

Janine on Amazon and Librarians

JP: If you use something like Amazon, how do you generally use that kind of a resource for finding something that you would use for a research project?

J: Basically I like Amazon for finding recent scholarship, so . . . I anticipate if I'm searching for something I'm going to get lots of the popular stuff that's not appropriate for scholarly work, but Amazon is pretty good about . . . even having forthcoming stuff up there, and so I feel like that is sometimes the better place to go to find the latest scholarship than the library. The other thing that I like about Amazon, I mean, first of all, it seems to have a very good search function, whereas the library, I feel like sometimes it is hit or miss because really my understanding of the way it works, and I could be wrong about this, but I feel like it only is searching on whatever keywords some library person has used to describe that work, whereas Amazon is increasingly doing whole text searches and searching reviews. . . . It seems like the search function is better. The other thing that I like about it is a lot of times it'll pull up stuff from other disciplines that I wouldn't get word of mouth, so it might bring up stuff from history or human interface design or something like that, that I might not find any other way. There is some wading through because you have to go through all the stuff that's not relevant or whatever . . . and a lot of times, the other thing that'll happen on Amazon is I might be . . . looking up the scholar whose work I'm familiar with and I'll realize that they've got this new book that is just out that I had no idea was just coming out, and I'll be like so and so just has a new book out, whereas I wouldn't necessarily sit down and think, you know, I wonder if John Smith has written a new book lately. So yeah. Does that answer your question?

JP: Yup. Absolutely.

. . .

J: Oh, and I should say that the other thing that I do . . . and I think I've told you about this: I often use Amazon in conjunction with the library home page, so I'll search on Amazon first and then I'll plug it in to our library to see if I can get it through the University of Illinois system, and I told one of the librarians that and she was horrified.

JP: [Laughs]

J: But what are you gonna do.