

Why Do They DO That?



How Academic Experience Influences Information-Seeking Behavior

Undergraduates	Professors
Are exploring disciplines and trying to decide on a major. May not even be clear about the academic disciplinary structure.	Are fully initiated into their disciplines.
Rarely are considering an academic career.	Are committed to scholarship as a vocation.
Are just beginning to learn the primary topics and issues in a discipline.	Have chosen a topic or issue as a specialty.
Are just beginning to learn the terminology or jargon of a discipline.	Dream in the jargon.
Are just beginning to learn the foundational theories of a discipline.	Know the theories inside out . . . and have favorites.
Are familiarizing themselves with the primary theorists.	The primary theorists are all old friends (or enemies).
Are just becoming aware of the core journals in a discipline.	Subscribe to core journals and keep up with the latest content.
Are trained (at best) to produce expository writing and perhaps argumentation supported by facts and evidence.	Have written a dissertation and continue to write for publication. Are experts at hypothesis, synthesis, and extrapolation.

As a result . . .

Search for information on a topic for a specific assignment.	Seek specific books or articles by specific authors in specific journals, particularly things they have read about in their own regular subscriptions..
Need background information from such resources as subject encyclopedias or general surveys.	Rarely need background information.
Need to use the library catalog and databases to do research.	Interact with a network of colleagues as an information-seeking strategy.
Need help in determining the most relevant database(s) for their topic or the discipline.	Use "gray literature" such as conference papers, working papers.
Need tools, such as database thesauri, to compensate for their unfamiliarity with terminology.	
Seek content to <i>match</i> their information needs exactly and may panic when they are unable to find it.	Seek to go where no scholar has ever gone before and are elated when the lit review suggests that they are doing so.