Shelby Thomas
02-17-2019
[Partner: George Baugh]
Learning Activity #1 (Mock Reference Interview)
LI802XR

A patron approached the reference desk and asked me for assistance. He was looking for information about recent technological advancements in the medical field. Specifically, he said he wanted to know "what new technologies in medicine have made the largest impact over the last ten years." I thought that was a broad question, so I asked him why he wanted this information. He explained that he'd be starting college soon and, though he planned on studying medicine in some capacity, he didn't know exactly which particular career path he would pursue. I asked him if he thought it might be more useful for him to instead find out which roles within the medical field were expected to grow or experience greater demand in the future. He agreed to this alternative.

I began the search by exploring journal articles, and we started with the MEDLINE database using the simple keyword search "medicine career paths." The results weren't promising; the journals collected in MEDLINE seemed too specialized and academic for the patron's purposes. Of the most relevant articles, each tended to be focused on one very specific sub-field of medicine and projecting the future level of need for those roles associated with it, or detailing a study or studies on the preconceptions of certain types of medical students.
We then tried to find a journal article through a different database, Academic Search Complete, hoping this route would yield more general results. We found a few interesting results with a search of the keywords "expected medical career demand," but none that were ideal. In retrospect, limiting the geographical component to the United States and thus narrowing the search may have significantly improved the results. Regardless, the patron did find one particular article that piqued his interest and he decided to download a PDF copy it.

I then geared our search toward books and we used ESU's online discovery search. In an attempt to simplify things, I thought we should start by doing a subject search using the keywords "medical" and "technology." We ended up finding a book published in 2013 titled *Medical Technology*. Even though this may not focus solely on the pros and cons of specific career paths nor offer the most current information on what is a rapidly evolving field, both myself and the patron were convinced it would, at the very least, provide new information and ideas that would help him plan for the future.

I saved the most promising search for last, and did a Google search for the four keywords "medical careers demand future." As a rule, I'm skeptical of the initial entries in the results list of a web search. I try to keep firmly in my mind the ways the order of search results are rendered all but meaningless due to SEO and corporate sponsorship. However, in this case, the first result listed turned out to be almost perfect. It was the secondary page of a site called BestMedicalDegrees.com. I was rather iffy at first—to me, the domain name has a certain whiff of commercialism, but going to the "About" section of the site explained that it's an independent source of information. The section of the website in question was called "Best Medical Careers For The Future" and was published less than one year ago. The patron agreed that it would be very useful to him.

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