Weighing the Evidence: Evaluating Major Research Databases

Assessment Tools

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Assessment Tools

• The role of expert opinion
  – Talking with colleagues
  – Published reviews (e.g. The Charleston Advisor)
• Trials – formal and informal
• Content Comparison Tools
  – Serials Solutions Overlap Analysis
  – Gold Rush Reports
  – CUFTS Resource Analysis
  – JISC Academic Database Assessment Tool
Role of Expert Opinion

• Talking with colleagues/friends
  – Good networking is essential (Charleston Conference is a key national venue)
  – Important to work with local consortia
  – Quick and easy
  – People you trust
  – Likely to get honest opinion “off the record”
  – Can dovetail discussions about related issues
  – But are they really an expert?
The Role of Expert Opinion

• The Charleston Advisor
  – Critical reviews of Web products for librarians
  – Begun in July 1999 and has now reviewed over 750 products
  – Peer reviewed
  – Substantive, structured reviews with a ratings system
  – http://www.charlestonco.com
TCA Evaluation Criteria

• Content
  – Appropriate for intended audience?
  – Comparison with competitive products
  – Major omissions or strengths?
  – Comprehensive or limited in its subject area?
  – Authoritative?
TCA Evaluation Criteria

• Searchability/User interface
  – Appropriate to intended audience and content?
  – Intuitive and easy-to-use?
  – Advanced features?
  – Graphics & screen design?
  – Reliable with consistent results?
  – Special features?
  – Installation requirements or plug-ins?
TCA Evaluation Criteria

• Pricing
  – Value of the product in relation to the cost
  – What pricing methods are used? Is there flexibility
  – Consortial discounts?
  – Duplicative content in different packages?
TCA Evaluation Criteria

• Contract/Licensing Options and Features
  – Compliance with national standards or guidelines
  – Metadata availability
  – Definition of acceptable users
  – Walk-ins and remote users
  – Archiving/perpetual access
  – Lease/ownership
  – ILL or redistribution permissions
  – Other peculiarities?
TCA Evaluation Problems

• Consistency among reviewers
  – some are generous, some are overly critical
  – The problem of “4”

• Changing standards/values/expectations over time
  – what was great a few years ago may be unacceptable today

• Products keep changing
  – A moving target so we only have a snapshot in time
TCA Evaluation Problems

• Stand-alone reviews are sometimes out of context
  – Like to do comparative product reviews when possible

• Reviews represent a person’s own bias
  – Collection development, reference, administration
  – Institutional bias if a site has selected a particular product

• Peer review provides relief along with care to avoid conflicts of interest
Database Trials

• When should they be done?
  – New products or systems to you
  – Of wide scale interest
  – Substantial new features

• Avoid Trials
  – When just a new database on a familiar platform
  – For short-term free access
Database Trials

• Benefits of trials
  – Input from faculty, staff and students
  – Input from library staff
  – Some institutions provide formal feedback forms or focus-group opportunities

• Some log and track trial results in a local ERM

• Trial access is sometimes hard to turn off!
Content Comparison Tools

• The ability to compare content within different comparable packages
  – Serials Solutions, Gold Rush, CUFTS, JISC ADAT (Academic Database Assessment Tool)
• Works best for journal-oriented databases
• Does not make sense for some products
• You can do this on your own by downloading title lists in spreadsheets but easier to use of the comparison tools!
Content Comparison Tools

• Serials Solutions
  – **Overlap analysis.** Compares content in different databases
  – Includes full-text journals but not indexed-only titles
  – Well respected knowledgebase, may be “best in class”
Content Comparison Tools

• Gold Rush Reports
  – Created by non-profit Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries
  – Includes full-text journals as well as journal indexing information
  – Supports one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many comparisons
  – Does not include ebooks and does comparisons via ISSN and eISSN with known drawbacks
  – Includes about 1,500+ packages
  – Embargos and additional database information shown when downloaded into a spreadsheet
**Gold Rush Staff Toolbox**

Reports -> Compare Title Lists -> Compare DB List

The Database Comparison Report produces a multi-part report, listing titles that are unique and common between the two databases.

To view a report, click on the linked number under the column Unique or Same.

