TEACHING WITH WORLDCAT LOCAL: WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

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INTRODUCTION

WorldCat Local is a discovery layer for library catalogs, currently gaining popularity in both academic and public library settings. Since its initial offering in 2007, academic librarians who provide instruction have worked to integrate it into their teaching. Librarians frequently discuss their successes, challenges, and other findings in informal settings. We, the authors of this chapter, performed a research study aimed at compiling and sharing librarians' informal discussions on how to teach with this resource in order to illuminate the body of lessons learned. We worked with two major goals in mind: 1) Sharing the practices that have evolved informally over time and 2) Providing a set of guidelines which academic librarians can use to think systematically about teaching with this resource. We believe that these tools will help librarians make informed choices about when and how to include WorldCat Local in their classes.

AN OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

We began designing the research project that informs this paper in early Spring 2010. Since our interest had initially formed through informal discussions amongst librarians, we decided to investigate the questions that arose within these discussions in a more organized manner. Thus we began our work by creating a list of topics that had emerged in these

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informal discussions. We shared these questions with teaching librarians at our home institutions to ensure that the most intriguing and meaningful questions were included. We gathered quantitative information regarding institutional demographics and populations taught. However, the majority of our questions gathered free responses to questions on techniques, perceived benefits and success, and more. This qualitative data allowed us to collect candid and detailed opinions within a controlled framework.

Heads of instruction at academic libraries in the United States which currently use WorldCat Local received an invitation to take the survey. We asked these individuals to pass the survey along to interested colleagues who also perform instruction at their institutions. In the end, 15 librarians took the survey. Although the survey did not ask them to name their institution, we gather from the demographic information

We purposefully chose to focus on instructors' experiences and the advice they have gathered over time rather than providing detailed statistics on our research. Statistics gathered from our study will appear in a forthcoming article in *Public Services Quarterly* in 2012. The citation for our article will be:

> Grotti, M., & Sobel, K. (2012). WorldCat Local and information literacy instruction: An exploration of emerging teaching practice. *Public Services Quarterly, 8*(1).

PUTTING MAJOR FINDINGS INTO PRACTICE

Our LOEX presentation focuses on three major categories: the skills that librarians choose to teach using WorldCat Local, the populations and audiences that typically

receive instruction using this resource, and the materials that are searched when teaching with WorldCat Local. For each category, we will share approaches that librarians have developed when using WorldCat Local for instruction. We will also analyze the challenges that these responses illuminate, and provide recommendations for expanding on current teaching practice, based upon the authors' own experiences. We will also present a tool, called the Brainstorming Guide (Appendix 1), which will help librarians make choices on how best to incorporate WorldCat Local into their own teaching.

THEME 1: SKILLS LIBRARIANS TEACH USING WORLDCAT LOCAL

Current Strategies:

Our research revealed that when librarians teach using WorldCat Local, they tend to highlight the same skills they do using "classic" catalogs or databases, with one major difference. Librarians who participated in the study frequently commented that, with WorldCat Local, they teach students to perform searches that come up with a large number of results and then sort through them using the many categories offered through WorldCat Local's sidebars. For example, librarians may point out specific types of materials such as fiction, nonfiction, dissertations, articles, and so on. They show options such as listing all the books by a particular author. They note that they make sure students feel comfortable with the mechanics of sorting through long lists of items using various criteria. This marks a shift away from the typical approach of constructing precise and targeted searches prior to viewing and analyzing search results.

For the bulk of the lesson, however, librarians focus on skills that they previously taught using the library catalog. These include locating and using subject headings, generating synonyms for keyword searching, and locating a call number. Librarians reported that they find themselves changing the weight given to certain library skills. For example, many libraries have seen a sharp rise in interlibrary loan or consortial borrowing requests because WorldCat Local incorporates results from other libraries into lists of results. Therefore, librarians are more likely to include a discussion of consortial agreements and interlibrary loan when they teach with this resource.

Challenges:

Respondents to the survey frequently expressed dissatisfaction with WorldCat Local's convergence of searching article or database content and catalog content. Librarians report that students become confused when they receive a list of results that contains books, articles, and other types of media. Although WorldCat Local marks each item with an icon indicating item format and librarians discuss methods for sorting or limiting results, students remain confused. This illustrates the need to focus on concepts such as how information is produced, what kinds of information can be expected to be found within certain formats, as well as technical details such as how to identify the icon indicating what kind of format a record represents.

Recommendations:

In our own experience teaching with WorldCat Local, we have found that allowing students to work with a long list of results which presents mixed formats can present a valuable teaching moment. Such a challenging task can open the door to a discussion of the important qualities of different formats. This is especially useful when working with underclassmen or novice researchers. For example, librarians can help students to discover that books often provide background on an unfamiliar topic, while scholarly journal articles provide detailed commentary. By encouraging students to think critically about format, librarians can lead students to a better understanding of the timeline of coverage – the fact that a newspaper will often begin covering an event the day it happens, while a scholarly journal will discuss it six months later, a book perhaps a year later, and so on.

