User Experiences with Harvard Discovery: Moderated Panel Discussion

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Date: Wednesday, December 2nd, 2015
Time: 2:00-3:30 pm
Place: Sever Hall 113

Link to the feedback: http://bit.ly/1JTYp5g

HOLLIS+ has been the default search interface for the library catalog for over a year now. What impact has it had on our users’ research experience? How does it fit into their overall research practices? What features do they find most helpful and least helpful? Come find out!

Please join us on December 2nd, for a moderated panel discussion with Harvard graduate students about their experiences with HOLLIS+ and with research at Harvard more generally. The moderator will pose questions drawn from the suggestions you submitted to our poll earlier this fall.

* There will be time at the end for additional questions from the audience.

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Notes from event:

This is not a transcript. The answers are not verbatim, but represent the gist or meaning of what was said. We have, however, attempted to record the questions as accurately as possible.

Question: How long have you been at Harvard?

Answers:

- 5 yrs
- 5 yrs
- 9 yrs (two degrees in two different schools)

Question: Where do you begin when you want to find something in the library?

In general, our panelists start their research in a variety of different places:

- Google Books is often used for initial topical searches and then the search is expanded using footnotes and citations found there. GoogleBooks is used for research topics that are not well-represented in LOC subject headings (e.g. certain topics in women's history); in other cases, Google Books returns too much "noise."
- HOLLIS+ is used for known item searches, but then is further used as a browsing tool.
- Research guides are used to aide in the discovery of primary sources.
- The LibX toolbar is used to find known items.
- The Portal home page is also used to quickly access and search databases such as JSTOR and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

Question: What non-HOLLIS resources do you use most? Can you say more about them?

- Many of the non-HOLLIS resources were mentioned in the previous question.
  - Research guides
  - Google books: one panelists noted that, because the now-obscure figures she is writing on were well-known at the time they lived, GoogleBooks searches yield primary sources in addition to secondary ones. Another said that he finds GoogleBooks to have too much noise and doesn’t like the absence of full text for in-copyright material.
  - 19th Century newspapers database
  - EBSCO
  - OASIS-One panelist mentioned specifically that this tool is not that helpful because it is not easy to search, it is unclear how sources are linked, and the finding aids are not great. He would like to see OASIS improve.

Question: What is the most frustrating feature of HOLLIS+?

- Overall, our panel really likes HOLLIS+. Points of frustration include:
  - Not everything is in HOLLIS+, and it would be great if all records had tables of contents and summaries.
  - CJK works, which is great, but doesn’t work as well as in Classic. Results are different than expected.
  - Why does ‘Find It @ Harvard’ show up when we do have the item and overall seems to show up at random times? This is confusing and contributes to noise on the page.
  - Subject searches feel more reliable in Classic.
  - Having HOLLIS+ and HOLLIS Classic is confusing, especially to undergraduates.
  - The ILL interface is confusing.
  - A few things they like: It is better than Classic, being able to download citation information is helpful, facets are great. But human librarians remain a crucial discovery tool.
Question: **Do you use HOLLIS Classic and if so, why?**

- One member of the panel says that he does not use it at all anymore. The other two used it for the following reasons:
  - Documents such as turn-of-the-century and some kinds of government documents (e.g., League of Nations) are easier to find in Classic.
  - Although CJK searching is easier in Classic, the results display isn’t as good for browsing because only Romanized titles are visible which is less intuitive to read. HOLLIS+ displays CJK titles as well as Romanized.

Question: **Do you refine your results and if so, how?**

- The panel finds being able to refine the results useful, but doesn’t always use facets. They agreed that if you refine too much then you might be missing resources you didn’t even know that you were looking for. They are willing to read through about 20 pages of results without refining. One panelist noted frustration with the options in the author facet: there are often multiple slightly different options for the same author, and it seems as though none of them reliably returns the complete list of titles by that author. The facets they use the most include:
  - Date (e.g. the term “cultural lag” was popular during a specific time period)
  - Material type
  - Location (when searching for archival material)

Question: **E-formats—what do you think about e-book and e-journals? Do you want more electronic resources?**

- It is more important to our panelists to have journals in e-format than to have e-books. Here are their comments:
  - They are pleasantly surprised by the number of e-books we have. One panelist dislikes platforms that divide a book into multiple .pdfs (one per chapter).
  - It is disappointing when the most recent publications aren’t available electronically: when preparing for a presentation, panelists will often want to check just-published journal issues just a day or two beforehand.
  - E-format is strongly preferred to microfilm (microfilm can be eye-straining to read).
  - They all agreed that they are often happy to discovery primary resources available only on microfilm or in original manuscript. Digitized texts are widely available and lots of scholars can write about them; less widely available material brings the promise of a new scholarly discovery.

