

Using Text Analysis to Inform Outreach Efforts

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Background

In 2019 curators in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University began a project to identify underserved programs and specific courses that would benefit from primary source instruction provided by the department. The project team decided to use text analysis as a means for analyzing and comparing course learning outcomes and syllabi.

Methodology

BYU | BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY Expected Learning Outcomes

- Compiled “expected learning outcomes” from the university’s learning outcomes website and converted them into text files.
- Analyzed text files using Voyant Tools to identify departments using language related to primary sources in their “expected learning outcomes.” Focused on the terms “librar*,” “archiv*,” and “research*”.
- Results indicated that a follow-up analysis looking at syllabi for identified courses and programs was merited.
- Compiled syllabi from the university’s syllabi website and converted them into text files.
- Analyzed syllabi using Voyant Tools. Focused on the terms “librar*,” “archiv*,” and “research*”.

Results

- The term “research*” appeared more often than “librar*” and “archiv*”.
- Textual analysis using Voyant Tools resulted in a similar curve showing relative frequency of the terms “research*,” “librar*,” and “archiv*” in the total corpus for learning outcomes (figure 1) and syllabi (figure 2).
- The History and Family History learning outcomes and syllabi used all three terms more frequently than the German learning outcomes and syllabi.

Findings

- Text analysis appears to be a promising alternative to syllabus mining for identifying departments and programs that might benefit from deeper integration with Special Collections.
- Based on our limited sample, performing text analysis on learning outcomes appears to give similar results as performing text analysis on syllabi.

Future Research

In order to confirm the results of this preliminary study we need to run our tests on a larger sample of programs. Additional insights about program scaffolding based on compiled syllabi may also be useful in identifying individual faculty members.

Sources

- Erin Alcock and Kathryn Rose, “Find the Gap: Evaluating Library Instruction Reach Using Syllabi,” *Journal of Information Literacy* 10, no. 1 (2016): 87-88
- Brigham Young University, “Expected Learning Outcomes,” Brigham Young University, <https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/> (accessed July 9, 2021)
- Keven M. Jeffery et al., “Digging in the Mines: Mining Course Syllabi in Search of the Library,” *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 12, no. 1 (2017): 76

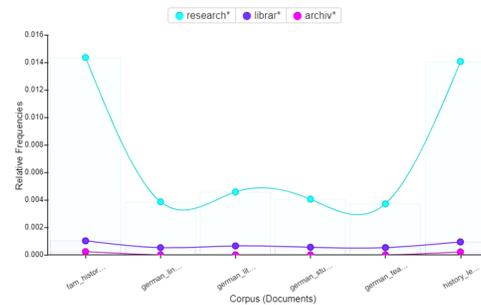


Figure 1. Learning outcome term relative frequency

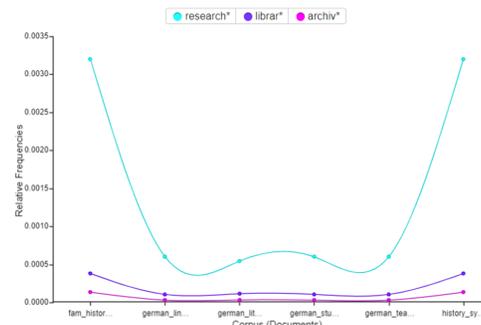


Figure 2. Syllabi term relative frequency