

Kelvin High School Library
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Related EBSCO Solutions
Canadian Reference Centre
Canadian Points of View

“If people are more comfortable with the technology, they are more willing to take on some challenges.”

Joanne Peters, Librarian
 Kelvin High School
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Challenges	Solutions	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training students and teachers to be better researchers • Steering students away from the Internet and toward online research databases • Making research tools more accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing classes and instructional tools that show the value and functionality of databases • Publicizing databases via print materials and library Web site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and their teachers learn valuable “information literacy” skills which can be used in the library, the classroom, and beyond

Overview

When high school librarian Joanne Peters speaks about the benefits of online research databases you get the feeling she knows what she is talking about. That’s probably because she has been doing her “homework” on the subject for the better part of the last 10 years.

“The more you get used to it, the more knowledge you gain,” said Peters, who has been using EBSCO databases since the mid-90s when it was still on CD-Rom.

Not only is Peters well-versed on the features and functionality of products such as EBSCO’s *Canadian Reference Centre* and *Academic Search Elite*, but Peters also plays a major role in educating Kelvin High School (in Winnipeg, Manitoba) faculty and students about how to get the most out of these resources. Whether developing bookmarks that remind students how to access these resources or by working with a science teacher to find articles specific to an upcoming project, Peters finds a way to get their attention and keep them coming back.

Challenges

Every year, Peters takes the time to write a grant proposal so that Kelvin students and fellow-educators can continue accessing the many EBSCO databases to which they subscribe. But just because she sees the importance of these resources, doesn't mean everyone else will automatically follow suit. Administrators often need to understand the value, classroom teachers need a valid reason to use a resource they may not have seen or tried before, and then there is the battle against the ubiquitous internet search engines and Web sites to which students are drawn. Peters recognizes these challenges and has her reasons for attempting to meet them.

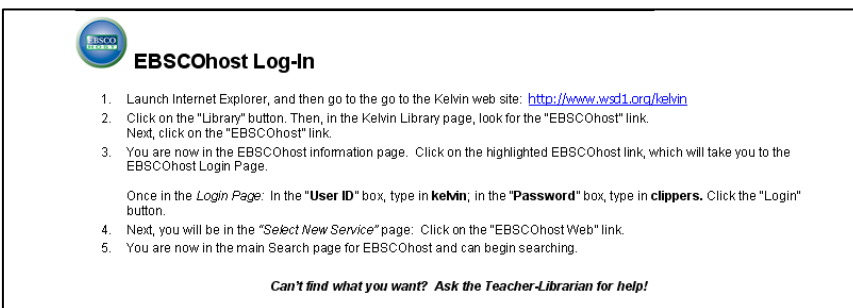
"I believe in the value of quality reference sources as opposed to what's out there on the free internet, such as Wikipedia," said Peters. "Some people do recognize the value of something chosen using a set of real criteria, as opposed to the dubious criteria of things on the internet."

Solutions

Peters' approach to boosting database usage at Kelvin is twofold and simple: Make sure they know about it and make sure they know how to use it.

"If people are more comfortable with the technology, they are more willing to take on some challenges," she said. And Peters has created several tools to help accomplish these goals.

One item she uses to help students remember how to access EBSCO resources is a bookmark with 5 steps for logging in (see image below). Peters said she used a template found on the EBSCO Support Site (<http://support.ebsco.com>) but added her own information to make it applicable to Kelvin students. "It's a nice convenient size," said Peters. She also created a bookmark for Kelvin faculty, which she inserts in her teacher "welcome packet" annually.



EBSCOhost Log-In

1. Launch Internet Explorer, and then go to the Kelvin web site: <http://www.wsd1.org/kelvin>
2. Click on the "Library" button. Then, in the Kelvin Library page, look for the "EBSCOhost" link. Next, click on the "EBSCOhost" link.
3. You are now in the EBSCOhost information page. Click on the highlighted EBSCOhost link, which will take you to the EBSCOhost Login Page.

Once in the *Login Page*: In the "User ID" box, type in **kelvin**; in the "Password" box, type in **clippers**. Click the "Login" button.
4. Next, you will be in the "Select New Service" page. Click on the "EBSCOhost Web" link.
5. You are now in the main Search page for EBSCOhost and can begin searching.

Can't find what you want? Ask the Teacher-Librarian for help!

In order to make the databases easier to find on the KHS Library Web site, Peters included an *EBSCOhost* link in the banner of the home page. The link takes visitors to a page where they are

instructed how to obtain a User ID and Password and also includes a separate link to the login page.

"It is a sales job, really," said Peters. You have to tirelessly remind people about the product. And there is instruction involved, so you have to be prepared to do that. Students, no matter how bright they are, still need direct instruction."

As part of that “instruction,” Peters uses detailed PowerPoint presentations to show students (and teachers) the features, content, and differences between the various EBSCO databases to which the library subscribes.

“In high school, students don’t transfer information all that well,” Peters explains. “They don’t transfer general examples to specific. They don’t carry knowledge from the last project to the current one. I structure the PowerPoints specifically to the subject, and, as much as possible, to what the assignment is going to be.”

Benefits

Dealing with teenagers who have been raised in an electronic age can be a challenge when it comes to demonstrating new technology, Peters said. “They’ve been told they can program the household VCR (or DVD player) from infancy so how can anyone older than them show them anything?” she quipped.

But once students do take the time to try using online databases, many agree it is a better resource than search engines and Web sites.

“It depends on the motivation of the student,” said Peters. “Kids who are keen to do a good job will admit that you have to work harder, but will get better results.”

One of Peters’ “better results” came from a recent collaboration between her and Melani Decelles, a classroom teacher and Kelvin High School’s International Baccalaureate coordinator. In order to prepare the IB students for their required extended essays, Decelles and Peters worked together on a series of six classes intended to “get the students well underway” on this project. One of these six classes was dedicated to “EBSCO*host* Web Article Selections.”

“Joanne prepared a very thorough PowerPoint presentation,” said Decelles. “Even though the students had been given time last year to use EBSCO*host*, they still appreciated the detailed set of notes and refresher presentation. They commented on the new EBSCO*host* Web databases that were not available last year.”

Before the end of the class, each student was instructed to find at least five magazine, journal or newspaper articles, indicate which database they used to find the article, as well as write a brief description as to why they thought the item would be useful for their Extended Essay. The lists were then collected and Peters took the time to read and comment on all of the submissions.

As a result of the classes, students were better prepared for their essays and started working on them far earlier than they would have normally.

“(The students) were very comfortable with EBSCO*host* and enjoyed using it for effective database searching,” Decelles said. And of Peters’ instruction, Decelles commented “She is extremely knowledgeable and shares her love of knowledge with a passion.”

As if the praise of her peers and achievements of her students weren't enough, there is also the matter of her school's usage statistics, which show nearly 10,000 searches launched over the last year. But numbers aren't all that impressive to Peters. She would rather gauge her success by how much her students are learning and retaining, especially as they leave Kelvin High and head for universities and/or the job market.

"Searching for information is a skill you'll use forever" she said.