Syllabus

Library and Database Instruction
for
Center for Health Care Ethics
Saint Louis University

Spring semester 2001

Instructors:
Dean E. Cody, Ph.D., M.A.L.S.
Mary Krieger, M.L.I.S.
Pat McNary, M.A.L.S.

Office hours: 9am to 5pm M - F
Office phone: 577-8606

Health Sciences Center Library
Saint Louis University
1402 S. Grand Blvd.
Saint Louis, MO. 63104

The primary goal of this course is to examine a variety of online indexes relevant to the research of students in the health care ethics program. A further goal is to provide the students with an understanding of the structure of databases in the hopes that they will have the skills to navigate through the same databases as software changes and the skills to navigate new databases that appear.

We will achieve these goals by means of the following objectives. Each class will proceed with a demonstration by the instructors of the features of the search software, followed by class participation in conducting searches in the system. Below, in the section "Class Objectives" we highlight some of the objectives we will accomplish during that class session. This is not intended as an exclusive list. Each in class search example is designed to broaden the students' familiarity with concepts in the health care ethics/bioethics field. We encourage you to complete the searches provided in the text. In our view practice is essential to developing your skills as a searcher.

Textbook: The instruction manual is a compilation of explanatory handouts developed by reference librarians, additional comments by Dr. Cody, search exercises developed by reference librarians, and information provided by the database developers. This manual is provided to the students with the compliments of the reference staff.

Overview

Jan. 18 Introduction to MERLIN, discussion of search strategy
Feb. 1 Ovid Web hands-on. WebCT
Feb. 15 BioethicsLine. MEDLINE tutorial
March 1 MEDLINE. Mid-term exam
March 12-17 Spring break

March 22  Philosopher's Index. Projects issued

March 29  Current Contents

April 5  Academic Universe, very basic exposure to doing legal research

April 12  Easter break begins the 13th

April 19  Final exam

Class Objectives

Jan. 16  Introduction: Library’s homepage, MERLIN, discussion of search strategy

As a result of this class the student will be able to:

- Locate at least one feature available on our homepage at the instructor's request;

- Explain what MERLIN stands for;

- Use MERLIN to search for a book or journal.

Feb. 1  Ovid web hands-on.

As a result of this class the student will be able to:

- Restate at least one distinction between Ovid software and features of the database it searches;

- Use the Boolean operators to establish logical relationships between lines in the search;

- Perform a search, then use the “citation manager” to email or print the search history and selected citations.

Feb 15  BioethicsLine

As a result of this class the student will be able to:

- Limit the parameters in their search exercises;

- Apply the Bioethics Thesaurus to the searches in BioethicsLine;

- Modify their search to increase its efficiency.

March 1  MEDLINE
As a result of this class the student will be able to:

- Utilize the "tools" feature to identify subject headings on which to search;
- Demonstrate the "explode" feature;
- Formulate a search to effectively retrieve information in response to an ethical problem.

March 22  **Philosopher's Index**

As a result of this class the student will be able to:

- Utilize SilverPlatter software to retrieve health care ethics citations;
- Retrieve citations published prior to 1973 (the beginning date of BioethicsLine);
- Critique this database for its usefulness in the health care ethics and bioethics subject area.

March 29  **Current Contents**

As a result of this class the student will be able to:

- Use truncation, synonyms, spelling variations in searching this database, lacking a controlled vocabulary, to effectively retrieve citations;
- Utilize the "save search history" and the "Auto Alert" features;
- Develop a search of a complex issue incorporating the features unique to this database.

April 5  **Academic Universe**

The student will be able to:

- Find law review articles, court opinions, and statutes in response to their research needs;
- Use available software options to limit the parameters of their search;
- Critique using this database that is full-text and lacks a controlled vocabulary.
Requirements

The chairman of the Center for Health Care Ethics has stipulated that attendance is mandatory and that students must pass the course with a grade of A.

The instructors and the chairman of the Center have determined that to earn a grade of A each student must earn 90%, or better, of the total possible points. You will earn points by taking a midterm exam, completing a group project, and taking a final exam.

Midterm exam, 30 points. This test consists of short answer questions and a problem requiring you to perform a search of a relevant database studied up to this point in the class, retrieve citations including specific fields in a bibliographic database, and email the results and the search history to me (for safety's sake copy yourself on the email).

Group project, 40 points. For this assignment members of the class form a group acting as the ethics committee of a hospital or health care system. The instructors provide several case reports having ethical implications from which the group chooses one to research. You are to write a brief report of the experience (including, among others, a statement of the developmental stages your thinking went through, and a statement of the ethical problem involved), conduct a search of all relevant databases (you must include legal information), retrieve information and include that information in a typed report handed in to the instructors.

Final exam, 50 points. This test consists of short answer questions and problems asking you to use a relevant database to retrieve the requested information, include the asked for fields in a bibliographic record and email the results to the instructors.