

From Information to Insight for Info Pros: Demonstrating Your Library's Value to End Users...and to Upper Management

Mary Ellen Bates, BatesInfo.com

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As information professionals contemplate the impact of digital content on our profession and our perceived value, we may want to take a lesson from accountants. Back before the days of QuickBooks and TurboTax, bookkeepers handled all the routine financial operations of an organization, and most people used accountants to handle their tax returns. Today, 80% of individual tax returns are filed electronicallyⁱ, and over a third were prepared by the individuals themselves, without the assistance of a tax professionalⁱⁱ. Successful accounting firms know they need to market their specialized skills in financial planning and reducing clients' taxes. Merely providing a thorough and accurate tax return to a client is no longer enough when clients believe that their needs will be met by tax preparation software at a lower cost.

Many info pros face a similar challenge of helping their clients recognize when they are missing critical information or relying on outdated data; their clients believe that they are proficient searchers and that if they cannot find what they want on Google, it must not exist. This white paper looks at how info pros can establish and communicate their value in relation to both the open web and the digital content available to their user community.

Building Information *Dissatisfaction*

As long as current or potential library clients believe that what they can find on the web is *good enough* for their needs, they will limit their searches to a few queries in a search engine. Info pros are competing with the convenience, speed, and ubiquity of Google while trying to convince users of the value of accessing digital collections.

While it is tempting to remind users of the unreliability and instability of resources on the web and the difficulty of conducting precision searching, this does not correspond to most users' experiences with web searches. They usually find some relevant material, and it usually seems reasonably reliable—in other words, it does seem good enough. Instead, info pros may find it more effective to concentrate on the purpose of the users' research and whether they were able to move forward, make a decision, or complete a project based on searching Google or relying on open web sources.

During client reference interviews or simple conversations, info pros can ask questions to surface the unmet needs the client may not recognize. Questions that elicit the most useful information—and create

uncertainty in users' minds about the extent of what they may be missing—include:

-) When you need to make an important decision, what information do you use? How do you know whether you have enough information?
-) What do you do *after* you have Googled a topic?
-) What do you wish you knew that you think our competitors know?
-) Where do you think is our organization's biggest knowledge gap?

“Dare to Compare” Exercises

One effective approach for establishing the library's value is a “dare to compare” exercise with a group or division that is not using or is under-using the library's e-resources.

For example, an info pro could learn that a project group is involved in a certain technology. He can then offer a live demonstration to the group, using a topic related to that technology. During that demonstration, he can show the results from a well-constructed Google search with all the appropriate terms and synonyms, and then the results of a search using the same terms in a premium search service. He can show the difference in ease of scanning results, increased relevance, and access to peer-reviewed journals. Even if this exercise does not generate much increased use, it serves to demonstrate that info pros can improve outcomes even when the users expect to use only open web sources.

Another approach to demonstrating the value of the library's resources is to take advantage of people's tendency to find the quickest and easiest path to an answer, even if it is not the best path. An info pro can offer a way to get the answer that is even quicker and easier, and also happens to be the most reliable source. For a group of paralegals, for example, a librarian can show how difficult it is on Google to find an engineering standard without the exact standard number. Then she can run a search in an internal database of standards and find just what she needs, demonstrating that the easiest route was through a digital resource provided by the library.

Focusing on Results

Information wants to be free because it has become so cheap to distribute, copy, and recombine – too cheap to meter. It wants to be expensive because it can be immeasurably valuable to the recipient.

-Stewart Brand, *The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at MIT* (1987)

While info pros understand the value of digital content, its value relative to the cost may not be immediately obvious to upper management. Many librarians are taking Stewart Brand's quote to heart—when librarians connect search results with decisions made or actions taken, information can be seen as immeasurably valuable to the recipient. Instead of talking about *what* they do or *how* they do it, info pros must focus on *why* they are providing their services, talking about the ultimate outcome of their services. Following are some examples of *what/how* statements versus the more strategic *why* statements that

demonstrate how info pros have made information immeasurably valuable. These statements are helpful in communicating the library's value both to clients and to upper management.

Instead of *we search premium databases*, use ***we provide insights from the outside***.

Instead of *we provide research services*, use ***we help project teams make better decisions***.

Instead of *we are experts in finding and organizing information*, use ***we make critical research findable***.

One of the underappreciated values of info pros is our ability to bring a larger perspective to a client's issue. We know how to construct thorough search queries, using synonyms our clients may not think of—searching not just for the word “fire,” for example, but also “cinders,” “ashes,” “flames,” and so on. Info pros also provide a cross-discipline approach; we know that there are corresponding databases in other fields that address the same issue.

Info pros can leverage these strategic skills to provide value even to groups who do not use the library effectively. A librarian can approach the group and offer to serve as their “Plan B” for any situation in which they could not find what they were looking for within 30 minutes. She can help refocus a Google query and suggest searches in the library's e-resources, and she has the opportunity to consult with the searcher about alternative approaches and about the library's research services.

