Preference Vs. Authority

Discovery tools and databases

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The Goals

- To measure, beyond simple usage statistics, what students want and need with regard to different library search tools.

- To ascertain whether subject specific indexing & abstracting databases provide added value for libraries with discovery tools.
The Questions

We aimed to measure what our students need and want with regard to library search tools by asking:

- Does the type of library search tool used affect the quality of information sources that students select?
- Does the chosen tool affect student satisfaction with the search experience?
Methodology

● 50 Students

● 3 search tools
  ○ Social Sciences Abstracts
  ○ Default Summon
  ○ Pre-scoped Summon

● Search task
Methodology

- Article scoring
  - Authority (taxonomy developed by Leeder et al.)
  - Relevance (home-grown rubric)
  - Currency (publication date)

- Survey gauging student preference for tools
Results

Most students prefer discovery layer
**Results**

- **Authority**
- **Relevance**
- **Currency**

![Bar Chart: Average Taxonomy Score]

- Default Summon: 15.54
- Pre-Scoped Summon: 15.90
- SSA: 15.96

☆☆ = statistically significant difference
The Take-Aways

- Not all students prefer discovery tools
- The tools that students prefer may not be those that give them the best results
- Default configuration matters
Further areas to explore

User behavior with regard to utilizing:

- Controlled vocabulary
- Metadata
- Search facets

Library search tools use of:

- Subject/discipline scoping
- Relevance ranking