Public Abstract

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Soon after the university movement started in the late 1800s, academic libraries became the dominant providers of the tools and services required to locate and access scholarly information. However, with the advent of alternate discovery services, such as Google Scholar, in conjunction with open access scholarly content, researchers now have the option to bypass academic libraries when they search for and retrieve scholarly information. This state of affairs implies that academic libraries exist in competition with these alternate services and with the patrons who use them, and as result, may be disintermediated from the scholarly information seeking and retrieval process.

Drawing from decision and game theory, bounded rationality, information seeking theory, citation theory, and social computing theory, this dissertation uses bibliometrics to investigate the state of affairs. The purpose is to understand if and how academic librarians are responding as competitors to changing scholarly information seeking and collecting practices. Bibliographic data was collected in 2010 from a systematic random sample of references on CiteULike.org and analyzed with three years of bibliometric data collected from Google Scholar. Findings indicate that scholars collect articles that can be located and retrieved without the benefit of a university's proxy and with services like Google Scholar. Although this suggests that academic libraries are being disintermediated, an analysis of the sources providing access indicates that academic libraries are key providers of free and open access content through a number of venues, including institutional repositories. These findings suggest that academic librarians are playing competitively.