THEME 2: POPULATIONS AND AUDIENCES

Current Strategies:

When we began studying how instructors teach with WorldCat Local, we expected to find that instructors teach WorldCat Local to some populations but not to others. However, we discovered that this is not the case. Individual instructors seem to include WorldCat Local in all of their teaching, or to exclude it entirely.

Recommendations:

A few librarians who teach with WorldCat Local during the majority of their instruction sessions suggested using a tiered approach to teaching this resource. Tiers may be based upon students' perceived level of prior research experience, in order to provide students with an opportunity to build upon their previous knowledge. We have expanded this idea below into the following recommendations for considering a tiered approach when working with populations with differing skill sets:

1.) When working with beginning researchers, WorldCat Local can be a rich tool for teaching keyword searching. Since nearly any search in WorldCat Local brings up a wealth of results, this can be used to encourage students to work flexibly when searching, noting how results change when they experiment with synonyms and related terms. Negotiating results in mixed formats also provides opportunities for discussing the aspects of a record which prove confusing such as differentiating between journal titles and article titles or identifying the names of the databases from which the articles are drawn.

2.) With intermediate-level researchers, librarians can focus on these same skills at a higher level, or focus on additional information literacy skills. For example, while a class for beginning researchers may focus upon differentiating between popular and scholarly works in general, more advanced researchers can be asked to differentiate between scholarly and trade publications. To introduce additional information literacy skills, librarians may choose to

focus upon source attribution, using WorldCat Local's citation tools. An appropriate class activity for more advanced researchers may include challenging students to look critically at WorldCat Local's automatic citation tools in order to identify errors and become familiar with style manuals as the authority on citation formats. The author facet within WorldCat Local can be used to open discussions on authoritative works. Advanced students can be encouraged to use this facet to identify authors who write prolifically on the subject of interest.

These skills do not seem especially advanced to librarians. In reality, they aren't. WorldCat Local is a valuable starting place for research, which can be useful for teaching foundational skills and concepts. With advanced students (or faculty), librarians tend to teach WorldCat Local and then transition to other, subject-specific tools for research. It is, however, an important part of the package that can be leveraged creatively for learning success.

THEME 3: MATERIALS SEARCHED FOR USING WORLDCAT LOCAL

Current Strategies:

Both our research and our informal discussions with colleagues indicate that librarians often use WorldCat Local to teach students to find some, but not all, types of materials. The most popular formats that librarians choose to teach students to search within WorldCat Local are books only, followed by books plus audiovisual materials, followed by searching all materials. Interestingly, no respondents claimed to have taught students to search solely for articles using this tool. The popularity of using WorldCat Local to teach students to search for books indicates that many librarians prefer to treat WorldCat Local like more familiar catalog systems. Rather than feeling as if they must teach every feature of WorldCat Local, librarians have identified its strengths in opening up book collections via simplified keyword searching and are using those strengths to help meet their students' research needs.

Challenges:

Librarians often express concern regarding teaching article searching to students using WorldCat Local. This may be because some search functionality is lost in a meta-search system, or due to concern that students will mistakenly assume that WorldCat Local searches all available library resources, rather than being one tool out of many.

Recommendations:

While it is not our recommendation that WorldCat Local be used to the exclusion of specialized databases, this tool can be helpful to beginning researchers. Researchers who are unfamiliar with the precise search strategies that are required when using more advanced databases can ease into library research by taking advantage of the more forgiving keyword search functionality of WorldCat Local. Students can become familiar with broader concepts such as information formats and can explore their research topics to gain a better sense of how they may need to broaden or narrow their focus. This can prove a valuable scaffold for students before approaching more challenging search systems.

FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING DECISIONS

In an effort to help other teaching librarians to decide how to incorporate WorldCat Local into their instruction practice, we developed the attached Brainstorming Guide (Appendix 1). When we set out to provide the results of our research, we had initially planned to guide librarians toward decisive answers on how to teach with WorldCat Local. As our inquiry progressed, however, we realized that any guidance we gave neither could nor should replace librarians' own judgment about their patrons' needs. There are many circumstances in which one library's successful model would fail if adopted wholesale at another institution. Thus, the attached Guide aims to present a number of considerations that can assist librarians in exploring how best to incorporate WorldCat Local into their own teaching practice. The Guide then provides a framework for librarians to reflectively analyze their decisions so that each librarian who chooses to teach with WorldCat Local may develop his or her own best practices over time, and share these with colleagues at his or her institution.

The Brainstorming Guide can easily be adapted to serve as a framework for exploring any new technology or research tool. It is based upon the instructional design concepts put forth in the Assessment Cycle, presented by Debra Gilchrist and Anne Zald in *The Information Literacy Instruction Handbook* (2008). Their excellent chapter outlines a process for planning and designing instruction using the principles of assessment as a guide. Our Brainstorming Guide draws heavily upon this process.

