The next generation of college students, more wired than any other, might not be as good at Internet research as you may think.

A new report, “Information Behavior of the Researcher of the Future,” from the Joint Information Systems Committee, a British higher-education research institute, “says the “Google Generation” (those born after 1993, who can’t remember a time when the Internet wasn’t widely available) may be computer literate. But that doesn’t make them information literate. Some of the key problems the study found include:

- Young people don’t develop good search strategies to find quality information.
- They might find information on the Internet quickly, but they don’t know how to evaluate the quality of what they find.
- They don’t understand what the Internet really is: a vast network with many different content providers.

The report details the implications of these problems for library professionals. It says library resources should be more unified with Internet tools like Google, and adapt to the changing ways younger generations gather information.

In the context of a recent report, “Information Searches that Solve Problems: How People Use the Internet, Libraries and Government Agencies When They Need Help.” from the Pew Internet & American Life Project that says 18- to 30-year-olds use libraries more than other age groups (mostly to use computer resources), it seems there will be an even greater need in the future for librarians to teach information-gathering skills.

—Hurley Goodall - January 16, 2008 from the Chronicle of Higher Education
Why Students Want Simplicity And Why It Fails Them When It Comes To Research

Stephen Bell - Associate University Librarian for Research & Instructional Services at Temple University's Paley Library

The research process, by its very nature, can be both complicated and complex. For students it presents a gap between the known and unknown. They get a research assignment, usually broadly defined by the instructor, and then need to identify a topic without necessarily knowing much of anything about the subject. Then to further complicate matters the student must navigate unfamiliar resources, perhaps encountering new and unusual concepts along the way. A defining quality of a complex problem is that right answers are not easily obtainable. Excepting those students who are passionate about the study matter and research project, most students would prefer to simplify their research as much as possible. The problem, as a new article points out, is that applying simple problem solving approaches to complex problems is a contextual error that will lead to failure. I think this theory may better inform us about why students take the path of least resistance for their academic research, than our usual beliefs that they are just lazy, have adapted to their instructors acceptance of “good enough” research or that the blame lies with us for serving up too complex search systems.

The Cynefin (pronounced Ku-Nev-In) Framework can help us understand why students apply simple approaches to complex problems, and how that is a formula for poor research results. Cynefin is a Welsh word that signifies the many factors in our environment and experience that influence us in ways we can never understand. A recent Harvard Business Review piece by David Snowden and Mary Boone explains how the Cynefin Framework can help us to better match our process for problem solving to the actual context of any particular problem. In other words, as a decision maker - and being an effective researcher requires the making of any number of decisions (what database to use, what search terms to use, which results to explore, etc.) - one must understand the very context of the situation in order to think clearly about developing the appropriate decision.

The four main contexts are simple, complicated, complex and chaotic, but here I’ll deal with just simplicity and complexity. Simple decisions have their place. It depends on the context of the problem situation. We resolve them by using patterns and processes that have delivered past success. In other words we approach simple problems by using personal best practices.
The right answer is clear, evident and without dispute. There is no uncertainty. The danger lies in what the authors call “entrained thinking”. When managers and leaders approach a problem the natural reaction is to use familiar strategies and methods to seek the one right solution - the ones we have trained ourselves to use because they typically succeed. While those entrained methods may work well in simple contexts they may lead to disastrous results when the context is complex. The point of the article is that managers and leaders must first analyze the situation at hand to determine its true context, and then use decision-making strategies that effectively fit that context. In some situations that are extremely complex, the authors say that no leader may be able to devise an effective solution and that those involved in the situation must allow a solution to emerge. Great leaders recognize these dilemmas, and are able to construct the environment that generates discussion that leads to the generation of ideas.

Students come to our academic institutions after 15 or so years of research methods that may have always worked in their previous simple contexts. I need to know the names of Britney Spears’ children…I use Google to find the answer. I need to know what year the War of 1812 started…I use Ask.com to find the answer. In these simple contexts there is always a right answer that can be easily obtained. If these strategies have served our students well, what do we think they’ll do when they get their first challenging research assignments? Right! They’ll apply their decision-making process that has previously led to great success. So what can we do about this? How can we help our students to understand that when it comes to college-level research they must first examine and understand the context of the decisions they will need to make before taking any action?

I propose that we add “identify and understand the context of the research problem and choose a decision-making style that matches that context” to that long list of information literacy skills that many of us list in some planning document. And it should be near the top of the list. There are times when a research question has but one correct answer and the simple context demands a simple research method. Go ahead and search Google. But when the research challenge is vague, involves uncertainty and requires navigating some complex issues, then students need to recognize it and overcome their temptation to seek out simple solutions. I’d like to think that if we can get students to think in terms of context it might help them to increase the effectiveness of their research skills. This skill could prove to be valuable for achieving academic success, but also for the many decisions our students will need to make in their post-college careers.
DeSales University Cookbook

Trexler Library is creating a university cookbook as a service for the campus community. We are in the process of collecting various recipes including soups, salads, appetizers, entrees, and desserts.

Once the cookbook is finished we will host a reception highlighting some of the recipes. If you would like more information, please contact Michele Mrazik at #1612 or Michele.mrazik@desales.edu

What the heck do we do about Wikipedia?


