

Usage Patterns of Databases in heterogenic Population – the Case of Jordan Valley College

Dalia Avigdori

Abstract:

The aim of this study is to locate patterns of using databases at the academic library and to compare the patterns of use between various groups of users.

The study was made among the users of the library of the Jordan Valley College, and included all the students of the academic section. Many studies dealt in the last decade with the academic library, in which a dramatic change took place due to technological changes in the world of information. Many of these studies of drive from librarians' point of view, less from the user's point of view. In Israel the research is at a starting point. The studies reviewed in this study are divided into three: the reference environment, the user and the information resources. The reference environment is characterized by the changes that take place in it. It is the place where the interaction between the librarian, the user and the information resources occur.

The library users were not the center of attention at the library in the past. New attitudes that deal with the "client at the center" were loaned to education in general and to the library in particular. This attitude, in which the client is in the center, made the librarians deal with the needs of the user's. These needs drive from the user's academic assignments and from the new technologies. The user's behavior literature models described, that the main issue is to understand the search process and the components related to it. Among the models there is C.C Kulthau's model which describes a search process of 6 steps. The process proceeds from uncertainty to understanding and satisfaction. Another model deals with the different types of users and is called "The Mental Model". Another model deals with the success in search and stress the phases of focusing on the issue in which information is searched. This model uses concepts of "recall and precision". Out of the

user's behavior the skills for searching derive, including general learning skills as well as informative skills. Searchers handle the new concept "information literacy" – which is the ability to locate information within a vast variety of resources, in order to use it. The patterns of search are another way to describe the behavior of the searcher. From the spotting of use patterns it is possible to learn about the searcher – is he/she efficient or not. Many researchers studied the use of the searching tools, the independence of the user, the causes that affect the effectiveness of the search and the success.

Adjustment to changes, the dependence on the librarians and expectations, as well as the positive feeling in the reference environment and the joy of studying in the library are some of the factors that help the search. Importance is given to the bibliography instruction. In literature a few categories are presented, by which the students are divided into groups: seniority in the academic world, fields of studies and cultural background. The concept "multi-cultural" mentioned in a study that was done in the U.S.A. in an academic library, refers to minorities, mostly Asians, or to the differences between black and white people. In Israel there is not much reference to the subject, one study refers to multi-cultural population in connection with co-studies of Arabs and Jews.

In the last chapter there is a count of the electronic information sources, including: the computerized catalog, CD-ROM databases, on-line databases and internet. The library today contains the local as well as digital collections of databases from all over the world.

The research assumptions concern the differences between groups according to their field of studies, mother tongue, the years studied and age groups. According to the assumptions of this study there are 4 groups: students from Social Sciences vs. Humanities; Students whose mother tongue is Hebrew vs. students whose mother tongue is Arabic or Russian. Students with academic seniority vs. first year students, young students vs. mature students will apply a more efficient and graded searching, will use number of searching tools and a greater variety of formats. They will be less dependent on help and grade the friendliness of the tools on a higher scale.

Among the finding of the study there are abundant searching patterns: most students begin their search in the computer and less in ways that do not

involve the computer. Most of them work with the computer alone, less work with friends. Most of them search for up to half an hour. Most of them ask for help when they can not find what they are looking for, and less tend to give up the search. About 50% prefer to ask for help from librarians rather than other possibilities, and they request a great deal of help. Out of the tools offered – three are in Hebrew and three are in English. More than half of students, look for material in Hebrew as well as in English, only about 40% look for material in Hebrew only. Among the majority of students, the route they search is similar to the route that is considered efficient.

The findings concerning the connections between the various groups and the search patterns indicate that there are differences between groups that are divided according to their field of studies. There are partial differences between the younger and older students. The differences found among groups, which are different due to their cultural background, were not significant and did not fit the assumptions.

As a whole – the conclusion is that the differences between the various groups are not extensive, and there are only a few components in which there are significant differences. The reason for that may be the great amount of help given individually to those who find the search difficult, at the library of the Jordan Valley College. It may be the reason that there are not so many differences between efficient searchers and less efficient ones.

The findings confirmed the conclusion that there is a need for formal instruction, and the instruction course improves the efficiency of the search and the using of tools. Until better and more efficient ways for search are found, whether technological or cognitive, the recommendation is to enlarge instruction, which might put a great load on the librarians.

system no. 467742

025.524 אבי.דפ תשסא