Re:Search Podcast

Episode 1: Welcome to The Library

Hi and welcome to the first episode of Re:Search, the George Mason University Library Podcast! This podcast is run by the student Peer Referral Coaches and will cover a number of different topics related to research and the libraries! Since this is our very first episode, we'll be introducing a few of the library basics to kick this podcast off. In today's episode we will discuss who our Peer Referral Coaches are, provide an overview of the George Mason Library website and finally give a synopsis of the main search bar.

To start off, what exactly is a Peer Referral Coach anyways? Well, Peer Referral Coaches or PRC's for short, are student employees hired by the Teaching and Learning Team of the George Mason Libraries to assist students in carrying out various research activities. PRCs provide peer-to-peer research assistance, facilitate library and research workshops, and are launching this research podcast, for which we plan to be releasing episodes weekly on Thursdays. And, we are located in Fenwick Library, and you can also find us at, library.gmu.edu/learning/prc.

Now let's get to navigating the library website. Our goal will be to give a run through of the site and then provide a deeper look into the resources available to you throughout each episode. The website can be found at library.gmu.edu/. When arriving on the front page the first thing you will see is the Mason Libraries search bar which we will return to later in this episode. Just below the search bar you will find four boxes listed as Subject Guides, Databases, Journals, and Reserves. Each box acts as a link to the corresponding topic. Next, we will look at the dropdown menus, there are six in total being, search, learn, use the libraries, user information, about, and support the libraries. Each of these dropdowns provide several options. There are a couple of other sections on the front page of the library website worth mentioning. In the top right corner, you can find links to Library News, My Library Account, Ask a Librarian, and Library Basics. Below that is a Search bar to search the library website. Below that search bar and to the right of the 4 boxes is a section that provides the hours of different Mason Libraries, and links to a calendar that has the hours as well. Below the 4 boxes, are 3 more listed as Departments, My Library and News. Departments lists the different departments within the library and provides links to them including Digital Scholarship Center, Mason Publishing, Research Services, Instructional Services, and Special Collections Research Center. My Library provides links to helpful library information such as Links to Interlibrary Loan, Library Workshops and Events, Library Tutorials, Media Services, and Borrowing Policies and Fines. Finally, News displays links to the most recent news regarding the Mason Libraries.

Since we have now quickly run through the website, let's get back to the core of it, the main mason search bar. You can use this search bar to find many different kinds of sources including books, articles, journals, movies, etc. It can be a good place to start if you're just starting research and want to search a broad idea and it can be helpful if you've determined specific sources and are trying to find them. You can choose between a simple and advanced search. All the simple search requires is for you to type anything into the search bar and hit search.

The advanced search option is on the bottom right of the search bar. This will provide you with a number of options for your search starting with picking a medium to search for and a term. It provides a space for Boolean terms. If you're not familiar with Boolean terms, sometimes called Boolean operators, here's a quick run-down: Using the Boolean operator AND will search for items that include both of your keywords; using the operator OR will find items with either of your keywords. Last but not least, using NOT will exclude all items using a keyword. Additionally, there is an option to refine according to the publication date of the source. You are also able to decide between four different catalogs to search within.

After searching for a term, you will be taken to a new page and see your search results lined down the middle. To the left you will see many different options to refine your search. First, you'll see options for sorting your results between relevance, date, author and title. There are ten filters available to refine your search results. These are availability, subject, author, library, location, resource type, collection, creation date, journal title, language and records. Each of these filters will have many options within them. You can select multiple to create a unique search filter by selecting the box to the left of the subsection in a filter, you can also choose to remove options by selecting the red box that will appear if you hover over the right side of it.

When doing a simple search, after searching you'll notice right next to the search bar a dropdown bar that also provides catalog options. These are the catalogues mentioned in the advanced search as well. The catalogs available through us are Mason Catalog + Articles and More, regular old Mason Catalog, WRLC Catalogs + Articles and More, and the regular old WRLC's Catalog. There are slight differences between each that can better help you find the resource you are looking for more efficiently. For example, say you are looking for a book you know the school has then you could search in Mason Catalog as it will only search for books and eBooks in our local collections. For the options with articles and more, it will search for eBooks, electronic collections, electronic dissertations and thesis, articles from newspapers, journals, legal material and more.

You can click on the different results to get more information about them. After clicking on the source, saying you're clicking on an article, you will see some of the basic details of the article, its status of being peer-reviewed or open-access, and then you'll also see a number of options for how to send or save a citation of this article (be that through copying the citation, saving it to Zotero, or printing it). If you scroll down, you will find links if it happens to be available online. Moving down further you will be able to see its availability, whether it's within our libraries and others. You also will have access to details such as the author, date, ISBN, a brief description, and more. Finally, at the bottom of the page you can check for sources that have cited your article or that your article has cited, which can be handy if you're looking for related sources.

Well, that about wraps up this episode of our podcast which I'm sure you can see why it's named Re:Search. I hope that you learned something about Mason's library services and that you tune in next episode for our next topic! Thank you so much for listening and see you next time! :)