

INFO 510 Overview

Spring 2005

Dr. Marti Smith

(Containing portions of Missy Harvey's Overview):

Note that in the IST LIS program we have course co-coordinators who work hard to keep the resources, assignments, and goals the same across all sections. Our courses build upon each other, so the standardization should be very useful to you. You should expect to see materials prepared by several professors in any given course. We are committed to helping each other to give you all the best education possible.

Welcome

For librarians and information professionals today, a significant amount of the job involves working with information retrieval systems. A corporate librarian may work with highly sophisticated and expensive bibliographic or numeric databases. A public librarian may counsel and advise patrons on which of many magazine and article databases to choose from. An academic or school librarian may give a student a first-hand tutorial on how to use the library's databases for assistance with a literary critique. All of them will use the library's catalog. Learning about the universe of electronic information resources and services is among the most useful types of information you will be exposed to as a Drexel student.

This course and INFO511 also give you an introduction to user-centered perspectives on information services and sources. You will read and discuss articles on user needs and information seeking behavior and be encouraged to think of your own needs as a user and also of your role as a mediator of information and information services.

There are two essential types of knowledge to take away from this course:

1. The theoretical foundations of online research tools, as well as the routine mechanics and syntax involving in becoming a master researcher. Syntax, interfaces, products, and more will *always* change. But the theory and foundations will remain relatively the same. If you understand the theory and foundations, you will succeed with most any research tool—today and in the future.
2. Developing an awareness of your self as the *bridge* between the information seeker and the source of the information. Being a great search intermediary or search counselor takes far more than expert knowledge of the systems and their operations. The art of searching and locating information involves a good deal of creativity, savvy, and an ability to assist information seekers to clearly articulate their information needs. The knowledge of the research in information

seeking behavior and user studies will help you apply your expertise to specific situations and to particular groups and individuals.

This course is intended to give you extensive practice using computerized, literature-based information systems (i.e., databases and other resources) to answer questions. In this instance, “literature” will *not* usually mean imaginative writings (such as novels, poems, and plays), but simply bodies of documents related by a common subject matter or some other feature.

You will be introduced to several systems: Drexel’s library catalog (using Innovative Interfaces), Dialog, Lexis/Nexis, FirstSearch from OCLC, and some others. You will also use several search engines on the Web. In the process, you will become acquainted with a number of databases—some bibliographic, some full-text. Become familiar with the resources available to you through the various companies providing print and electronic reference and retrieval services. Even if you forget some of the details of what you learn in this course, you can renew your knowledge with these helps. Good leads for jobs too. See, for example,

- Dialog <http://www.dialog.com>
- LexisNexis <http://www.lexisnexis.com>
- Web of Knowledge/Web of Science on the Hagerty Web Site: <http://www.library.drexel.edu> Look under databases. We will have additional access.
- OCLC <http://www.oclc.org> (Look for the affiliate in your area.)
- Palinet <http://www.palinet.org> (Regional OCLC affiliate based in Philadelphia)
- ALA <http://www.ala.org> (See divisions on services to various user groups and also reference and adult services <RASD>)
- SLA <http://www.sla.org> Special Library Association

The lecture notes and readings will help to increase your understanding of the concepts and techniques underlying retrieval skills. The assignments are designed to give you a brief look at current online capabilities. We hope that you will go beyond the exercises and browse extensively when you have time. Feel free to “play with the systems.” That’s the only way can you come to appreciate the retrieval powers now available to you and to others *through* you as a librarian. The best researchers and reference librarians are those who become *very* familiar with the databases they use regularly to help exploit the strengths of each database to meet the needs of your patrons.

Course Format

The course will consist of a variety of materials to introduce you to

underlying principles and to learn how to use various databases. There will be PowerPoint presentations, links to Web resources, online tutorials, and interactive experiences in the lab on campus and/or online.

Time Commitment

This is a graduate course in a professional school. We estimate that the total workload (textbook assignments, notes, practice searches, exercises) will still take 8 to 10 hours per week. Be prepared for a serious commitment of attention and effort.

This is NOT a course where you can put off the homework until the *end* of the week. Try not to get behind or work too far ahead. For the most part, this is not the kind of course for you to work weeks ahead on the searching assignments. You can do some of your readings early but don't try to do the searching assignments until you have received complete instructions.

You should begin serious work on your final project early in the course. Give yourself time to understand the assignment and adjust yourself to its long-term demands on your time and brain. You will be glad in 510 and 511 if you work hard from the beginning.

