

## Helping our students in their Bachelor's Degree Final Project (TFG): bibliographic resources and information skills

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### Abstract

The Medicine Library of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona organizes user training sessions for all the University community members. Their purpose is to spread the use and knowledge of library services and information resources, foster independent use of the library and support research, especially among the undergraduate students and help them in their bachelor's degree final project (TFG).

*Keywords: university libraries; user training sessions; bridging courses; bachelor's degree final project; students, medical; education, medical, graduate*

### Introduction

After loan service, one of main library functions is to provide access to information and its dissemination. Therefore most libraries invest their time and expertise in information literacy. The libraries of Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) are not an exception and for a several years we have been designing tailored courses for students in order to help them to develop their skills and capabilities because sometimes their background with libraries and finding information is generally poor. Before the implementation of the new teaching methods, the teacher, in many cases, even provided the student with the basic bibliography for the full development of their subject and most catalogue consultation was limited to basic recommended handbooks. Currently, these methods go further on and encourage students to use the library's resources in more intensive manner, this means that the libraries, -the Medical Library (ML) in particular- in turn, must adapt to the changing needs of its users.

With the European Higher Education Area we have had to adapt our training sessions to the new teaching plans. Nowadays students with their own experience must find the best possible information, develop their hypotheses and lines of investigation and reach a conclusion. In this context, the ML plays a vital role. Nothing is further from our thoughts than the library is a bibliographic document repository; No, it is a fundamental teaching support tool, and contributing it is part of our function. However, user education is an investment for the future and only when students realize that they lack the ability to find the literature that is relevant for their needs that they will take the time to learn more and acquire capabilities needed not only for their studies but also throughout their careers. The user gets the skills to find relevant information that the ML affords him, and the same time that it maximizes their funds and makes knowledge accessible to those who need it.

For this reason we decided to give support, help or advice about useful tools and bibliographic resources for the development of the student's academic work (TFG) in their last year. The implementation has been gradual and not equal because it all relying on the length of the studies, because of this we started with the undergraduate students of Physiotherapy. Having had a good experience, we decided to design a course for Medicine ones and help them with their TFG.

## Objectives

Our main goal is to provide students with support and the basic knowledge about bibliographic tools in order to help them in their TFG.

Nowadays, any catalogue, databases and all search engines are easier to use and friendly. In addition students are familiar to these queries, they are not only younger but they belong to internet generation and therefore they are not afraid of technology, because technology is usually part of their lives. Students do not feel embarrassed or awkward when they have to ask any question. This may be a trait shared by students of the same generation, regardless of the library from which they are regular users and demonstrate a strong interest in information literacy and sometimes they asking for help to understand clearly what some topics mean. Sometimes they have some problems when searching the catalogue and many difficulties in selecting the best information sufficient for more complex searches, When it comes to look for references on a subject, not only in print publications, but also in databases, summaries of magazines, etc. things get complicated.

Somehow, this goal has always been present in the functions that are specific to the library, only new format is changing: we must go with the times and provide to our user the easier and the quicker way to learn how to get relevant and precise information for research and its subsequent writing as TFG. Consequently, to be able to reach our goal, we need support from the academic staff because we need to know how main attributes are for the TFG and what is best for the student's curricula, respectively.

## Methods

We draw a plan with the collaboration of the UAB Medical School teaching staff.

This gave us the opportunity to schedule four training sessions, each one with a specialized content:

1. Health Sciences main sources information
2. Database searching: a practical approach
3. Bibliographic management tools
4. Author's copyright and the TFG

The attendance to these sessions was voluntary but highly recommended by teaching staff. The length of each unit is about two hours and we think it is very important to establish good feelings with students. They may perceive that we are not a teacher but a librarian who could make easy their research. If the communication with students is good the feedback between librarian and them will run well. At the same time this feedback during the lessons allows us to improve the next sessions.

We should attend undergraduate Medicine or Physiotherapy students both equally, but we are more sensitive with the first group. Firstly because we do not have previous experience with them and on the other hand is because of the complexity of the Medicine studies. The length of Physiotherapy studies is four years meanwhile the Medicine ones is six, allowing its graduates hold also a Master in Medicine (1). Here we find the most important reason for pay more attention with them.

However, our interest is focused on supporting students showing them the main health sciences sources of information to might fit well but some of them filled of complicated topics that require some explanations to be used efficiently. In other cases, the focus is on showing the benefits that user can obtain from some bibliographic tools: how to perform a search, how to save the results of a search, or how to get the results of a search on mobile devices has become a requirement for futures researchers. In many cases they have evident difficulties in the assimilation of some concepts like Open Access or author's rights, because of the common believe than information on Internet is free to be used and free of charges.

The specific content of each planned unit is according with the main objective of these training sessions:

Session 1 – The main characteristics of the bibliographic search process: determining the correct keywords and limits of the specific topic; the list of available information resources in health sciences and their content; selecting the most appropriated source of information according to the TFG subject and, finally, citing the bibliography according to Vancouver style.

