Academic and all of which "...". Students think... they do have Biological Abstracts... periodical indexes such ten search Web sites 6,000 international with bibliographic more specialized pe... journals. mlJ it'... FindLaw, Ubl'dl'... they can also Academic Universe, Newspaper Source, North Carolina which together provide access to Academic Search Fulltext and... Library's electronic resources, like our online news... Ltdw.com... "Excuse me. I've been looking for two hours on the Web over there but I can't find anything that's really related to my topic. Do you know where else I can look...?"

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Electronic Sources Via the Library

"I can't find this case in FindLaw.com and my professor assured me it's there."

The Library currently subscribes to (i.e., spends a substantial chunk of change on) more than 100 online... databases. Some are general periodical indexes such as Ebsco's Academic Search Fulltext and Proquest's PA Research, which together provide access to more than 5,000 journals, many in full text. Others are more specialized periodical indexes such as Biological Abstracts with bibliographic access to nearly 6,000 international journals. Students thinking "electronic" often search Web sites of individual newspapers for newspaper articles. A more efficient, less frustrating, strategy involves searching one or more of the Library's electronic resources, like our online newspaper indexes including Newspaper Source, North Carolina Newsstand, or Lexis Nexis Academic Universe, all of which provide full-text access to millions of newspaper articles. A query on a Web search engine, such as InfoSeek or Go.com, about a legal issue can result in a thousand hits, ranging from legal institutions to personal homepages crusading some legal injustice. A more scholarly and useful approach to legal research is to tap into the Library's subscription to Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe. Although there are excellent free law sites available on the Web, such as FindLaw, they do have their limitations. The student quoted above was asked to find a Supreme Court case from the Civil War era using FindLaw but Supreme Court opinions from this Web site start in 1893. In contrast, access to opinions from Academic Universe begin in 1790. Not only are Federal and State court opinions available to students in Academic Universe, they can also research over 200 law reviews and journals—all available in full text.
How Students Can Better Utilize Their Librarians

"I am sorry to bother you but a friend of mine said you have ..."

Students benefit from getting to know their reference librarians at Belk Library. Librarians are continually refining their skills at searching for and evaluating online information, compiling guides to resources on various topics, and teaching others effective methods for finding, evaluating, and using relevant resources. Furthermore, they enjoy getting to know students. Librarians love being asked questions, even the common "this is a really stupid question" type, and there are many different ways for students and faculty to take advantage of their help—it is why they are paid for this service.

The Reference Information Desk

The center of the reference librarian's work is still the Reference Information Desk. Students, faculty, and the community at large can walk up without an appointment to ask for help on almost anything. The purpose of the librarian at the desk is to help guide the way—to show possible avenues to search or key resources to try, and even to help the searcher refine the nature of the search. Reference librarians do even more. They answer phone and email inquiries, assist patrons in the reference area with printing, downloading, email and other computer questions, and serve as general advisors on questions related to the Web and other resources. Librarians at the Reference Desk love this kind of work and welcome any question regardless of how complex or how silly the patron fears it to be. There should be a sign over the Reference Desk that reads, "Don't say 'Sorry to bother you.' We are here for you."

R.A.P. Sessions

A more in-depth way of obtaining help from a Reference Librarian is to schedule a R.A.P. (Research Advisory Program) session. The librarian will meet one-on-one with the student or faculty member delving in much greater detail into the research subject than is possible at the Reference Desk. Often the lack of time or the nature of the question requires more than a cursory exchange at the Reference Desk. The R.A.P. session provides a unique opportunity to get to know your librarian by working with him or her extensively on a topic.

Instruction Classes

An efficient way the Library has for communicating resources to students is through Library instruction classes. Over 300 instruction sessions have been conducted by librarians for students and faculty in each of the past three years. Professors can work with librarians to specially structure the class, tailoring it to the type of research and subject matter needed by the class. The Electronic Library Lab (ELL) provides the opportunity for hands-on instruction and help in selecting, using, and evaluating information resources.

A student receives assistance from reference librarians.