Question: **What is the most valuable piece of information on the HOLLIS+ page (after you have selected an item)?**

- All agree that location, availability, and the ‘Request Item’ button (saves a ton of time!) are the most important parts. Other notable features:
  - Table of Contents—wish that more records supplied this
  - Summaries—wish that more records supplied this
  - ‘Browse Shelf’ feature—Even though they might be able to request an item for delivery, they still see the value of going into the stacks to browse.
    - One panelist just learned about it and thinks they will be using it a lot in the future.
    - One panelist has known about it, was excited about using it, but hasn’t found that they have used it as much as they thought they would.
    - Even though they might be able to request an item for delivery, they still see the value of going into the stacks to browse.

Question: **Do you use a research management tool like Zotero?**

- The panel has had very mixed experiences with research management tools (Zotero was the most commonly used).
  - One uses it regularly and is grateful for it, but does see a lot of flaws in it.
  - One tries to stay on top of using it, but some of the flaws hinder use.
    - Citations imported from HOLLIS+ retain the catalog’s capitalization rules so a lot of time is spent fixing them. Getting citations from Google or Amazon is easier than HOLLIS+ because formatting ends up being better.
    - It is helpful to researchers to organize citations into different, reconfigurable groups, in the same way one might organize books on a shelf according to one’s dissertation chapters, but Zotero doesn’t offer an easy option to do that.
  - One has tried it once or twice but doesn’t use it.

Question: **What is your favorite research trick or the thing you wished you’d learned earlier?**

- One panelist stressed the importance of using librarians. They didn’t feel that the pressure of being the greatest researcher because they know that librarians know about advances in technology and unprocessed collections and how to gain access to them. Another panelist noted that HOLLIS+ has more features than he’d ever used, such as an Advanced Search page: he’s aware it exists but never feels a strong need to use it. He offered the analogy of a smartphone: you might download a ton of wonderful apps, but in the end you probably only use a couple of them. The final panelist noted that although he relies heavily on the librarians in libraries and archives he knows well, sometimes it’s unclear which librarian to contact for help with a particular kind of question, especially for a very large library like Widener.

Question: **Do you use LibGuides and if so, how did you hear about them?**

- All of the panelists use LibGuides (Research Guides). They heard about them from a professor, in a class and from an office mate.

Question: **What is the hardest to find in the library?**

- Archival material:
The panelist notes that there seems to be a disconnect between what they think a historical term means or how it should be categorized and how it is actually shelved. They also feel that their experience has been that other universities are better at this. One panelist finds that the keywords they use are not the same as the keywords used by a catalogers, especially for terms with historical meaning that have changed over time. "University Press" would be a useful facet: one panelist noted that it would help her keep abreast of new developments in her scholarly field.

Question: **HOLLIS+ launched a year ago, how has your searching changed?**

- All panelists agreed that HOLLIS+ is their favorite of all of the Harvard catalogs they have used. Here are some of their comments:
  - I used to use both HOLLIS and HOLLIS Classic, now I just use HOLLIS+.
  - I did not like HOLLIS (Aquabrowser).
  - Book reviews are good.
  - I don't use other resources as much now that HOLLIS+ is around. Such as JSTOR, EBSCO, and ProQuest (I do not like ProQuest)
  - HOLLIS+ is: easier, more enjoyable to work with, makes my work more productive and efficient, is an embarrassment of riches because it is so good and we have access to so much.

Question: **When do you search (day of the week, time of day)?**

- The panelists do their searching at all times of the day. One even mentioned that it is easy to get lost in a research spiral.

