Easy access to medical literature: Are user habits changing? Is this a threat to the quality of Science?

University of Liège - Life Sciences Library

Starting point

Observations, trends and facts

- Enlarged access to e-journals
- Exploding Science Direct (Elsevier) & Synergy (Blackwell) usage reports
- Collapsing Inter-Library loans (ILL)
Worrying trends

Downloaded articles
Synergy + Science Direct

ILL requests

Oct/Dec 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005
0 50.000 100.000 150.000 200.000
0 5.000 10.000 15.000 20.000

Working hypothesis

A disaster scenario (?)
Do users turn to full text aggregator portals?

✓ To avoid the difficulties of searching bibliographic DB?
✓ To gain instant access to full text articles?
Our objectives

To conduct an analysis in order to gain new or updated insights into

✓ Library management
✓ Users education

Our strategy

✓ Retrospective statistical analyses of ILL data
✓ Gathering bibliometric data
✓ Comparing e-journals & bibliographic DB usage reports
✓ Survey: Medicine & veterinary Medicine
  • Habits
  • Preferences
  • Needs
  • Encountered problems
Specific aims

Collect data in order to

✓ Support decision making to
  • Define an ideal collection of periodicals
  • Renew rigid contract licenses with full text editors

✓ Adapt teaching activities and user education
  • Demystify the difficulties of DB searching
  • Emphasize the importance of conducting comprehensive investigations
  • Trigger critical reading & thinking

In depth analysis of ILL data

Origins of requested articles

Medical Faculty members

External users

Other libraries

Local collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Medical Faculty members</th>
<th>External users</th>
<th>Other libraries</th>
<th>Local collections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>125%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion 1 (partial)

Beside an intensive usage of e-journals, ILL requests for articles, which are not directly available either online (electronic) or in the library (print), has remained stable over the last 5 years

2001-2005
~ 3500 ILL articles / year

Bibliometric analysis

Web of Science 2001-2005

Searched by: Author (n = 1150) AND Address

Where do they publish?

2 608 articles

Publication Database

What do they read (cite)?

57 978 citations

Citation Database
Journal analysis

A. Publication Database
2 608 articles in 829 journals
✓ 46 titles contain 34% of articles
✓ 88% of titles are not indicative

B. Citation Database
59 277 citations in 2 437 journals
✓ 12 titles contain 16% of citations
✓ 66% of titles are not indicative

Favorite titles

A. Publication database
B. Citation database

2001-2005

Cluj - Napoca - 2006
Published articles

2001: 31%
2002: 24%
2003: 31%
2004: 39%
2005: 44%

2001-2005:
2,608 articles published in 829 journals

Core collection (CC)

Publication DB
Threshold:
# Publications ≥ 5

Citation DB
Threshold:
# Citations ≥ 100

Synergy Reports
Threshold:
# Downloads: Top 50%

Science Direct reports
Threshold:
# Downloads: Top 50%
Conclusion 2 (partial)

- CC is built according to independent criteria which reflect user preferences
- Most journals in the CC have high IF & ranking in their respective disciplines
- Amongst the 250 titles in the CC, 50% are published by Elsevier / Blackwell
- It's important to save enough of the budget to purchase interesting titles not included in the consortiums.

User survey

- Protocol adapted from Wessel et al.
- Print version sent to 1150 participants
  - 900 Medical Faculty & UHC
  - 200 Faculty of Veterinary Medicine

Wessel CB, Tannery NH, Epstein BA
Information-seeking behavior and use of information resources by clinical research coordinators.
J Med Libr Assoc. 2006;94(1):48-54
Surveyed population

✓ Participation rate of 48% (n=548)
  • 419: Faculty of Medicine / UHC
  • 129: Veterinarians
✓ Highest educational degree
  • Medical degree (39%)
  • PhD (27%)
  • Master's degree (20%)
  • Higher education teaching (13%)
✓ Most of the participants (86%) search the literature several times a month

What are they looking for?

✓ Research and review articles (86%)
✓ Clinically relevant articles, exclusively (19%)
✓ Guidelines (30%)
✓ Educational materials (20%)
✓ Drug information (16%)
✓ Patient education materials (6%)
✓ Browsing contents (16%)
Their favorite tools

- Medline/PubMed = first choice (67%)
  - Medicine: 89% (5% Medline/Ovid)
  - Veterinary Medicine: 95%
- Science Direct / Synergy = second choice for
  - Clinicians: 41%
  - Veterinarian: 56%
- EBM Reviews (Fac. Medicine)
- CAB Abstracts (Fac. Veterinary Med.)
  - Never use: 28% 42%
  - Never heard of: 41% 39%

Problems

- Bibliographic DBs
- Catalogues 10%
- Full-text 53%
- Thesaurus 6%
- Boolean operators & () 7%
- Printing (83%)
- Saving (53%)
- Personal DB (13%)
Conclusions 1 (final)

✓ Hasty conclusions must always be called into question
✓ Stress the importance of collecting data for statistical analysis and making surveys in order to:
  ✓ Understand user needs
  ✓ Adapt purchasing policies
  ✓ Update our teaching
✓ User habits are changing

Conclusions 2 (final)

✓ Users consider bibliographic databases as the major entry point to medical literature
✓ The disaster scenario can be disregarded
✓ We validated the strategy we use to point out to inevitable titles to be kept in the core collection
Conclusions 3 (final)

✓ Clarify our position regarding electronic editing and monopolistic attitudes (OAI)

✓ Customer usage reports provided by editors (just like IFs) should be used with full knowledge of their limitations

Conclusions 4 (final)

✓ Adapt our teaching to the different publics
  • Students
  • Scientists & clinicians who did not answer the survey
  • Users wishing to improve their searching methodology and skills
I thank you for your attention