“Students often use Wikipedia without having any idea what it is, other than a convenient source of information on a topic they need to look up. But the fact that it changes constantly, has thousands of anonymous contributors, and can be edited by anyone makes their instructors understandably nervous.

Beyond the obvious question – should students use it at all? – lie some deeper pedagogical issues.

• How do we convey our expectations of college-level interpretation and analysis to students who are new to the process?

• How do we persuade students it’s worth the trouble to go beyond the easy and obvious and learn how to seek out, recognize and use high quality sources?

• How do we introduce them to scholarly conventions of authority and evidence and convince them these standards matter?

…Historian Ray Rosenzweig has suggested a number of ways Wikipedia can be used in the classroom as part of general information literacy efforts.

• Use Wikipedia to expose students to the need to critically analyze primary and secondary sources. Because editorial changes are tracked, students have the opportunity to see meaning debated and negotiated.

• Show how the process used by Wikipedia extends the writing process used in the classroom to the public sphere. In a very real sense, Wikipedia is a celebration of lifelong learning. As Rosezweig says “those who create Wikipedia’s articles and debate their contents are involved in an astonishingly intense and widespread process of democratic self-education.”

…Wikipedia can be a sandbox for playing with the skills students need to be information literate. Instead of writing a traditional research papers with an audience of one, students might add or edit articles on topics related to the course material. By so doing, they will need to go well beyond the easiest sources and gain experience with fact-checking, evaluating sources, and synthesizing information clearly and fairly while contributing to a project to make information freely available to the world.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checking out DVDs at Trexler Library.</th>
<th>“Sneak Peek” at Trexler</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If you are looking to find DVDs, in Trexler Library go to our library homepage: <a href="http://www.desales.edu/library">www.desales.edu/library</a></td>
<td>The Library has teamed up with the TV/Film dept to start a film series called Sneak Peek at Trexler. The series will run three times a semester in the Library’s Air Products room.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Select the “Search the catalog now” link.</td>
<td>The first movie is “El Bola.” This Spanish language movie is about a 12-year old boy raised in a violent and unforgiving environment. Embarrassed by his family life, he retreats from his classmates engaging them only through a dangerous game. The arrival of a new boy at school, from whom he learns a new definition of friendship, leads to the discovery of a family where communication and love prevail over domination and violence.”</td>
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<td>3. Choose “SUBJECT” from the drop down menu and type in “DVD”.</td>
<td>El Bola will be shown on March 14th at 7pm in the Air Products room. The event is free and open to the DeSales community.</td>
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<td>4. An alphabetical listing will appear.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5. Select the title you wish to take out and see if it is available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Copy down the call # and go to the DVD section on the first floor of the library and pull the empty case.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Bring the case to the “Circulation Desk.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. We will place the DVD in the case and check them out to you for one week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. All overdue media is .50 per day.</td>
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<td>10. If looking for a specific film genre, type it in the “subject field”.</td>
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<td>We also have a finding DVD tutorial on our library homepage labeled: “Tutorial on Finding Videos in Trexler”.</td>
<td>We thank all of the people who entered our annual “Academy Awards” contest. Two students guessed four out of the five categories correctly and Amanda Schneider was randomly chosen the winner. She received two movie passes to the Rave Movie Theater.</td>
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Academy Awards Contest Winner
The Access program continues to encourage its students to join efforts with Trexler Library for research, technology assistance in information science, and ultimately, pleasure and satisfaction in learning. This spring, I had the opportunity to convert my Old Testament Theology course (THE 234) from an in-class to a hybrid environment. In so doing, I was able to experiment with some new ways of exposing my students to library resources, services, and instruction. Originally, when students participated with in-class lectures only, there was time for a face-to-face library orientation session, during which librarians gave students a total overview of the library, with an emphasis on the collection’s theology reference works, databases and periodicals. Especially important to students was understanding and the use of both Biblical Commentaries and Biblical Concordances.

However, as hybrid courses evolved at DeSales University, they brought with them a more limited face-to-face experience, so I decided to employ the services of librarian Lynne Kvinnesland as an on-line consultant. Lynne attended class with the students at the beginning of the course so that she could introduce herself to the students, and meet with them in person. The following week, she conducted a full library orientation session online, via Elluminate in Blackboard. Throughout the eight weeks of the course, students worked with Lynne and her colleagues as they conducted research for their annotated bibliographies, a format with which many of them were unfamiliar. The final project was a PowerPoint display on the topic of the students’ annotated bibliographies. The annotated bibliographies were evaluated on writing style/grammar, MLA format, depth of research and correctness of content, and were graded by both instructor and librarian.

The collaboration proved a worthwhile learning experience for all concerned. I enjoyed the challenge of seeing students produce bibliographic entries as a form of critical research. Students realized the satisfaction and importance of producing original work as they became acquainted with biblical scholars whose works are held at Trexler Library. Librarians welcomed this new venue for reaching students and making them more aware of the resources and research assistance available to them at the library. Perhaps most importantly, consultants, students and instructor all came to know each other in a warm and communicative hybrid manner!