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# *Writer's Statement about "Digital Literacy and the Making of Meaning: How Format Affects Interpretation in the University of Central Florida Libraries Search Interface"*

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As a multilingual writer, language and interpretation are a very conscious element of my daily life. In the digital age, we are surrounded with new forms of communication—languages—and unique contexts for interpretation. We may not think about it, but we all possess a diverse number of literacies that we use on a daily basis. This consciousness has guided my interest in mediums of communication, and how they affect meaning and interpretation. I was set on the path of exploring literacies while still in my first English class at UCF: Dr. Steffen Guenzel's ENC 1101. Then, I began to embark upon a research project for my ENC 1102 class with Professor Jacob Stewart. The first step building towards the research paper was through delving deeper into genres as methods of communication. This really cemented my interest in exploring literacy across genres and the implications of digitization on preconceived notions previously built on textual-based literacies.

In the process of working towards a concrete research question, we took a two-week library sciences course as part of our ENC 1102 class. This proved to be a transformative experience, learning from a librarian firsthand what kinds of tools were available to a researcher through the library. The librarian guided us through the use of the library search and the various ways one may manipulate the search tool in order to find applicable results. This experience helped shift my focus more specifically to the library. I found it to be the ideal place to explore this intersection between textual resources (books on the shelf) and their digital counterparts. I also became very much aware of the constraints, both positive and negative, on access through that medium. Finally, during the development of my annotated bibliography and after conferencing closely with Professor Stewart, I was able to focus on a single research question: What effect does the UCF library search format have on the meaning we make from the results?

As my research method, I chose to conduct a rhetorical analysis of the search page, because other methods of data collection were not entirely applicable to this particular question. It turns out this was a unique choice and in need of being well-qualified. I focused on conducting my own

primary research on the search page, and then using secondary sources to help me interpret my observations and allow me to draw some meaningful, research-based conclusions. I also conducted an interview with a UCF librarian to give me further insight into the professional perspective on my questions.

I felt my research was very productive, identifying a lot of elements that affected search behavior and thus the results obtained from the search. My work shed light on the power of small and seemingly inconsequential rhetorical moves in an online setting. I also sought to shed light on questions of access and control when it came to utilizing such tools as web search effectively. My research would suggest that, while we possess all the necessary tools to be successful in evolving digital environments, it is necessary to embark upon a conscious pursuit of acquiring and adapting the capabilities to operate in such environments so as to gain access to them in a full and meaningful way.

Although limited in scope, I believe this research has the potential for wider ranging implications in the fields of library sciences, literacy studies, and search technology. As we move closer to digitization of the library, it is prudent to explore the relationship between users and portals of access, and what influence do these portals exert on initiating and directing patterns of behavior in their spaces. I would hope that my research's invitation to deeper exploration entices interest among students of these respective fields and an appetite for continuation of this vital conversation.