Academic libraries and student everyday life information seeking: A proposed model and paradigm shift to increase undergraduate student utilization of library online information sources & services

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**Introduction**

*University retention rates are low...* Only 59 percent of first-time full-time students who began seeking a bachelor’s degree at a 4-year institution in fall 2007 completed the degree at that institution by 2013 (U.S. NCES, 2015).

**Academic libraries can be part of the solution...** The academic library is equipped to play a critical role in supporting students in both the formal and informal systems of the institution. Students who are more engaged are also more likely to remain enrolled and graduate (Tinto, 1975). Can libraries be the trusted source of quality information outside of traditional academic sources?

**However...** Undergraduate students are turning away from their academic libraries in favor of more attractive alternatives for their information seeking (Colón-Aguirre & Fleming-May, 2012; Croxton, 2015; Denison & Montgomery, 2012). How do undergraduate students prefer to meet their information needs?

**Literature**

The undergraduate information seeking literature suggests...

- Undergraduates prefer quick, easy, and convenient alternatives that do not include the library (Denison & Montgomery, 2012; De Rosa et al., 2011; Head & Eisenberg, 2009).
- In a nationwide survey study (N=2,229), De Rosa et al. (2011) noted: Search engines dominate among college students as most preferred electronic source (93%).
- Between 2005 to 2011, a decline was reported in use of library Web sites (62% to 58%), electronic journals (54% to 40%), and online databases (35% to 30%) among college students (all ages), driven primarily by a decrease in use between 25-64 year old students.

**This is concerning because...** Significant, positive correlational evidence suggests library utilization is closely related to both students’ academic performance and retention. When students are more engaged with academic resources they are also more likely to achieve academic success and graduate (Haddow, 2013; Soria, Fransen & Nackerud, 2013, 2014).

**Conceptual Framework**

- **Purpose**
  - Develop a deeper understanding of why undergraduate students are turning to sources beyond the academic library to meet their information needs.
  - Explore ways by which to reverse these trends and bring undergraduate students and their academic libraries into closer alignment in support of academic success and university retention.

- **Research Questions**
  1. What motivational variables best predict academic library utilization by undergraduate students?
  2. What are the social cognitive information needs of successful students?
  3. How do undergraduate students prefer to meet their information needs?
  4. To what extent is addressing the everyday life information needs of students a viable option for academic libraries?

**Methods**

Four-phase sequential mixed method design

**Participant Selection**
- Purposely selected librarians (2/university) - interviews
- Purposely selected retention officers (2/university) - interviews
- 25% randomly selected undergraduates / university
  - Stratified by year in school
  - Stratified by GPA (low, medium, high)

**End Products**
- Valid survey instrument to measure undergraduate students’ information needs, preferences, and motivation for academic library utilization
- Model for library motivation

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