

On seeking and sharing info

By Linda Karlsson¹

Access and availability

There is no doubt we're living in a time when we expect most things to be available in an instant and with no barriers. When searching the internet for information to support your studies or your research, you want it to be an easy and seamless process, but you're at risk of stumbling on many steps.

Getting access to the information is one of them. Some of the difficulties come from technical and copyright protection issues. Others have to do with library acquisitions' models and the limits of platforms and search systems. A defining aspect of the type of access you can get access is whether or not you belong to an institution, company or organization that can afford to provide a tailored collection of licensed information resources.

Research made available with open access is slowly growing as a response to research funders and universities' demands for the free and immediate online availability of research articles. Opening access is being enabled faster for journal articles than for monographs. The hope that researchers will try harder to incorporate open access into their book publishing strategies in the future may run contrary to the desire to be promoted by prestigious publishers. An encouraging example of a recent publication from Malmö University for MIT Press shows, however, that open access and publication by a prominent printing house can be combined: [Making Futures: Marginal Notes on Innovation, Design, and Democracy](#) (Ehn, Nilsson and Topgaard, 2014) was released under a Creative Commons license at the rate of one chapter per month.

How to go about information literacy?

There is a tension for information literacy in higher education. On the one hand, we want the students to use the licensed library resources, often guiding them to use specific library searches such as discovery tools and link resolvers. But on the other hand, we are preparing them for jobs outside the academic world, where these resources and systems might not be available. One solution is to promote broad search strategies, where keyword and thread searches are executed on many different platforms, thus making the students aware of the different ways in which the information landscape is structured.

The reading lists for the ComDev Master's programme consist mainly of books. Personally, I would like to see a reading list with more e-journal articles and other texts that are available online, preferably for free and through open access. I believe that such an approach could make it easier for the students to focus on understanding the content of the readings, without having to struggle to get access, and would also mirror the change in humanities and social sciences towards open access publishing.

Mindful of this shift, the ComDev staff has already made some adjustments: titles available as e-books are prioritized and e-journals are promoted. Having access to central titles like *Development theory: deconstructions/reconstructions* (Nederveen Pieterse, 2009) as a library e-book copy is especially important for distance education students, as demonstrated by the e-books user statistics, which are high for mandatory readings. The library's shift towards patron-driven acquisition (PDA) for e-books allows for more titles than those selected as course readings to be presented alongside the Library's own collections. In the PDA model, a library only purchases digital content, like e-books and e-journals, when it is clear that a customer wants them. This makes it easier for students looking for readings for their project works to access additional materials.

On *Glocal Times*

In *Glocal Times*, students, researchers and practitioners are published side-by-side. I think there's a real beauty in this, for several reasons.

The strategy of bringing together a blend of scholars, practitioners and students is strongly connected with the ComDev Master's programme and the [Ørecomm festival](#), where students are encouraged to participate actively. The festival's activities double as course seminars. This breaking down of boundaries, allowing students to mix with researchers, is not that common in the academic world, and worth taking extra care of.

Glocal Times functions as a delimited entry point to research, ideas and case studies in communication for development and social change. If you browse through issues of the web magazine, you'll get a feeling for central themes of the specific Malmö ComDev approach. This is of great help when you're just starting to explore a subject field as a student.

For students who graduate from the programme, rewriting their Master's theses and adapting them for a different reader is a useful experience. An article published in *Glocal Times* will most likely reach a wider audience than the students' theses, even though these are also published online via Malmö University Electronic Publishing - MUEP. *Glocal Times* also serves as an alumni tool, allowing former graduates to keep up to date with easy to reach and relevant information and thus creating a strong connection back to the Master's programme.

As a freely available publication, quality-controlled by editors, which doesn't charge author fees, the *Glocal Times* makes its content available for anyone, free of charge, no matter who or where you are. Its [open access approach](#) corresponds well with the belief in openness and transparency central to the teaching process in the ComDev Master's, exemplified by the [live streaming of seminars](#) and the drive to explore the usability of open source and new media tools in the classroom.

The special issue of *Glocal Times* published in collaboration with *Nordicom Review*² in 2012 is proof of the web magazine's contribution to communication for development and social change research.³

Let the librarian help you

Having reflected on issues of access and availability in the current information landscape as regards higher education, and discussed the role of *Glocal Times* as an informational tool, I finish by sharing a few tips on how to seek information equally useful for students, researchers and practitioners.

Social media

Social communication tools work well for both strategic monitoring and serendipity. Adapt your use to your information need at a specific moment. Engage in ways you're comfortable with – interact with others, or just create an account to follow projects, organizations, researchers or individuals. Because information is often posted simultaneously on several channels, there's the option to pick the channels you like the most.

Twitter, Facebook and Instagram – I use [TweetDeck](#) to structure my Twitter flows in columns based on hash tags, searches, user accounts, and more.

- Blogs of all kinds – I use [Feedly](#) to monitor my favorite ones
- [Researchgate.net](#) or [Academia.edu](#) – two examples of research communities, for dissemination of research and networking

Google Scholar

Google Scholar is still outstanding for journal article searching. Let the search engine do some of the work for you and create keyword [alerts](#).

Metadata

Take care of your [metadata](#) – make sure that what you publish can be found by using tools such as repositories and publishing systems. These tools often have the advantages of allowing other services to harvest the metadata. And don't forget to search optimize [your scholarly literature!](#)

References

Ehn, P., Nilsson, E. and Topgaard, R. (eds.) (2014) *Making Futures: Marginal Notes on Innovation, Design, and Democracy*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Nederveen Pieterse, J. (2nd edition) (2009) *Development theory: deconstructions/reconstructions*. London: Sage.

¹ Linda Karlsson is a librarian specialized in digital services at Malmö University. She is especially interested in communication, usability, information literacy and ICT & learning in Higher Education. E-mail: linda.karlsson@mah.se

² A refereed open access journal published by Nordicom, <http://www.nordicom.gu.se/en>

³ The latest special issue of Nordicom Review, "[Beyond the impasse: Exploring new thinking in communication for social change](#)", builds on Nordicom's collaboration with *Glocal Times* in 2012, further attesting to the web magazine's relevance.