Textbook [Be sure to get the 2nd edition]

Walker, Geraldene, and Joseph Janes. 1999. *Online Retrieval: A Dialogue of Theory and Practice*. 2nd ed. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

This is a good introduction to online searching at the professional level. It is a lucid book, with many concrete examples. The book primarily teaches how to search Dialog, the major American vendor of search software and online databases. There are shorter sections that discuss searching on the Web. It does not cover LexisNexis, OCLC, or several other important vendors of access to databases. However, if you've learned Dialog, you should be able to transfer your skills and knowledge to other services. Search engines, for example, generally use a subset of the commands and techniques we learn on Dialog. Remember also that you can use the tutorials and tools on the Dialog website <http://www.dialog.com>

The textbook is a bit dated but is *still* considered the best one in the marketplace right now for teaching searching skills. Most of the leading library schools across the country are using this book. This means that some things will be presented in the textbook first and then will be reinforced and perhaps expanded later on in lecture notes or handouts. There is a LOT of detail to be mastered in online retrieval. Do not be put off by the seemingly long readings assigned for the course—often the length of the chapters result from extensive sample retrievals, which you “follow” rather than read.

Not all chapters of Walker & Janes will be read in INFO 510. However, **SAVE** your textbook! It will be used again for both readings and reference in *INFO 511: Information Resources and Services II*. Joe Janes is a very active researchers and author. Look for his current work.

Handouts, Electronic Reserves, and Article Databases

Some of the sessions have handouts. These will be found on our Bb site in the *Handouts/Books* areas of the course. Several of them are **vital** to good performance in searching, so do not overlook them. Also there will be links to Web sites that may increase your knowledge—so make a point of looking at them as well.

You will also find some of your weekly readings in Electronic Reserves on the Hagerty Library Website. For the bibliography project, you will use the electronic databases from Hagerty. Spend lots of time exploring the databases and the logistics of finding bibliographic records and full-text articles, of downloading records, and of the various ways to manipulate records. You will be advantaged if you learn to use RefWorks early in the term to manage your bibliography records. You may also find that you will need to use print articles from Hagerty or in your local area. Note that the Drexel library services will mail you articles that you need. However, I'd encourage you to look at the professional resources in your area.

Searching Assignments and Practice Exercises:

There are four required searching assignments this term. There are also many practices exercises that you will find useful for practice. Don't count on doing the required exercises without spending plenty of time on the practice exercises. Required exercises will be strictly graded and will require more than an elementary level of search expertise.

Final Project: Annotated Bibliography of Information Seeking Research

There is a final project due at the end of the course, an annotated bibliography with documentation of your searching process. This project is intended to help you prepare for a review of the research literature on a major research area in information seeking behavior and user need studies in Library and Information Science. You will be asked to find and evaluate a group of empirical research studies in 510 and then write an analytical review of the research literature in 511. You will be guided in your choosing of a user group or theme, selecting appropriate empirical research articles, and preparing for your analytical literature review in 511.

You may find it useful to consult Donald Case's *Looking for information* in this course in preparation for your work in 511. Remember that you can

request the book from your local library's Inter-Library Loan if you don't want to purchase the book now. Also, you may want to borrow a book from a student who has completed 511. Note that the Case book may be available electronically through NetLibrary on the Hagerty site.

Access to Resources

In order to complete the assignments in this course, you will need to have access to the electronic resources available through the Hagerty Library's Web site, as well as to two databases that require independent passwords. **As soon as the term begins**, you should:

1. Make sure you can use your Drexel ID to access the Hagerty databases. Spend as much time as you can exploring the Drexel Library resources <http://www.library.drexel.edu> Also Blackboard has a tab called "Library Resources." Make a point of trying to use some of the databases right away to ensure your Drexel ID—ex. 1022xxxx works properly. Also, visit the site: http://www.library.drexel.edu/support/University_ID_FAQ.html for more information. Make sure that you can find: Subject List of Databases, Title List of Databases, Web Reference, Electronic Reserves, Ebooks, and other electronic resources. Note that the library staff is available to help you. Details to come.
2. Make sure that you can receive messages from your Drexel email account or forward your Drexel mail to your *preferred* account. If you use Yahoo or Hotmail, you may have problems with receiving messages from Blackboard.
3. Explore both the print and electronic reference resources in your local areas. Do you have access to a large academic library? Large public library? Do you have local access to a print collection of library and information science journals? Look for *the Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *Library Quarterly*, *Library Trends*, *Library and Information Science Research*, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, et al. Talk to the local librarians about their challenges and how their work has changed in the last ten years or more.
4. Include bookstores and other information centers in your local explorations. You never know when an informal contact will lead to a potential job contact.