

To google or not to google: Is it a question?

Maja Žumer

University of Ljubljana

Univerza v Ljubljani



University of Ljubljana

- <http://www.uni-lj.si/en/>

History of ULJ



**Established September 1919,
First beginnings 1595 and 1619**

- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Medicine
- Technical Faculty
- Faculty of Theology
 - 969 students

**First, largest and only complete
university in Slovenia in addition
to...**

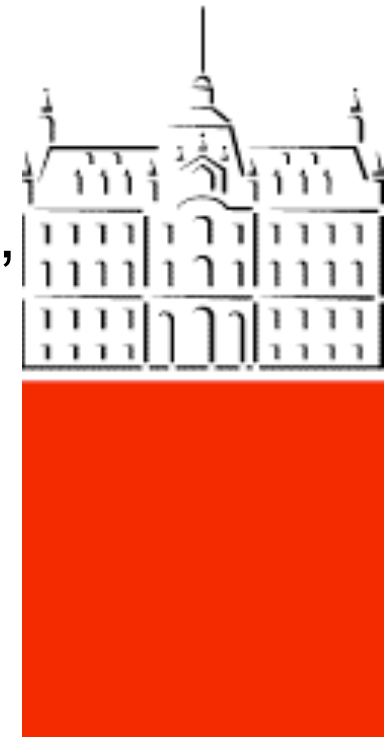
- University of Maribor
- University of Primorska, Koper
- University of Nova Gorica
- ...



University of Ljubljana in numbers

UL is one of the big universities in EU with:

- 58 000 undergraduate students,
- 5 200 postgraduate students,
- 4 000 teaching staff and researchers,
- 1 450 administrative staff:
 - 22 faculties (science, social science, humanities, technical, medicine)
 - 3 academies



Filozofska fakulteta



Faculty of Arts

- 21 departments (social science and humanities)
- Over 7000 students
- **Department of Library and Information Science and Book Studies**

<http://www.ff.uni-lj.si/oddelki/biblio/en/index.html>

Programmes offered

- Bachelor
 - Library science
- Masters
 - Library science
 - Information science
 - Publishing
 - School librarianship
- PhD
 - Information studies

Information society

- Just a phrase?
- Could people ever live without information?
- What is different now?



Information needs

- for work/school
 - for everyday life
 - for fun
-
- dormant / unexpressed / expressed



Information seeking

- Dynamic, non-linear, complex process or activity of attempting to obtain information
- Many models, theories...
- Zipf's principle of least effort:
People tend to use the most convenient search method, in the least exacting mode available.
We stop as soon as minimally acceptable results are found.



“The Google generation study”

“Study on the Information Behaviour of the
Researcher of the Future” [http://
www.bl.uk/news/pdf/googlegen.pdf](http://www.bl.uk/news/pdf/googlegen.pdf)

(born after 1993; growing up in a world
dominated by internet)

- Commissioned by BL and JISC
- Performed by CIBER (University College London)





The aims of the study

- Do they look for information differently?
- Will this shape their future behaviour as mature researchers?

To inform and stimulate discussion about the future of libraries in the internet era



Results

- young people demonstrate an ease and familiarity with computers
- they rely on the most basic search tools
- they do not possess the critical and analytical skills to assess the information that they find on the web

- But also...



Research-behaviour traits that are commonly associated with younger users – impatience in search and navigation, and zero tolerance for any delay in satisfying their information needs – are now the norm for all age-groups, from younger pupils and undergraduates through to professors.

'These findings add to our growing understanding of subjects that should concern all who work in further and higher education – the changing needs of our students and researchers and how libraries can meet their needs.'