IN CONCLUSION

We feel that WorldCat Local has great potential for teaching both information literacy skills and the mechanics of searching for materials, particularly at the beginner level. We hope that librarians who teach using this tool will continue to voice their questions and share the useful techniques and strategies they develop. We also hope that users will continue to assess and compile these techniques and strategies in the future, as we have now.

REFERENCES:

Gilchrist, D., & Zald, A. (2008). Instruction & program design through assessment. In C. Cox, & E. Lindsay, (Eds.), *Information Literacy Instruction Handbook* (pp. 164-192). Chicago: American Library Association.

BRINGING WORLDCAT LOCAL INTO YOUR INSTRUCTION PRACTICE: A BRAINSTORMING GUIDE

Section A: Creating Outcomes

What do you want your students to learn? What external factors must be taken into account when planning for the session?

1) Will you be teaching WCL in a one-shot session, or within the context of a multiple-session course of information literacy instruction?

2) (For one-shot sessions) Are there particular instructional parameters that must be considered, such as an assignment, or specific content requested by the course's faculty?

3) (For one-shot sessions) Given the external parameters, what outcomes have you established for the students attending your session?

4) (For one-shot sessions) Where do you see WCL <u>best</u> fitting in as a teaching tool to advance student mastery of your outcomes?

5) (For information literacy courses) Are there unique instructional parameters such as external curricula or other standards that must be considered?

6) (For information literacy courses) Given the outcomes that you have developed for the course, do you feel that it is best to introduce WorldCat Local before or after an introduction to more specialized resources?

Section B: Thinking about Content and Pedagogy

How can you best bridge the content that you must cover to the learning outcomes you have set for the students? How can you integrate WorldCat Local into these activities to greatest effect?

1. External Factors: Will students be working on their own assignments or topics? How can the unique aspects of student topics be incorporated into the lesson? Can WorldCat Local facilitate this?

2. Student Characteristics: Will you be working with beginning researchers, or more advanced researchers? In either case, what pieces of prior knowledge will the students most likely be able to contribute? How can WorldCat Local be leveraged to challenge or expand this knowledge?

3. Given your thoughts on question 2, consider some of the following pedagogical methods. Select those (or others) that you feel will allow the students to build upon their prior knowledge and explore the content in order to master the learning outcomes you have established.

- Game / Competitive Activity
- Goal-oriented exploration of the tool

- Think-Pair-Share
- Jigsaw
- Collaborative group work

- Problem-based activity
- Worksheet
- Mind Mapping / Concept Map

4. List the features of WorldCat Local that can potentially be used within the activity that you have decided upon:

Section C: Assessment of your outcomes

How will you determine that your students have successfully mastered the class' learning outcomes?

1. Will you be using summative assessment (ex: a quiz or test after the class), or formative assessment (such as comprehension checks) or a combination of these, to assess student learning?

2. Depending upon your answer to question 1, list the criteria that you have established to measure student mastery of your learning outcomes. (ex: students will answer a test question with 80% accuracy; students will correctly identify 3 proper keywords, etc.)

3. Use the space below to detail your assessment for your outcomes

Outcome *(Write in your outcome below)*	Criteria for Success *(How will you be able to judge that the outcome has been met?)*	Assessment Measure *(Write your planned assessment for the outcome in the space below)*

Section 4: "Closing the Loop"

What worked? What didn't work? How will you alter your practice based upon your experience?

Using WorldCat Local as a teaching tool is a work-in-progress for all of us. In the attached worksheet, record your experiences teaching with this tool. Remember, sometimes your experiences will tell you that WorldCat Local is not the most appropriate tool for the learning goal you have established. Other times, it may suit your students and your outcomes well.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE WORKSHEET

Date and Description of Class Taught	Outcome	Pedagogy	Reflections	How will I change my approach next time I teach this class, or with this tool?
EXAMPLE: 3/12/2011, taught an English Composition Class for freshmen	EXAMPLE: Students will differentiate between scholarly and popular resources. **Criteria:** Students will be able to articulate at least 2 of the main characteristics of a popular and a scholarly resource.	EXAMPLE: **Collaborative Group Work:** Groups of students worked together to search for and identify one popular resource on their topics, and one scholarly resource. Each group was asked to defend its decisions about the resource at the conclusion of the activity.	EXAMPLE: Because WorldCat Local is now more prominent on the homepage, I chose to teach with this resource. Students did well in differentiating between popular and scholarly sources, and were able to partially infer the meaning of "peer reviewed" thanks to the icons on the result screen. However, book reviews for scholarly sources muddied the waters for the students. They were unfamiliar with these resources and how they might be used.	EXAMPLE: Because the students uniformly showed success at achieving this outcome when I used WorldCat Local to facilitate this activity, I will try this again. I will anticipate the problem with book reviews next time, and I will try to open a discussion with students about the need to pay careful attention to what resources they are seeing when they use WorldCat Local. This might be a good place to transition to having the students explore the faceted search to limit by format.