move from

the initially proposed classification taxonomy to the six domains listed above.

It's time to take your question and find out in which domain it belongs. Each domain has its own definition:

- Collections: Building a high-quality collection of print and electronic materials that is useful, cost-effective and meets the users' needs.
- Education: Incorporating teaching methods and strategies to educate users about library resources and how to improve research skills. LIS Education is a subset of the Education domain, and it specifically pertains to the professional education of librarians.
- Information Access and Retrieval: Creating better systems and methods for information retrieval and access.
- Management: Managing people and resources within an organization. This includes marketing and promotion as well as human resources.
- Professional Issues: Exploring issues that affect librarianship as a profession.
- Reference/Enquiries: Providing service and information access that meets the needs of library users. (Koufogiannakis, Slater, and Crumley, Table 2)

Now that you have more information about your question, it's time to turn to the literature. The challenging part of evidence-based librarianship is that not only should you look in the Library and Information Studies (LIS) literature, but also further afield in disciplines that relate to your question's domain(s). **The starting point is usually the traditional LIS databases, in addition to the suggestions below.**

1. **Collections:** Collection management as a domain is almost completely covered within the library literature. In this case, the library literature includes "the wider

scope offered by museum and archival activities" (Booth, Collection, 187).

2. **Education:** Research studies about education can be found in several places: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsycInfo, and the Campbell Collaboration. However, Brice and Carlson report that "much education research sits in the 'grey literature'" (168).

3. **Information Access & Retrieval:** In the last few decades, more research into digital libraries has been found in the information retrieval research. Additionally, information science and computing literature also looks at information retrieval and access. It's been noted that there is not a lot of cross over between public and commercial sectors and the academic sector. Thus, "the wheel is being reinvented" (Booth, Evidence, 233). Therefore, there should be more impetus to search broadly across different disciplines.

4. **Management:** Informative research on a variety of management topics can be found in the Harvard Business Review, as well as in general management databases such as ABI-Inform; in sector-specific management databases and collection, i.e. Health Business Elite; and in resources covering specific facets of management, i.e. marketing, HR, etc. (Booth, Towards, 201).

5. **Professional Issues**: This is a wide-ranging domain that explores issues pertaining to librarianship as a profession. The traditional LIS databases will most likely be the only stop to make. However, depending on the question, literature from other professions could be consulted.

6. **Reference/Enquiries**: Questions that fall under the Reference domain can also be explored in literature pertaining to "the wider subject discipline of human interaction and communication" which also includes "research studies from

psychology (PsycInfo), computer science (INSPEC), and other behavioural and social sciences" (Booth, Examining, 150).

It is important to think outside the LIS box when looking for evidence to inform your question. Thinking about the question in terms of domains can help you do this and in turn broaden the range of useful resources. But what happens if there is no access to for-fee databases? Next time: Open Access Sources of LIS Evidence.

Works Cited

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