Question: **What is one thing you would change about HOLLIS+?**

- Relevance ranking—it doesn't match their idea of relevance. How does this work and who decides it is relevant?
- More results on one page, or a continuous scroll, so they don't have to click as often.
  - More like Amazon:
    - Features like "because you searched this topic, you might be interested in this" or "others who have searched this topic looked at this item".
    - Like the way that Amazon thinks about their users.

Question: **The tabs in HOLLIS+ (Locations & Availability, Details, etc.), do they help or hinder?**

- The panelists like the tabs.

Question: **When you click on View Online and get to the FindIt page, how do you pick which e-resource to go to?**

- Panelists decided based on two criteria:
  - Which one includes the year that I am looking for.
  - Which one is the resource that I know and like. They have learned which resources make it easy to get to the article and download it.

Question: **Of the "Get it @ Harvard" options which do you use?**

- All of the panelists use Borrow Direct and find it a great resource.
- Scan & Deliver is an option for one panelist when the material isn't needed right away.
- ILL allows one panelist to access high-resolution images. The staff help track down actual scans since the quality of images on microfilm is too poor.

Question: **If there were going to be a "HOLLIS++"—some future version—what features from the current HOLLIS+ would you want to see retained?**

- Overall, the panelists found all of the features worth keeping. Some specifics include:
  - Subject headings and tables of contents
  - Ability to search really broadly
  - The buttons at the top of the homepage

QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Question: **What would you improve for BorrowDirect, Scan & Deliver, ILL, etc?**

- Faster is always better!
- If the book is on reserve at Harvard it'll sometimes show as unrequestable in Borrow Direct. The patron doesn't opt for ILL in a situation like that because they assume it'll take longer.
- ILL form should allow requesting of high-resolution images.
- Scan & Deliver scans are sometimes bad ((by the last page it was clear that the person wasn't paying much attention anymore).

Question: **What other archival info systems have you used that are more intuitive?**

- Princeton because the archival stuff is cataloged as the collections themselves are actually organized (e.g. reflects the administrative organization of the body that produced the documents).
- Yale's finding aid system is great, very easy to look through from an aesthetic point of view.
- UK Archives hub—bring together archival collections across a country. The panelist thought it would be nice to have something like that for Harvard, that gathers all archival collections across the university, and also that points to related collections at other universities.
Question: Do you ever use the Ask A Librarian form?

- One patron knows exactly who to talk to when looking for archival material (so doesn’t use Ask A Librarian), but is confused by who to talk to for secondary sources at places like Widener and Lamont. They felt that there is a little bit of a wall in terms of knowing who to ask for help with a particular task or subject.

Question: Do you ever use browse search instead of keyword search?

- They had not noticed, or noticed but never clicked on, the “Browse HOLLIS by...” link.

Question: Do you ever use HathiTrust instead of Google Books?

- One panelist sometimes searches directly in HathiTrust and feels that they have great material. Another panelist uses HOLLIS+ to find HathiTrust items.

Question: Do you sign into HOLLIS+ before you begin your search?

- Two of the three panelists had no idea that signing in gave them different search results; they only signed in when they needed to renew items or request something. The other panelist has only recently started signing in because they had actually noticed that they got different search results. One wanted to know why it times out and why can’t they just stay logged in longer?

Question: Have you attended any library instruction classes? Did you find it useful?

- Generally, it seemed that they didn’t always know when sessions were being held, although a few had attended a session or two. They found that session were too basic and more advanced classes would be better, or classes with more tailored advice; panelists said that is was less useful to them to learn about all of the features of a specific resource; they would prefer to have a session focused on helping participants "upgrade" their current research strategies.

Question: How do you get to HOLLIS+?

- I type "h" in my browser and it shows up because I go there all the time.

Question: How do you want library announcements to get to you?

- The panelists seem more likely to pay attention to emails and announcements from their department.

Question: Do you use library resources on your mobile device?

- They have not had the best experience with using HOLLIS+ on mobile devices. It is too small on a phone and doesn't work well on an iPad.

Question: How much should the library invest in the design of HOLLIS+?

- They all agreed that they did not see any problem with the design of HOLLIS+.