Question: Time to Ditch the RDS?

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UKSG Forum, 2016
Answer: Probably Not
How Readers Discover Content in Scholarly Publications

- Large scale reader survey:
  - http://sic.pub/discover
Academic researchers rate academic search engines #1

When you need to do a search for articles on a specific subject, where on the web do you start that search? 2015 vs 2012 comparison. Academic sector in high income areas for Academic Researcher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative Score</th>
<th>2012 data, n=3201, ±0.07 at 95% confidence</th>
<th>2015 data, n=1812, ±0.11 at 95% confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bibliographic database (A&amp;I)</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library web pages</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal aggregation</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social or professional networking site</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher’s web site</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By searching journal alerts</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The journal’s homepage</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A general web search engine</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An academic search engine</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society web page</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subject variations

When you need to do a search for articles on a specific subject, where on the web do you start that search? Variations by subject in high income countries

- Bibliographic database (A&I)
- Library web pages
- Journal aggregation
- Social or professional networking site
- Publisher’s web site
- By searching journal alerts
- The journal’s homepage
- A general web search engine
- An academic search engine
- Society web page

Humanities, n=1571, ±0.10 at 95% confidence
Social and Political Science, n=1584, ±0.11 at 95% confidence
Medical Subjects, n=2401, ±0.10 at 95% confidence
Life Sciences, n=1131, ±0.13 at 95% confidence
Engineering and Technology, n=784, ±0.15 at 95% confidence
Librarians are different

When you need to do a search for articles on a specific subject, where on the web do you start that search? Variations by job role in high income countries

Relative Score

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Educator, Teacher, n=2534, ±0.08 at 95% confidence
Lecturer, n=1193, ±0.13 at 95% confidence
Researcher, n=1345, ±0.13 at 95% confidence
Masters Student, n=1251, ±0.12 at 95% confidence
Librarian, Information Manager, n=780, ±0.17 at 95% confidence

http://sic.pub/discover
Conclusions

- RDS seen as valuable in many subject areas
- Google Scholar the most important overall
- Sum of all other discovery options eclipses Google Scholar
- People use the simplest method that achieves a good enough result
Thank you

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