

Introduction

I was recently given access to Google Analytics for the purpose of analysing usage of our discovery layer and our library management system provided catalogue. I was looking for a way to assess how users interact with the search systems we provide and whether the assumptions we make about their interactions are correct. It is still early days and I am still discovering what the scope is for using this tool. I am looking at what metrics I may be able to use to monitor use and on which I can report, as well as what potential there may be for recognising simple, easily implementable enhancements and improvements to the experience of search at Leeds.

Set-up: systems

At the University of Leeds we use Sierra from Innovative Interfaces as our Library Management System and we have Summon from ProQuest as our resource discovery layer. The Library has been with Innovative for about twenty years, from the early days of GEAC, through Innopac and Millennium to Sierra. The Library transferred the discovery layer from Innovative's Encore to ProQuest's Summon a couple of years ago for the improved central index.

We provide access to both the discovery layer and traditional catalogue. Summon is branded as Search@Library and is the default search box option; Sierra provides 'Classic Catalogue' and this is located on a separate tab. The University of Leeds has an in-house reading list system and a lot of the items on the lists link directly to a bibliographic record in Sierra. Summon and Sierra have been made to work together by the Library Systems Team but the set-up is still not ideal as, although we do nightly updates to keep records up to date, we don't have real time availability information for print stock in Search@Library.

Set-up: teams (IT/Metadata/eResources)

I have mentioned the Library Systems Team and we are incredibly fortunate to have nine people in the Systems Team and within that we have specialists for each piece of software including the repository, reading list system, archives and special collections as well as Sierra and Summon. My main contact has been brilliant to work with. He instigated a series of monthly meetings where he comes and sits in the office with the team and talks through problems people are having; through doing this he has learnt a lot more about the world of cataloguing and we are better able to communicate as he can now speak some 'cataloguer' and we can speak some 'systems'.

The Metadata Team currently have very traditional cataloguing roles. The majority of the work is still monograph-type item cataloguing and journal issues but alongside this is work on special collections and, increasingly, eBooks. One of the big areas still with the Metadata Team is classification. We have a not-entirely-unique system as University College London are also lucky enough to employ the Garside classification scheme. This is the legacy of Kenneth Garside who was Assistant Librarian at the University of Leeds just prior to the Second World War and Deputy Librarian at UCL after the war. Due to the classification scheme, which requires regular updates, and other structural changes we are not currently in a position to go shelf-ready with any of our book suppliers.

EResources are looked after by the Resource Acquisitions Team with the access work being undertaken by a part time Service & Support Coordinator and a part time Subscriptions Assistant. They look after the knowledgebase and ensure that the correct resources are activated in order to feed through into the search systems. We do also have some MARC records for databases in Sierra so that these are discoverable in a variety of ways.

Drivers

The new library strategy '*Powering knowledge and opportunity, 2016-2021*' got underway in September 2016 and one of the actions is on discovery. The headline title of the action is "Review the options for improving the 'discovery layer' to the Library's resources"; within that are sub-actions, the first and perhaps most key is to "review how Summon operates and recommend changes to improve discoverability of content."

My starting point has been to look at what evidence has already been gathered about Library search and assess what is already known about how people interact with Search@Library. The main source of information has been a survey run by the Library Website Project Team where the majority of the free text comments were related to search rather than the website itself.

A project is currently being undertaken to update and improve the Library website. As part of this the project team undertook a month long survey to gather opinions from both students and staff at the University on the website. One of the main findings from the survey was that searching the library's holdings is by far the most important and most frequent task undertaken by all types of visitor.

The report written by the project team has been broken down by responses from different user groups: academic and support staff, research postgraduates, taught postgraduates, and undergraduates. The free text comments provided in the report have been a very useful starting point for me to start looking at possible approaches to the review of Summon. The other element that has emerged from the website project is that they have used Google Analytics to track the usage of the site and draw conclusions about what is useful content and what is never used.

Using Google Analytics

Inspired by the work done by the website project I approached the Systems Team in January this year and asked whether there was any way to track how people were using Summon. I was particularly interested in what search terms were used, which facets were most used (or unused), length of time spent on a search, were any revisions made to those initial searches and did people find what they wanted.

