

EBSCO
Discovery Service

Advancing Student Success with a Discovery Service

A Guide for Community College Libraries



Community college libraries face an array of challenges; it could be argued more so than their four-year counterparts. And yet, the influence the library has on students' success is undeniable. Many students attending community college are either working full or part-time jobs while pursuing their degrees. Some of these same students have plans of attaining an undergraduate degree or are the first generation to attend higher education. The need to provide these individuals with methods and platforms that can help build information literacy skills is vital. Nevertheless, the library is simultaneously tasked with teaching research skills, vying for budget, and proving their value to both students and staff. So, the million-dollar question is – how can this be done efficiently, effectively and consistently?

This guide looks specifically at the challenges of building research skills in today's community college students and how leveraging a discovery service can enhance information literacy for students while increasing resource usage for the library.

If there is one word to describe the student body at a community college, aspirational is among the top. Most of these students aim to complete an associates degree, while some even look to entering an undergraduate degree once completing their associates. **One out of every five community college students attending full time (20.6%) were employed full time.**



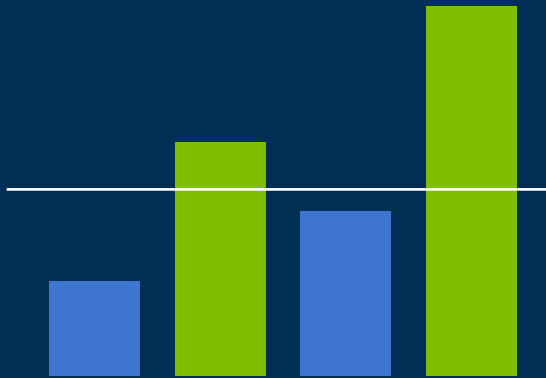
What is even more impressive is that 2 out of every 3 students will study to achieve their degree while simultaneously working.

Source: <https://www.thinkimpact.com/community-college-statistics>

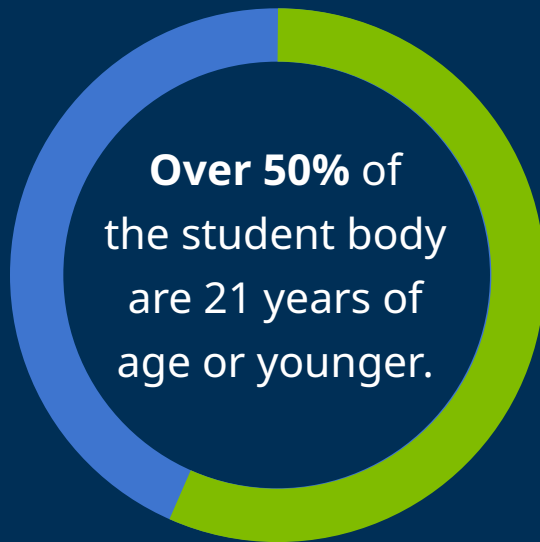
While these students have educational aspirations there is a surprising disconnect between the perception of academic preparedness and the reality. In fact, a poll by the American Associates of Community Colleges found that more than 80% of students believe they were academically prepared with more than 60% of the polled individuals needing to take one or more developmental educational courses. Why is this?

The Google Generation – Two Sides of a Coin





The average age of the community college student is **27 years old**.



Over 50% of the student body are 21 years of age or younger.

The first generation of true digital natives, this cohort shows adaptability with technology – no matter how new or complicated. It is this adaptability which creates the impression that today's community college student has a superior user experience expectation (UX).

But, being well versed in technology and UX does not make a well-versed researcher. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Technology, especially the Internet, has built poor information literacy skills in today's students; for example, a student may not fully understand the different types of information resources and distinguish 'good' from 'bad'. As a result, there is a significant gap in what information skills a student graduates with and what is expected within undergraduate programs or even in their future job.

Internet Influence

For community college students, the Internet has become the primary means of obtaining information, shaping students' perceptions that learning and research can take place anytime, anywhere. Internet search results and evaluating search results have created interesting UX behaviors in students, some examples include:

- ✓ Tabbed Approach
- ✓ Bounce Approach
- ✓ Random Access
- ✓ Visually-Oriented
- ✓ Social media, apps for texting and social interactions
- ✓ Accustomed to the “instantaneity” of commercial platforms
- ✓ No separation from technology in their everyday life

Mobile

The impact of mobile through the formative years of community college students has influenced a portion of their information-gathering behavior. From shopping to communication to video usage to learning – mobile reigns supreme.



According to a 2015 Pearson Education Survey, **75%** of high school students believe using mobile in the classroom will better match their learning style.

As a library, the mobile-first mindset will certainly affect the research behavior of students, coupled with the fact that many maybe working on class projects during lulls during their work hours or after library hours. Ensuring that there is a mobile component (with the best approach being a dedicated mobile app experience) to enable research anytime, anywhere will help satisfy learners' UX needs.

