Interdisciplinary Research

• Known challenges with the classification of materials along interdisciplinary lines:

  • Attributing value to interdisciplinarity in the physical & virtual organization of documents/sources vs the expectation that a new work will be made available through an established discipline or sub-discipline.

  • Duty to create and manage disciplinary connections.

  • When do we need to recognize the emergence of a new subject?
Speaking of the Dewey classification system:

“[…] the hierarchical organisation tends to compartmentalise knowledge into small, unconnected topics rather than demonstrating the links that may exist between them. Interdisciplinarity can hardly be taken into account with this system.”

“[…] useful tool for anyone trying to map a specialised domain. If it confirms its complexity, it also provides some information about the borders between its different sub-sections, borders that can be crossed and made to evolve, but whose existence should not be denied.”
Library points of view

• Avoiding roadblocks in interdisciplinary library research:
  • Use classification terms as border objects
  • Indexing
  • Interdisciplinary research tools: thematic bibliographies, research guides, thematic multidisciplinary databases, etc.

• RDA cataloguing standard principles:
  • The metadata describing a resource must flag the significant relationships between the described resource and other resources by relying on a system that qualifies the types of entities, attributes, and relationships that should be recognized.

• Classification based on usage strategies
  • Crowdsourcing, tagging, social network referrals – Examples: Proquest, Mendeley, citeulike, etc.
Research process

1: Identify your research question

2: Identify principal and relative concepts

3: Clarify limits

4: Identify/locate books and reference works related to your question

5: Identify/locate related journal articles in subject databases

6: Identify other types of potentially relevant sources

7: Evaluate the information sources (purpose, authority, currency, relevance, accuracy, etc.)
Interdisciplinary library research

Is it more helpful to investigate the body of scholarly literature on a question by academic discipline or by thematic grouping? In terms of library collections, it important to realize that these two types of classification exist side by side and that both are useful.

How do I undertake a literature search on an interdisciplinary question effectively?

- Use different kinds of sources produced in different disciplines you can tie back to your question (books, articles, statistics, government documents, etc.)
- Use different kinds of research tools.
- Create your own associations between classification vocabulary from different disciplines.
Interdisciplinary library research

Main questions to ask:

• **How can I describe the main concepts of my question to create appropriate search statements (keyword search strings, subject headings, etc.)?**

• **What are my sources (databases, articles, etc.)? What disciplines are they based in?**

• **How can I leverage different classification systems to help me find my sources?**

• **Can I find my sources by theme and/or by discipline? Is it possible to identify this difference in my search strategy?**
Library research methods

• Exploratory, open
  • Open combination of general keywords
  • Simple subject search

• Targeted, systematic
  • Strong understand of term definitions and disciplinary limits
  • Advanced combination of technical keywords and controlled vocabulary

• Snowball searching, by citation, via citation network
  • Use of key document to locate additional relevant sources
  • Search by key document, key author, key institution, etc.
Library research methods

• Propaganda and the media

Related/associated ideas:
• liberation propaganda, colonialism & propaganda, war journalism, patriarchy & propaganda, rhetoric & propaganda
Interdisciplinary research

Make use of subject research guides and library research tools:

http://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/internationalstudies

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