Adding Value with ProQuest Dialog

Corporate libraries that offer access to user-friendly premium search services have the opportunity to provide their clients with a better overall search experience, increasing the chances that clients will go through the library—not the open web—to get the information they need.

One such example is ProQuest Dialog. ProQuest Dialog's recently revolutionized search interface adds value to every type of search, from a basic “Google-like” search done by a novice searcher, to a more advanced search incorporating filters and limiters, to a command-line search using Boolean terms.

The Administrator Module in the new ProQuest Dialog provides a wide range of tools for customizing the service for each user or group of users. Info pros can create what are essentially customized search engines, designed to focus the user's search in the most likely sources and with the best search tools. Following are just a few of the ways info pros can customize ProQuest Dialog for their users.

Improving The Overall Search Experience	Improving Search Quality and Comprehensiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="186 289 797 359">) Set the default search page to Basic Search or Look-up Patent to simplify quick searches. <li data-bbox="186 367 797 443">) Set the output citation style to one preferred by the organization. <li data-bbox="186 451 797 615">) Create widgets that embed a search box in a web page, with built-in search parameters to provide quick, effective searching from within non-library pages. <li data-bbox="186 623 797 741">) Allow users to download their search results into a professional-looking report, complete with the organization's brand. <li data-bbox="186 749 797 825">) Add library branding and ways to contact a librarian for assistance on every page. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="826 289 1435 359">) Set the number of search results to 30 or more to encourage deeper browsing. <li data-bbox="826 367 1435 485">) Set the search customization to automatically include both U.S. and UK spellings, a common blind spot for end users. <li data-bbox="826 493 1435 657">) Set the search customization to include plurals and comparatives, as well as enable autocomplete, to help users include parallel terms in their queries. <li data-bbox="826 665 1435 783">) Connect the user's RefWorks account to the ProQuest Dialog account to simplify exporting or synchronizing records. <li data-bbox="826 791 1435 909">) Create shortcuts with pre-selected databases that info pros know will be the most useful sources on a topic.

The goal in all of this customization is to give users a better, more successful outcome than a Google search—making the e-resources the easiest route as well as the best.

Tools for Raising Awareness

In order to effectively raise awareness of the library's e-resources, info pros can use a range of techniques to catch their users' attention in multiple settings and media. Following are some ways to communicate the value of the available digital content.

-) Create cheat sheets that explain when to use resources on the web and when to use the library's resources, for example: "If you want information on this topic, use these sources on the web. If you want information on this other topic, start with the ProQuest Dialog search widget on your group's intranet page."
-) Create how-to videos or webinars on searching a particular library e-resource, introducing a new web resource, or even using Google more effectively. Keep them to no longer than 3-5 minutes long and include a reminder about the additional research services available through the library.
-) Include QR codes in any print signage so that users are directed back to the library's online presence. QR codes on staff's business cards can link the user to that staff member's web page.

- J Develop one or more 15-second “elevator speeches” targeted toward different audiences (clients, upper management, etc.) describing the library’s services, focusing on end results—the problems solved, the insights that powered a strategic decision, or the patent awarded that was supported by library research.

- J Create a clear explanation on the library’s website of the distinctions between searching the web and using the library’s digital resources—focusing on ease of use, quality of results, unique access to peer-reviewed material, internal resources, and so on.

- J Make it easy to find the library’s e-resources. Offer widgets that embed search boxes within web pages, use chat tools to provide live support, or create customized search profiles for individuals and groups.

- J Create sample reports and analyses to show clients what kind of research results they can expect. This is where the output formatting tools provided by ProQuest Dialog can help show value.

No Longer a Service—A Strategic Partner

In order for an R&D organization to be successful, its research must go beyond the capabilities of a free, publicly available search engine. Google and other open search engines are commodities available to everyone on the planet. Info pros can show both end-users and upper management that serious research in a competitive industry cannot begin with a commodity.

The value that info pros provide is a critical piece of the R&D process. By deploying the right search tools—and effectively communicating our value across the organization—we can stake our claim as strategic partners who make key contributions to new discoveries.

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ⁱ <http://www.treasury.gov/irsob/reports/2013/IRSOB-E-File%20Report%202012.pdf>

IRS Oversight Board. *Electronic Filing 2012: Annual Report to Congress*. Dec 2012

The quote is on page 5 of the report: “Based on filing results for most of 2012, the Board estimates that individual e-file will reach at least 81 percent, up from 77 percent in 2011.”

ⁱⁱ <http://www.irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/Filing-Season-Statistics-April-26,-2013>

IRS 2013 Filing Season Statistics

E-filing Receipts:	
TOTAL	113,067,000
Tax Professionals	69,730,000
Self-prepared	43,336,000