

Chapter 23

From ‘Gateway Site’ to Reference Content: The Role of Bibliographies in Research and a Case Study of Oxford Bibliographies Online

Rebecca Cullen

Oxford University Press, UK

Robert Faber

Oxford University Press, UK

ABSTRACT

It is suddenly axiomatic that today’s researchers, faculty, and students alike begin their research online. The gateway sites (e.g., Google Books, Wikipedia) may provide a user-friendly and serendipitous searching experience, while simultaneously keeping the most authoritative and vetted content out of sight. This chapter will examine the research chain as it is currently understood, as well as discussing the planned and actual role of Oxford Bibliographies Online within this shifting research context.

INTRODUCTION

Web use and online searching have become much more usual in daily life. However, from being a manageable collection of informational pages, the Web has become a trackless wilderness. Present

day students and researchers represent themselves as “drowning in content.”

There is now so much information online that both faculty and students are overwhelmed, and often uncertain which search terms to use in order to find the good quality information they are sure is available. The gateway sites currently provide only a partial solution, precisely because they are

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61350-308-9.ch023

exclusive of subscription content. With research beginning more often on the free Web than in the walled garden of the library catalog, students at all levels are faced with the ironic situation of seeing too many search results which may yet not include the most authoritative and vetted scholarly materials that they really need.

At the same time, the reference market demands that more information should transition online because that is now the medium in which research takes place. So how are publishers to fulfil market and user needs without either augmenting the existing problem of information overload or of adding to the stockpile of hidden content?

As a further factor, in this research environment, discoverability and accessibility are significant drivers. Librarians are keen to encourage use of both their online and print collections, and researchers at all levels want a clear link between finding a pointer to content and finding the content itself. In order to be noticed in the first place, publisher provided material has to participate and compete in the arena of the free Web, where only the first page of Google results counts.

The focus of this chapter will be to dig deeper into the current research chain, describing the use of a nexus of search tools, sites, and content. While students are aware of the importance of using vetted resources, they often turn to the gateway sites, such as Google Books, Google Scholar, and Wikipedia for their perceived speed, ease of use, and simply because there is increased overlap between the tools individuals use as part of their daily life and those they use in scholarly research. In fact, familiarity may become an even more important factor in the future for those students who have grown up with the resource of the free Web to hand, and have therefore never had to bother developing any other research habits.

We will then discuss the role of bibliographies in an online environment and outline the rationale behind the development of *Oxford Bibliographies Online*. Finally, we will provide some preliminary

evaluation of its place in the scholarly research toolkit based on feedback to date.

BACKGROUND

Several articles of late have examined aspects of undergraduate and postgraduate students' research behavior and the overall results are encouraging, in that students do use course readings, scholarly databases, and library OPACS, as well as gateway sites (Head, 2007; Head and Eisenburg, 2009). Wong (2009) found that students adopt a mixed search strategy, using a combination of free Web and scholarly resources.

One of the most well-known, as well as most controversial of the gateway sites, Wikipedia, has now been around for 10 years. During that time, attitudes to it have moved along a trust continuum: from initial mistrust and benchmarking against traditional reference materials, as in the 2005 *Nature* comparison between Wikipedia and *Encyclopedia Britannica*; to tacit acceptance and limited use among undergraduate students (Head, 2007, p.2); to the present day's active and acknowledged use by both faculty and students.

Particularly for undergraduate students, the gateway sites fulfil an unmet need in the research process by enabling them to begin to build the context within which their search *should* happen. Head and Eisenburg reported that students "described finding context as laborious, often frustrating, yet essential to most of their research" (2009, p.7).

Wikipedia is regarded as an efficient tool with which to fill in gaps in knowledge so that these students can acquire the appropriate vocabulary and mental map of a subject that they need in order to be able to tackle the scholarly research databases; one focus group attendee used the term "presearch tool" (Head and Eisenburg, 2010, p.4), and this is a useful concept to take forward in understanding the current multi-step research process.

Despite fears among both librarians and publishers that a reliance on search engines means

5 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/gateway-site-reference-content/57930

Related Content

Best Practices for Selecting the Best Fit

Monica Metz-Wiseman, Melanie Griffin, Carol Ann Borchert and Deborah Henry (2012). *Planning and Implementing Resource Discovery Tools in Academic Libraries* (pp. 77-89).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/best-practices-selecting-best-fit/67815

Collaboration at an International Level: Germany

Hella Klausner (2014). *Collaboration in International and Comparative Librarianship* (pp. 195-203).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/collaboration-at-an-international-level/103084

It Takes a Village: The Value of Multiple Instructor Voices in the Online Classroom

Nicole A. Cooke (2013). *Advancing Library Education: Technological Innovation and Instructional Design* (pp. 141-152).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/it-takes-a-village/88893

Principal Component Analysis Using the Factor Procedure

Sean Eom (2009). *Author Cocitation Analysis: Quantitative Methods for Mapping the Intellectual Structure of an Academic Discipline* (pp. 171-193).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/principal-component-analysis-using-factor/5447

International Librarianship: One Librarian's Experience in Reducing the Digital Divide

Alan Hopkinson (2014). *Collaboration in International and Comparative Librarianship* (pp. 51-62).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/international-librarianship/103071