

Research Guru Interview

1. When you did research for college papers, what search engines did you use?
2. Tell me about a few of your experiences using library search engines to find sources for your college papers.
3. Did you enjoy doing research? What parts of the process did you enjoy?
4. What was challenging or frustrating about the research process?
5. How did you learn to do research for school papers?
6. How would you determine if a source was something you could use?

Interviewee 1

1. Tell me about a few of your experiences using library search engines to find sources for your college papers.

He didn't have any experience with that. He was old school. Would pull books from the shelf. Do citations manually. He didn't have to write too many papers for his degree. 3-4 classes required papers with citations. Others were based on labs and math work.

2. Did you enjoy doing research? What parts of the process did you enjoy?

Doesn't remember hating it. Was some pleasure in finding a book and then discovering what you're looking for. Thrill of discovery. Going to technical reference for materials, understanding a chart, – hey I know what that means, I'm learning something – and then apply it to a design.

3. What was challenging or frustrating about the research process?

Just having to go through multiple books and guessing what's in the book. Having to find out what they're about. What others had written about a subject (bible classes).

4. How did you learn to do research for school papers?

Middle or high school, using a library card system. Make photocopies and highlight. Take notes.

5. How would you determine if a source was something you could use?

Wouldn't know. Depends on type of writing he was doing. If the author was recognized or published in his field, not just someone writing an opinion piece. On the engineering side, there were published libraries of information from national or intl organizations. That's where you'd pull data from.

Looking at Conestoga's Library Home Page.

You're doing a paper for a history class on Napoleon. Walk me through how you would use this site.

Would do a general search first (one word Napoleon) to browse results.

Then would add keywords / use advanced search (He means applying some filters, such as source type).

*The actual Advanced Search is small and he didn't notice it at first. Couldn't access it without institutional access.

Says that he goes to Google first when doing research.

Looks for scholarly articles and reputable sites.

Considers what kinds of source it is to determine if it's useful.

Wants to cut to the chase.

Interviewee 2

7. When you did research for college papers, what search engines did you use?

Starting out, would use Google for most of research. Would use wikipedia too, read up on topic, find the sources they were citing. Would take those sources or use the same citations.

In 2nd, 3rd year, would start using Google scholar. Still not optimized for discovering it exists, for finding article/information you want. Google scholar goes through titles/abstract of articles instead of full text. Would use Google scholar if he knew exactly what he was looking for.

During U, would use library website and search engine. Because of limited access and paywall with Google/Google Scholar. For higher and higher levels of U, more necessary to use library website.

8. Tell me about a few of your experiences using library search engines to find sources for your college papers.

Did area of interest during U in history, business history, history of business. Did several assignments that required access to primary or secondary sources that could only be found through library (digital) archives. One of the problems: while the libraries were comprehensive, they weren't complete. You can find info about a source, but you can't always access it because it's not digitized, taken out, requires special access (such as being a masters student). Biggest problem he had with Primo, keywords could be finicky, less association like in Google/Yahoo. Primo searches with such a specific lense that you have rephrase your keyword search a number of times. Primo was efficient, not optimized.

9. Did you enjoy doing research? What parts of the process did you enjoy?

You can only enjoy this process so long before poor results and optimization problems make it a tedious slog, like finding a diamond in the rough than it is to use a non-academic source that you have access to and Google can find in seconds.

One of the major things he enjoyed: 1. When you found something usable, so much more satisfying 2. Reading abstracts and articles could give you another perspective, tidbit, piece of the puzzle. Although not directly applicable it could give you something else to include in the paper. Another piece of the data set.

10. What was challenging or frustrating about the research process?

Lack of digitization. Lack of satisfactory results. You can get a million hits using the library search engine, but the article you need might be lost in there. You have rephrase your search a lot.

11. How did you learn to do research for school papers?

U of Guelph: seminars taught by librarians for courses that required research. How to use the search engine, how to use key words, etc. But the majority of discovering what the keywords are is trial and error. Not fine and dandy if your key words and the library's keywords don't match. How to use the search engine is a basic tutorial. How to find useful information is trial and error.

12. How would you determine if a source was something you could use?

Relevancy. Does it contain the information to support my argument? Information pertinent to what I'm discussing. Ex: food history class. Prevalence of W African cuisine/food in the South. Could find an article about the slave trade, but it wouldn't mention the food supplies brought on the ships, or that some slaves were brought as cooks for other slaves and masters house.

Is an academic source. Should not be treated as an academic source if it's a blog. Google shows the blog, Google Scholar shows academic source, but doesn't do it well.

Language [appropriateness]. Food history course example. Someone can talk about food coming over from W Africa in an article. It may not have enough material to be used as a primary research source. Is the article something you can quote from or just to back up argument? How he's going to use the source based on how much the article dedicates to the topic: a paragraph or two vs. the whole paper.

Keywords. Food history example. There are two different keywords to talk about this cycle: triangle of suffering/death (slave trade) or the golden triangle (from a British business perspective). If you Google “golden triangle” you get results for both things. If you use Primo or Google Scholar, you would only get a couple results on one of them.

NWACC: using this food history example.

Uses search field: search everything: Gold Triangle.

Initial search query doesn't yield results.

Gold Triangle yielded different results than Golden Triangle, which yielded more results, but not a single thing on the slave trade.

*Doesn't use advanced search or filters.

One good result, but the initial link doesn't show information about the source content.

Google search:

Notes Google suggestions.

Eventually includes “slavery” in the keywords. Then finds Triangular Trade on Britannica.

Nwacc also has suggestions. He finds good results when using transatlantic slave trade. He notes how he had to initially do research on what his keywords are going to be. When he puts in triangle again, it messes up the results.