Session 2 – Searching databases (taking PubMed as example): logical operators (AND, OR NOT); truncation; exact phrase; filters or limits; advanced search and the thesaurus (MESH) as a search tool. With the comprehension and practicing, students will be able to search any database in their future.

Session 3 – Citing properly the bibliography: practice with Mendeley -the UAB bibliographic management tool- The well done bibliographic reference it is essential to recognize other author's research and to support the own work

Session 4 – Author's Copyright and the TFG: students have to understand how the Spanish copyright law affects their TFG, which is going to be accessible to everyone through the repository according to Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona open access institutional policy:

*“PhD Students and other University students also have to deposit their research projects, Masters theses and final degree projects in the [UAB digital] repository.” (2)*

All the support material to these sessions is available at the UAB institutional repository, Dipòsit Digital de Documents (DDD), where every document have a permanent URL (3).

The biggest handicap for been successful is the own structure of the UAB Faculty of Medicine. Despite these training sessions were taught by several librarians, Teaching Units libraries include, the Medicine students who are preparing their TFG are distributed among four decentralized Teaching Units located in the major hospitals in the Barcelona area:

- The Santa Creu i Sant Pau Hospital (Barcelona)
- The Vall d'Hebron Hospital (Barcelona)
- The Germans Trias i Pujol Universitari Hospital (Badalona)
- The Parc Taulí Hospital (Sabadell)

It is very important to disseminate the same content at each Teaching Unit, and a common program designed by all participant librarians comes to help us.

## Results & Discussion

During the last training sessions, every Teaching Unit took a poll among the students in order to assess contents and to know their opinion. With obtained results we have made a report that take a general view of its success. These kinds of surveys are very useful to be able to improve in the future, if it is necessary.

The UAB Library Service developed a three-question survey about the training sessions:

Question 1: They have been useful for new knowledge acquisition

Question 2: Clear explanations

Question 3: In general, the sessions have been useful

Students have valued these questions in a 5-point scale, where number 1 means “I do not agree” and 5 means “I’m totally agree”. In addition, it is very important obtained feedback from our students, so we considered it would be useful for us leave an open question where the students could write their opinions and suggestions. Certainly it is very useful for us but it is not interesting for this paper and we do not develop it here.

Analysing the results, we find the best average on points 4 and 5, where we have found that the 83% of students were mainly agree that seminars were useful for them, and with the same percentage considered that they acquired new knowledge thanks to the seminars. Finally, the 95% of students think that the explanations were very clear, recognizing the work of the librarians as trainers. (See Table 2)

Meanwhile, the worst punctuations are for points 1 and 2. These answers are corresponding to the students who have considered that the contents of these seminars were something known previously (2%) and, for this reason the 4% considered that the seminars were useless for them. (See Table 2)

To sum up, the total average is between the points 4 and 5, indicating a high satisfaction level among the students. (See Table 1)

Tables and figures

Table 1

Teaching period	No of sessions	Total attendants last session	Total polls last session	Questions	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺	Average
Sept. 2015 / Feb. 2016	19	300	213	1	0	5	31	90	87	4,22
				2	0	1	11	80	121	4,51
				3	2	6	27	84	94	4,23

Table 2

	1 ☹	2	3	4	5 ☺	TOTAL
<b>New knowledge acquisition</b>	0%	2%	15%	42%	41%	100%
<b>Clear explanations</b>	0%	0%	5%	38%	57%	100%
<b>Useful sessions</b>	1%	3%	13%	39%	44%	100%

## Conclusions

We will be very brief with conclusions because after three years having successful experiences among Physiotherapy students training sessions we are satisfied. Nowadays we have started with undergraduate Medicine students and, because of this we have an initial feedback from these students and our conclusions are preliminary.

The organization of the Medicine Faculty in a different Teaching Units is a handicap for us. The Physiotherapy students are concentrating in sole Teaching Unit and we do not have problems with them, all the while the Medicine students are distributed among four Teaching Units located in the major hospitals in Barcelona area. The contents of our training courses is common but try to find the balance among the different Faculty of Medicine sites is our biggest challenge. In this sense set up good communication between the Teaching Coordinators is essential.

Despite of the training sessions were voluntary, six hundred and seventy students from all Teaching Units followed the seminars. We have collected two hundred and thirteen polls from the three hundred students who attended the last session.

The high level of satisfaction indicates that we are on the right track, so the suggestions compiled through the open question –not analysed here- must help us to improve the weaknesses of these training sessions, with the teaching staff and Faculty administration collaboration.

As we have found, we are convinced that this kind of information literacy is a suitable way to train Medicine bachelor students in acquiring bibliographic search skills. To sum up, these training sessions have been a successful experience; students have valued them as useful to carry out their TFG.

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