

11 THINGS

we learned from
talking to our users
about *Gale Research
Complete*



At Gale, we believe doing regular research to understand how students, researchers, and librarians use our databases is essential. With library technology constantly changing and new generations of students arriving each year, we can never rely on assumptions from even a few years ago.

Before starting to develop the new search experience for Gale Research Complete, we spoke to more than 50 users, including students (first-years through postgrads), librarians, and faculty across a spectrum of colleges and universities, from junior colleges to premier research-intensive universities in the US, UK, and Northern Europe. In these in-depth online interviews, users shared their screens and walked us through how they navigate library discovery and research databases in their everyday workflows. Here are a few of the things we learned:

- 1 Multiple routes into content are needed.** Users shared positive feedback for the new *Gale Research Complete* home page and cross-search, but it's clear these only represent a few of the paths users will take to find content. Many will still access the separate home pages for *Gale Business: Insights* or the *Literature Resource Center*, or will arrive via direct links to articles from discovery services, Learning Management Systems, reading lists, or LibGuides. Alongside designing the new search, Gale will continue optimizing our integration with this ever-changing ecosystem of library resources.
- 2 Students embrace discovery services.** All participating students were aware their library provides a range of online resources and knew the gateway to finding articles is the discovery service—although none of them used that term. Tellingly, one student said, “This is the library,” as she arrived on a Primo search results page. For these students, the online library has replaced the physical library as the place to visit for research.
- 3 Content needs vary by region.** Example: while US undergrads were generally focused on finding ‘articles’ (from peer-reviewed scholarly journals), UK students were more likely to notice when contents are grouped into categories like Articles and Books, and had varying views on whether their instructors favoured references to journals or books.
- 4 Students don't use the word eBook.** Listening to the language of your users is a key part of user-centered design. Students seem highly unlikely to use the word eBook for the same reason that they don't say e-resource or e-journal—the ‘e’ is redundant because they are accustomed to the availability of online resources.
- 5 Gale jargon is confusing for students.** While librarians know Gale Academic OneFile is a premier resource containing peer-reviewed journals and authoritative news sources, many students become confused when presented with a list of Gale database names. Instead, it's much clearer to present options using terms familiar to students, such as journals, news articles, magazines, primary sources, literature resources, or books.
- 6 Potentially ambiguous labels need clarification.** For the interdisciplinary and international user base of Gale Research Complete, even broad descriptive labels might need explaining. Historians know Gale Primary Sources means historical documents, but for literary scholars or anthropologists, primary sources mean something completely different. One psychology student thought Gale Literature is a platform used for literature reviews of scientific publications. Gale user experience designers work constantly to overcome these challenges.
- 7 Known item searches need more support.** Surprisingly, many undergraduate students frequently search for a specific article or book. Whether following a citation from a course reading list, a footnote in another article, or Google Scholar, they know to check their library resources to see if the full text is available. Gale is planning to offer tools on the home page of Gale Research Complete to assist with this use case.

8

Users don't expect everything to be like Google. Search engines like Google have molded expectations of how search should work over the last 20 years. For example, users expect to be able to combine search terms without needing to understand Boolean operators. However, we repeatedly observed that all levels of users had different expectations in a research setting. Instead of expecting to find answers in the first three search results, as is custom with Google, users eagerly sifted through results to narrow their searches and find the content they needed.

9

Search filters are not popular. Users frequently chose to redo their searches with modified terms rather than narrow their search results using filters. The date filter and peer-reviewed checkbox were exceptions to this observation.

10

Dyslexic users welcome HTML full text. In one round of testing, three out of twelve students shared, unprompted, that they were dyslexic and preferred the HTML version of an article to the PDF. They could easily use their preferred third-party screen reader software with HTML—in one case, a student used Siri. Users also said they appreciated how Gale generally offers both HTML and PDF versions, as a PDF of a scholarly article has other advantages—one user tellingly referred to the PDF as “the actual document.”

11

Users of all levels appreciate a helping hand. The proposed Gale Research Complete interface includes more user-friendly features compared to competitors: topic pages, display panels that group results by content type, recommendations, visual cues, and a simplified results page with only the most useful search filters included. Junior college students look forward to the inclusion of these helpful features just as much as faculty and librarians at major research universities.

gale.com/discovergrc

