The Student and the Information Search Process

Library Development Using Student Voices
Malmö University

- Established in 1998
- 4 interdisciplinary faculties
- 21,000 students (12,000 full-time equivalents)
- 1,300 employees
“The University Library as an Inclusive Learning Environment”

A two year project 2010-2011 at Malmö university library

• To be more professional in how we approach and work with an increasingly heterogeneous student population.
• Increase the awareness about widening participation and retention among the staff.
• Clarify the librarian’s role in an inclusive learning environment
• Deepen our knowledge about student’s information search processes, from the student point of view (how they formulate their problems, their knowledge) and with this as a starting point develop our services: library introductions, teaching/library instruction and how we design the physical library.
• ...and in the long run contribute to student retention
Two branches of the project

Action research
- Focus groups
- Analyse the book-a-librarian-service

In-service training
- Educational visits
- Lectures
- Workshops
- Journal club

Other methods: critical friend, quality walks, diary

Both tracks are interconnected!
Booking form

Book a session at least three working days in advance. We will confirm your booking by email.

Choose a library:
- Health & Society Library
- Study Square Kronan
- Oral Health Library
- Örkaran Library

Name:

Email:

Programme/Course/Faculty:

Suggest a time which times and days work best for you?

What subject(s) are you looking for information about?

Describe your question:

What problems have you encountered?

Which search terms have you used and where have you searched?

By clicking Submit, you give consent to the storage of your information.

Submit
Empirical material

- 599 bookings
- 2007-2009

Important to remember:
The student’s information search process from **the student point of view** (how they formulate their problems)
Method

• First the project group performed a qualitative content analysis of this material and identified 25 kinds of problems.
• Each problem was given a tag.
• Each booking was tagged, one booking often got several tags.
• This was then analysed
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Tags</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking for information on in-training service among adults</td>
<td>This is my first independent research project. I’m lost. I want to know how you search a subject /.../ How can I know what has already been done and what kind of research I can do, and what kind of literature I have to read. It might be silly to ask questions like this but as I said I’m lost.</td>
<td>Helpless Introduction/library instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for scholarly articles concerning massage as pain relief</td>
<td>Having trouble finding scientific articles, I’m mostly finding reviews</td>
<td>Scientific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why do students book a librarian?

1. Too little information
2. Relevance
3. Scientific
4. Search technique
5. Databases/Access points
6. Key words/Key words in english
7. Material type articles
8. Introduction/Library instruction
9. Tutor
10. Too much information

2011-07-08
A great range between...

the "driven" student

• Has a language for the ISP
• Can articulate their problem
• Wants to confirm that they haven’t missed anything important.
• Do they really understand what they articulate?

the helpless student

• Is missing a language for the ISP
• Is having a hard time articulating their needs
• Feels lost in the academic world of practice
• Asks questions they should ask elsewhere

Both student co-exist in the same classroom - this poses a pedagogical challenge
So...

- Many problems might be solved quite easily.
- Student voices = taylor-made teaching.
- The library works as a neutral place in the university.
- Varied forms of teaching (learning activities)
Model of the information search process.
(Kuhlthau, 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Initiation</th>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>Exploration</th>
<th>Formulation</th>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings (affective)</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Confusion/ frustration/doubt</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Sense of direction/ confidence</td>
<td>Satisfaction or disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts (cognitive)</td>
<td>vague</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>focused</td>
<td>increased interest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions (physical)</td>
<td>seeking relevant information, exploring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>seeking pertinent information, documenting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2011-07-08
Students book a librarian in all stages of the ISP

- Initiation: don’t know how to start
- Selection: have often re-formulated/changed their question/subject when we meet them
- Exploration: find too much/little, not relevant/right information (most common)
- Formulation: can formulate their need, have a clear focus, need help with search technique and databases
- Collection: collecting information
- Presentation: want to make sure they haven’t missed anything

2011-07-08
So...

- Book a librarian is most effective in the formulation stage.
- Zone of intervention – right help at the right time
- The knowledge of ISP is important (for librarians, teachers, students).
- A lot of work is done outside the library – research question, formulation of focus
What have we done so far?

• Spread our findings to:
  Teachers
  Library staff

• Presented the analysis in several of the higher education courses for (new) faculty teachers

• Developed our teaching in information literacy
  - collaboration with teachers
  - integrated assignments
  - taylor-made teaching
Where do we go from here?

- Revise our thesaurus
- Investigate the correspondence between the expressed problem and the actual problem
- Investigate more closely how we can best meet the needs of the student in a specific stage of the ISP
- Further train our staff in meeting students in different stages of the ISP – tie theory and practice together
- Spread our findings to teachers
- Develop support material
- Continue analysing the bookings
THANK YOU!

IB.LUNDGREN@MAH.SE