### Title List Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unique</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic One File</td>
<td>7255</td>
<td>6042</td>
<td>13297</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Search Complete</td>
<td>6806</td>
<td>6042</td>
<td>12848</td>
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</table>

### Full Text Title List Comparison

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic One File</td>
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<td>5728</td>
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<td>Academic Search Complete</td>
<td>6352</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>8310</td>
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</table>

### Full Text Titles Unique to Academic Search Complete (not in Academic One File)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>ISSN</th>
<th>eISSN</th>
<th>Citation Dates</th>
<th>Full Text Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taullial Mathematical Seminar</td>
<td>1822-511X</td>
<td></td>
<td>2010-01-01 - current</td>
<td>2010-01-01 - current</td>
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<td>5th International Conference on Applied Statistics</td>
<td>2069-2498</td>
<td></td>
<td>2010-01-01 - 2010-01-01</td>
<td>2010-01-01 - 2010-01-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>AANA Journal</td>
<td>0094-6354</td>
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<td>2001-02-01 - current</td>
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<td>0717-344X</td>
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<td>2001-04-01 - current</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal And Islander Health Worker Journal</td>
<td>1037-2403</td>
<td></td>
<td>2009-09-01 - current</td>
<td>2009-09-01 - current</td>
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<tr>
<td>About Campus</td>
<td>1096-4522</td>
<td>1530-0687</td>
<td>1997-01-01 - current</td>
<td>1997-01-01 - current</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Leader</td>
<td>8750-7730</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001-01-01 - 2006-08-01</td>
<td>2004-01-01 - 2006-08-01</td>
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<td>Academic Questions : AQ</td>
<td>0095-4852</td>
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<td>ACI</td>
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<td>1996-03-01 - 2001-09-01</td>
<td>1996-03-01 - 2001-09-01</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Content Comparison

• CUFTS Resource Comparison
  – Free open source comparison tools from Simon Fraser as part of their Open Source Serials Management
  – Includes full-text and indexing for 575 packages
  – Can compare up to 4 packages at once
  – Focuses only on duplicate holdings (i.e. overlap)
### Duplicates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>title</th>
<th>issns</th>
<th>Academic OneFile - Gale III</th>
<th>Academic Search Premier - EBSCO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdominal Imaging</td>
<td>0942-8925</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
JISC ADAT

- In the UK JISC is providing a comprehensive suite of programs and assessment tools for higher education and the library community
- One of these tools compares library databases
- [http://www.jisc.ac.uk/](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/)
- Academic Database Assessment Tool (ADAT)
- It’s free!
JISC ADAT

- Covers a smaller number of databases (about 25 databases)
- But the presentation and level of analysis is much deeper than the other analysis tools
- Includes nice search filters
- Includes nice graphical presentations
- Includes nice dashboard overview of each database
Compare Titles: Search Results

Comparison of:

- Academic OneFile
- Academic Search Complete

Your search settings:

- ACTIVE = Yes

Your search includes active titles from the selected databases:
- Widen search to include both active and inactive titles
- Filter search to include inactive titles only

Found 17,611 titles. [Searched 94,709 titles in 0.01 seconds.]

Venn Diagram

The Venn diagram represents overlapping and unique titles within this comparison. Click on a segment or label to view the relevant list.

- Academic OneFile (Total: 13,169)
- Academic Search Complete (Total: 9,757)
- 7,854
- 5,515
- 4,442
This dashboard represents a summary of the database title list provided by the database supplier. Please note that counts for each section may exceed the total number of titles where the supplier has provided more than one record per title.

Content Coverage | Date Coverage | Geographical Coverage | Other Info
--- | --- | --- | ---
Total titles: 14,980
Title list last updated: 13 Jul 2011
Publication types: Scholarly Journal 61.15%, Magazine 26.00%, Not Stated 6.25%, Report 3.25%, Book In Series 0.36%

**Abstracts**

<table>
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<td>13,668</td>
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</table>

**Cover-to-Cover**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>2,364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Citations

Counts of titles which have citations.

Full Text

Counts of titles which have full text, or link to full text.
What can I do with this information?

• Concern about database overlap
• What should be cancelled?
• What should be purchased?
• If I have a large indexing tool such as Scopus of Web of Science can it replace specialty indexes?
• Will large aggregator databases suffice for specialty databases?
• Should I cancel traditional A&I databases and focus on full-text content
• What role does Google Scholar and the new discovery interfaces play (Summon, EDS, Primo Central, WorldCat Local, Encore Synergy)? This well help you know what is in these new discovery tools.
Conclusion

• Many considerations in decision making
• Normally no one factor tells everything
• Important to have many different assessment tools
• Budgets are the final determiner after all of the other factors