Univerza v Ljubljani



- *All age groups revealed to share so-called 'Google Generation' traits*
- *New study argues that libraries will have to adapt to the digital mindset*
- *Young people seemingly lacking in information skills; strong message to the government and society at large*



Findings of OCLC

- 89% of college students use search engines to begin an information search (while only 2% start from a library web site)
- 93% are satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience of using a search engine (84% for a librarian-assisted search)
- search engines fit college students' life styles better than physical or online libraries and that fit is 'almost perfect'
- college students still use the library, but they are using it less (and reading less) since they first began using internet research tools
- 'books' are still the primary library brand association for this group, despite massive investment in digital resources, of which students are largely unfamiliar



Online catalogs: What users and librarians want (OCLC 2009)

What do end users want?

- Direct links to online content—text and media formats
- Evaluative content, such as summaries/abstracts, tables of contents and excerpts
- Relevant search results
- Item availability information—if the item is available and how to get it
- Simple keyword search with an advanced, guided search option

Is Google (etc.) bad?

Tara Brabazon

The University of Google: education in the post information age
Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008

"The education world has pursued new technology with an almost evangelical zeal and it is time to take a step back and give proper consideration of how we use it."

"Too many students don't use their own brains enough. We need to bring back the important values of research and analysis."

"I ban my students from using google, wikipedia and other websites like that. I give them a reading list to work from and expect them to cite a good number of them in any work they produce."

Univerza v Ljubljani



Nicholas Carr: Is Google making us stupid? (2008)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/6868/>

- “I now have almost totally lost the ability to read and absorb a longish article on the web or in print,”
- “Even a blog post of more than three or four paragraphs is too much to absorb. I skim it.”
- “We are *how* we read.”

What do our students say about Google

- It is easy
- The best place to start
- One always gets something
- No training needed



Research

Objective comparison of Google and 'academic library resources' (catalogues, bibliographic databases, e-journals)

Masters research by Jan Brophy (Prof. D. Bawden)
City University London

Is Google enough ? Comparison of an internet search engine with academic library resources

Jan Brophy and David Bawden

Aslib Proceedings, 2005, 57(6), 498-512

Univerza v Ljubljani



- case study
- general areas chosen by an academic librarian as important to students
- queries selected from a list of ‘real’ queries
- chosen so that material is likely to be found in both web pages and academic materials



Test queries

- **Law:** internet piracy
- **Environmental science:** endangered species
- **Education:** children's reading habits
- **Music:** opera production



What was judged

- Relevance
 - topical - matches subject matter of query
 - pertinent - gives some 'real' information
 - useful - satisfies the information need
- Accessibility
- Quality



Results

- Google better for accessibility
- Library databases better for quality
- Both provide unique material
- Precision of both is about the same

- they are complementary
- user needs both for good results



Since then

- More scholarly materials on Google
- Library databases indexed by Google
- Portals (distributed searching)
- Simple library interfaces
- Relevance ranking in bibliographic databases
- 2.0 tools

Would results be different now?



So what is the message?

- Both are useful
- Better to do both (but remember Zipf's law :-)
- Neither is perfect, but not a total miss either

- You can always improve your skills



Some good advice...

- Always start with the analysis of the information need
- Find the information source
- Formulate the query
- Evaluate the results

- Repeat any of the steps as long as needed



Information need and context

- **What is the topic?**
 - How can I express it?
 - What are the aspects?

- What do I need the information for?
- What do I know already on the topic?
- What am I expecting to find ideally?
- What am I satisfied with as minimum?
- What are the constraints?

- ...



Finding the appropriate source

- Topic
- Nature of the need
- Time available
- Price
- Get advice:
 - Academic library website
 - Subject directories/gateways
 - Search engine lists (<http://www.internettutorials.net/choose.asp>)



Formulate the query

- If unfamiliar with the topic: browse, use different sources, use a search engine
- Think of all possible terms
- Think of different aspects/facets
- Investigate options
 - ‘Advanced searching’
- Develop your query
 - Berry picking
 - Pearl growing



Examples

- [The British Library](#)
- [WorldCat](#)
- [The European Library](#)
- [Europeana](#)



Evaluate the results

- Relevance/usefulness
- Quality/reliability
 - Author
 - Publisher
 - Last update



The future

- Semantic Web
- Web 2.0/Library 2.0

