1-1-1999

Technology and Library Research

Kim Ranger  
*Grand Valley State University*

Kathryn Waggoner  
*Grand Valley State University*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr](http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr)

**Recommended Citation**

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Grand Valley Review by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.
Technology and Library Research

When many of us were undergraduates, we never used computers at all, let alone for finding information. Finding articles or books was a time-consuming and laborious project. Now, as university librarians, almost everything we do involves using a PC, and it is almost impossible for anyone doing research not to use a computer. Technology has affected the teaching and learning of library research skills in that resources are easier for information seekers to get for themselves but the process becomes less personal since they can do many of the basic processes without the mediation of a librarian.

GVSU now uses a library computer system called “Voyager” from the Endeavor Company. Two of the components of Voyager are the “Local Catalog,” which lists all the physical items owned by the University Library regardless of format, and “Databases,” which allows access to hundreds of journal indexes, a few full-text (or full-image, meaning that graphics are included) databases, and electronic journals. The local catalog allows us to include World Wide Web resources as well as the more standard and familiar physical items. Since the Voyager system is Internet-based, it may be accessed at any location with a PC that has the capability and is set up to connect to the Web.

Voyager and its databases allow searching for several years’ worth of material at one time. Voyager also: gives the ability to customize searches (e.g., look for only journal articles in English), allows searching for material through many access points (not just subject and author), makes

Kim Ranger, an associate librarian specializing in government information, came to GVSU in 1990.

Kathryn Waggoner, a senior librarian, coordinates reference, library instruction, and electronic resources. She came to GVSU in 1980.
different search modes available, and sometimes allows citations to be sorted by author, journal title, etc. In terms of information processing, it allows citations (or full text/full image) to be emailed, downloaded, or printed. For users there is online help immediately available via help screens, and it makes many more sources conveniently available—e.g., one may search Harvard’s library catalog without driving to Massachusetts, for instance.

Some of the disadvantages of computerized research are that information seekers must be computer literate, libraries must make a substantial investment in equipment, and more can go wrong with machines than with paper and shelves.

How has this technology affected and how will it affect the acquisition of library research skills? Information seekers, except for those who are computer-phobic, love being able to search for articles, books, documents, websites, etc., all via one PC, from office, home, or any other location. Students, especially, are much more willing to search for and incorporate outside sources of information into their papers and the students enjoy the process, perhaps because it seems more like play than work. Students’ retention of the research process seems to increase when searching techniques are demonstrated using some kind of PC and projection system, followed by immediate hands-on practice from their own workstations. These things make learning research skills much easier and more enjoyable.

The disadvantages of using technology to teach and to do research are also many. The cut and paste functions and the availability of full text do make plagiarism more of a problem. When the network is down, or when the electricity is out, it is impossible to demonstrate searching. It is also difficult to make overheads that represent all types of research. Some librarians dislike teaching how to use paper indexes and other print sources now, even though they might be helpful, because the students simply won’t use them. Other librarians insist that it is all in the presentation: students will use paper resources if they are convinced that they are helpful. Students use the Web to do print sources, in a lot of junk. At least librarians or other instructors can view and choose the purpose of the cost of the Library’s Horizons that have been chosen. The faculty as a whole teaches the importance of materials.

This past summer a faculty created a Web-based English 150 class in which networks with each class to teach research process. Writers can incorporate outside sources into their schedules, their lab classes. The instructors have beautiful chances to encourage the students to use them. The presentation is less personal, and there are fewer actions between the librarian and the students. Students may get the impression that they need to come to the library, to meet one of the available resources and their expertise. Since teaching these advantages, it is on the faculty. Frankly, give them the chance to stay. We need to keep the advantages, and try to minimize students’ learning skills. The one-day research skills for what technology is crucial that librarians work together, especially if the faculty is interested in learning skills.
available, and sometimes identified by author, journal and sometimes full text/full image) to be printed. For users there are many available via help on more sources conver­
taining Harvard's may search Harvard’s to Massachusetts, ines of computerized con seekers must be more and more can go mis with paper and affected and how will search library research skills? ing for those who are ing able to search for websites, etc., all via any other location. ma much more willing to outside sources of in­and the students en­cause it seems more. students’ retention of the ncrease when search­ated using some kind how, followed by imme­in their own worksta­arning research skills are available.

Using technology to also many. The cut are availability of full the existence of a problem. When then the electricity is to demonstrate searching. It ers that represent the librarians dislike that are helpful, they might be helpful, they won’t use them. This is all in the present­operate resources if they...