I was given a login for the Summon help centre but the statistical reporting was much more focused on the eResources rather than on the performance and use of the discovery layer itself. It can provide a list of search terms but the information wasn't really at the level I wanted. I was then given access to Google Analytics, which had been used to great effect in the mapping work on the library website project. I was given access to the sites for both Search@Library and the classic catalogue and, at my request, the search terms being entered by users started being recorded for the first time.

As with the Summon help centre, Google Analytics is still a fairly blunt instrument because data protection and authentication methods mean there is only a certain amount of information you can track. The search terms are definitely one of the best things about it for me as one of the first things I've found is that users are pretty good at knowing what to search for and in which catalogue and you have to go a long way down the list to find the first copied and pasted reference. However, one of my key questions, and what Google Analytics can't tell me, is whether the user has found the correct resource. If they revise their search and use new terms then it simply appears in the list as a new search rather than being shown as the same session and a revised search.

A superficial glance at the numbers on the analytics home screen would tell you that the classic catalogue gets nearly twice as many visits as Search@Library. However, this only tells part of the story. As previously mentioned, our reading list system sends users through to the bibliographic record of books in the classic catalogue which accounts for search terms referring to a bibliographic record number appearing in the list of search terms. Also, if a user searches in Summon but finds a print resource and want more details they will be taken through to the classic catalogue.

The other unknown element I'm facing is whether a high 'bounce rate' is a good thing or not. 'Bounce rate' is when someone arrives at the page and then almost immediately leaves again and I would like to know whether it's because they have found the resource they're looking for and have immediately followed a link to leave Summon, or whether they've left because they haven't immediately found their resource. Given the high number of searches for databases that would result in those resources appearing at the top of the list I am currently leaning towards a high bounce rate not being too worrisome but it is definitely an area for further investigation.

There has already been one successful outcome of using Google Analytics: I have fed back to the website team with the first two month's search terms as the key finding is that the top ten search terms in both the classic catalogue and Search@Library are for the same databases. It is now likely that the new website design will incorporate a list of the top ten most searched for databases on the home page to allow quick navigation to these resources. We will keep the search terms under review to see if the easier access to these resources reduces the number of times that they appear in the list of search terms.

Google Analytics can also tell you all sorts of fun but not necessarily useful things such as where your users are located. Unsurprisingly, of the nearly 150,000 Summon sessions in the last month 84% of them were from within Leeds. Perhaps more surprisingly, given that Leeds is a Microsoft institution and 55% of the sessions are from machines running Windows, Internet Explorer is only third on the list of the most used browsers with Chrome and Safari making up 89% of the sessions between them.

Metrics and future development

The easily accessible and fun to report on information of search terms, number of searches, location of users and what devices are being used are useful up to a point. However, in terms of developing a better understanding of user behaviour within the system, ideally I would be able to find out more about how a user develops a search, whether with facets or by revising the search terms they use. I would also like to find a way of assessing whether a high 'bounce rate' is a good thing or a bad thing! I am currently very much in the "fun fact!" realm and I think these elements will be useful for reporting to the wider library and it may be that what I would like to do isn't possible without a more sophisticated analytics tool. However, it is gratifying that the information we are now gathering on the search terms has been useful and has already contributed to the design of the new website.

I have contacted some other libraries to find out what, if anything, they are recording in relation to search and interaction with their discovery layers. There have been studies of user experience relating specifically to resource discovery layers but the methodologies have primarily been very in depth using focus groups or surveys to look at how users approach certain tasks rather than broader brush tracking of common interactions. All the responses I received were from Primo libraries so I currently have no comparisons from Summon libraries but I am keen to make contact with anyone looking at whether the systems can provide insight regarding user interaction with them. It seems clear from the responses I received that this is an emerging area with quite a lot of scope for development; particularly for understanding what users do next, where they go and what we might then extrapolate in terms of the resources we provide, the quality of our metadata and how this can focus our future activities.

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