Paving the Way for Graduate Students’ Information Literacy Skills

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LUT Academic Library

- LUT Academic Library is the joint library for LUT University and LAB University of Applied Sciences
- Two locations, Lappeenranta and Lahti
- Serves more than 16,500 students and 1,800 staff
- Fields of study: technology, business, social sciences, art and design and healthcare
- Library personnel 23
Case: Masters’ students in UAS

• Over 85% percent of students doing their Masters’ degree in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences are over 30 years old
• Requirement for UAS Master’s studies include minimum of two years work experience in a relevant field
• When returning to studies, information literacy skills need updating
• Studies are usually done part-time with emphasis on independent study
Scoping the Needs with Service Design

- A service design process with health care faculty staff in early 2022
- Information about the service was gathered using mixed methods
  - observation
  - interview
  - survey
  - scoping
- Three user personas (fictional profiles of typical users) were created
- Two solutions to cater their IL needs
Sabrina The Struggler
- Motivated, struggles with academic articles and the English language, lacking ICT skills, information retrieval skills needing an update
- Hoping for step-by-step guidance and personal contact with the library staff

Sarah The Survivor
- Goal-oriented, good ICT skills, information retrieval skills needing an update
- Hoping for comprehensive guidance and a clear process to support information retrieval

Annie The Achiever
- Skilled, effective, independent, excellent information retrieval skills
- Hoping for high-quality, relevant digital resources
Solution 1: information retrieval toolkit

- a step-by-step guide for updating and refreshing the information retrieval skills
- guide was designed to work with the already existing comprehensive information retrieval guides
- simple and accessible language and a clear structure benefits everyone
  - the students using the English guide are mostly non-native speakers, so clarity is even more important
LAB - Information Retrieval Toolkit

What is your topic?

Information retrieval/searching starts with selecting search terms. The search terms describe the information you want to find. There is rarely such a thing as the "correct" or "perfect" search term, as the same concept or topic can be described using different terms. You might not get the best results with your first search, but by trying different search terms, you will discover which terms bring the best result.

The following questions will help you plan your information retrieval/search:

- what are the key concepts of your topic?
- what is the angle or approach to your topic?
- what is the larger framework of your topic?
- what do you already know about the topic?
- do you need pictures or images?

Tip! Write down your search terms so you will remember what ones you have already used in your searches, and to make it easier to repeat the search in a different database.

Key concepts

Start with identifying the key concepts in your assignment. Once you've identified the key concepts, write them down, also write down related terms, concepts and synonyms. Use combinations of these terms for your search. For example if your topic was privacy management in social media services, your search term map could look like this:
Feedback from students & lecturers

• Positive feedback from the course lecturer
  • students had less difficulties finding and identifying academic sources with the help of the new guide

• Positive feedback from students (feedback form on the guide page (n=52))
  • 56% agreed & 38% somewhat agreed that they learned new things from the guide
  • 46% agreed & 50% somewhat agreed that the guide was easy to use
  • 10 out 17 open ended comments mention clarity of instructions/guide

• Instructional videos were the most requested idea for further development
"Easy to read and understandable structure"

"The main points of information seeking explained briefly and clearly, could browse through in one go."

"Clear instructions"

"More videos please"
Solution 2: a skills test

• request from the faculty to allow the teachers to ensure the students have familiarized themselves with the information retrieval toolkit
• allowing the students to reflect on and evaluate their IL skills
• a multiple-choice test with 10 questions covering the library services, finding suitable search terms, using phrases and truncation, using LAB Primo, Google Scholar and field specific databases and recognizing the features of academic articles
Looking to the future

• Continuous development based on feedback and discussion with lecturers
• Review content regularly, add and weed when needed to keep the guide up-to-date & relevant to the students
• Instructional videos on finding subject terms, Primo search & Google Scholar to benefit different learning styles
• Using the toolkit as lecture material
Concluding remarks

• Service design process can help the library refine existing services to meet the needs of our patrons and ensure through collaboration that the services are effective and relevant.

• User personas offer a good way to remind the librarians of the diverse customer base, and to make sure the adult learners’ specific needs are met.

• The toolkit offers a clear and concise way to help students with information seeking. It's important to keep to the main points so the instructions don't become overwhelming or too time-consuming.
Thank you,

questions and comments much appreciated!