THE "INFORMATION MATRIX"

Information Types and the Right Tools to Search Them

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INTRODUCTION:

- Hi, I'm Loring Prest.
- I'm the Electronic Resources Librarian and Library Webmaster at the Louis L. Manderino Library of California University of Pennsylvania.

NO SHORTAGE OF INFORMATION

* One thing we have plenty of today: <u>INFORMATION</u>!

* There's so much, it can be overwhelming.

* When you start your research, you need to ask yourself…

* **What kind of information do I need?**

INFORMATION COMES IN MANY FORMS:

- Books
- Articles
- Web Sites
- Reference Materials
- Laws – Federal and State Statutes & Codes
- Laws – Federal and State Court Decisions

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

✖ BOOKS:

+ Usually <u>many pages</u> long

+ Longer length often results in <u>broader coverage</u> of the topic

+ All that length takes time to write, edit, and publish! So, there can be a <u>long "time lag"</u> from idea to publication...perhaps years

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

- **ARTICLES:**
  - Come in a variety of "flavors"
    - Magazines (popular)
    - Journals (scholarly)
    - Newspapers (news reports, editorials)
  - Each "flavor" has slightly different characteristics
  - Compared to a book, however, all articles will be much shorter

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

- **ARTICLES -- Magazines:**
  - Refers to <u>popular</u> magazines, like…
    - Newsweek, People, Sports Illustrated, Motorcyclist
  - Written and marketed to the <u>general public</u>
    - <u>Short articles</u> for short attention spans!
    - Usually <u>no documentation</u>, citations, or bibliographies
  - Shorter length and popular audience = <u>shallow coverage</u> of the topic
  - Typically <u>published weekly or monthly</u>, so "time lag" is shorter than a book

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

✖ ARTICLES -- Journals:

  ✚ Refers to <u>scholarly</u> publications, like…
    ✖ American Journal of Public Health, Journal of Comparative Social Welfare, Journal of Family Violence

  ✚ Written and marketed to <u>researchers</u>
    ✖ <u>Longer articles</u> for longer attention spans!
    ✖ Presents <u>new research</u> and analysis
    ✖ <u>Expect documentation</u>, citations, and bibliographies

  ✚ Longer length and specialized audience = <u>focused coverage</u> on a specific topic

  ✚ Journals are usually <u>published 4 times a year</u>, so "time lag" is shorter than a book, longer than a popular article.

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

× **ARTICLES -- Newspapers:**
  + Refers to <u>news</u> publications, like…
    × Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, New York Times, Washington Post
  + Written and marketed to the <u>general public</u>
    × <u>Reports the news</u> and gives opinions (editorials) about events
    × <u>Very brief articles</u> for very brief attention spans!
    × <u>No</u> <u>Documentation</u>, citations, or bibliographies
  + Articles = <u>news coverage</u> on an event
  + <u>Daily publication</u> is most up-to-date, but also most prone to errors, since written very quickly to meet deadlines.

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

- **WEB SITES:**
  - Cover <u>all kinds of subjects</u>
    - Can be very brief, or in-depth
    - Can include documentation, or provide **no** documentation
  - Written <u>FOR</u> all kinds of people:
    - Children, general audience, specialists
  - Written <u>BY</u> all kinds of people:
    - Children, general audience, specialists.
    - How do you know? Better find out before you cite the Web page!
  - <u>Wide range</u> of resources, but accuracy is also quite varied
  - Some terrific sites, some awful ones.
    - Your job is to choose carefully!
  - Can be the <u>most up-to-date</u> resource, since publication is almost instantaneous. But many old, outdated pages live on the Web too.
  - All in all, Web sites come in every flavor imaginable!

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

× **REFERENCE MATERIALS:**
  + Resources that provide <u>content and information</u>
    × Encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, etc.
    × Resources that provide statistics, analysis, etc. For example: CQPress Electronic Library
    × Databases where you can find "nuggets" of information
  + <u>Length can vary</u> from a short dictionary entry, to a very long encyclopedia article
  + May—or may not—include <u>documentation</u>, citations, or bibliographies
  + Typically a <u>very long "time lag</u>." Many reference sources are based on other sources. Collecting this information can take some time.

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

✖ LAWS – STATUTES:

- The laws <u>passed by the legislature</u> at the federal or state level (House and Senate)

- The "official" laws of the land, these are <u>primary source</u> materials.

- Paper versions have a long "<u>time lag</u>" between passage and printing. Legislative Web sites, however, provide more current information.

EACH TYPE HAS ITS OWN CHARACTERISTICS:

✕ LAWS – COURT DECISIONS:

- The judicial <u>court decisions</u> at the federal, Supreme Court, or state level

- The "official" interpretation of the laws of the land, these are <u>primary source</u> materials.

- Paper versions have a long "<u>time lag</u>" between decision and printing. Legislative Web sites, however, provide more current information.

OK, NOW WHAT?

- Now that you know the range of resources available, we need to ask the all-important question:

- **How do I find information in these resources?**

FINDING INFORMATION IN THESE RESOURCES

- Before you start clicking and searching, you need to know…
- Different SEARCH TOOLS work best for each type of resource.
- Think of…a tool box.
  - Sometimes you need a hammer…to pound a nail.
  - Other times, you need a saw…to cut a board.
  - They aren't very interchangeable!
  - You don't use the same tool for every situation.
- Learn to use the <u>RIGHT TOOL</u> for the <u>RIGHT JOB</u>.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

✖ To FIND: BOOKS

✖ USE:

+ Library Catalog (ours is called: "PILOT")

+ WorldCat.org

+ Google Book Search

✖ Allows full-text searching of millions of books

✖ Complete full-text for books published before 1923

✖ Limited full-text of many newer books

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

* To FIND: **ARTICLES (all kinds)**
* USE:
  * **General Indexes:**
    * Academic Search Complete (scholarly and popular articles)
    * LexisNexis Academic (newspapers)
  * **Subject-specific indexes:**
    * SocINDEX with Full Text
    * Social Work Abstracts
  * **Google Scholar**
    * Finds scholarly articles, Web sites, and more
    * Use the link on library's Web site to ensure you get all the free full-text articles you have coming to you!!

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

- To FIND: **WEB SITES**

- USE:
  - Search Engines
    - Google (still the best!)
    - Yahoo!
    - Ask
    - Etc.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

× To FIND: **REFERENCE MATERIALS**

× USE:

+ Various Tools:

+ Find them by going to:

   × Library Home Page > Find Resources by Subject >

   × Choose your Subject

   × Look for reference resources (which may include selected free Web sites)

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

× To FIND: **LAWS – STATUTES and COURTS**

× USE:

+ Legal Tools, especially:

× LexisNexis Academic

× WestLaw Campus Research

× Legal Information Institute (Cornell University site)

+ Find them by going to:

× Library Home Page > Find Resources by Subject >

× Choose Law & Legal Studies

MORAL OF THE STORY

- I've got lots of tools in my toolbox, because I can't get by with just one. Neither can you.
- You have LOTS of resources available to you!
- Your job is to decide which TYPE of resource you need.
- Then, decide which TOOL will work best to help you find the information in that resource.

IF YOU NEED MORE HELP

* If you need help finding the right tool, contact the library or me.
* We will be happy to help you! THANKS!

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