Library Challenges





If you are a librarian reading this, you are very aware of information literacy. After all, this was an area of focus during your degree studies and is also the challenge you are faced with every day. Teaching information literacy is one thing, having the right tools in place to anticipate user intent to help foster information literacy is another thing.

Impressions of the Library

Chances are, when it comes to library onboarding with the student population, you have very limited time and reach to effectively and efficiently demonstrate and present on all that the library offers. An inadequate amount of education time, coupled with lacking information literacy skills can cause unfavorable impressions of the library. Impressions of your library also directly affect your ability to demonstrate the value of your library.

Limited Staffing

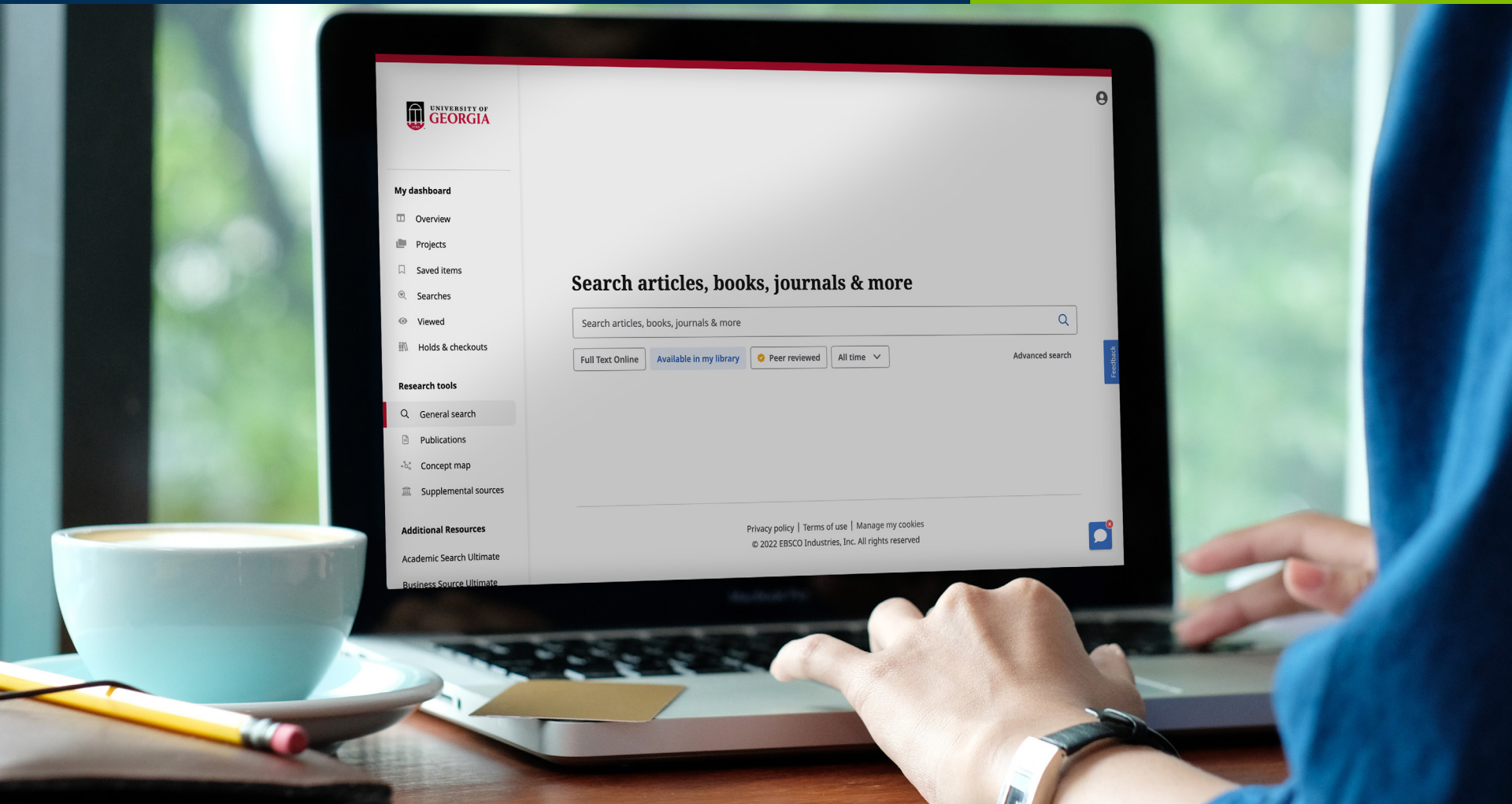
Another common challenge for the library is insufficient staffing. This leads many library staff members to juggle multiple roles and wear multiple hats – from learning code for their website, serving as the marketing and promotions department, and providing training on resources and platforms (on top of doing their job-specific duties). Limited staffing can affect not only the users of the library but also the tools and content of the library.



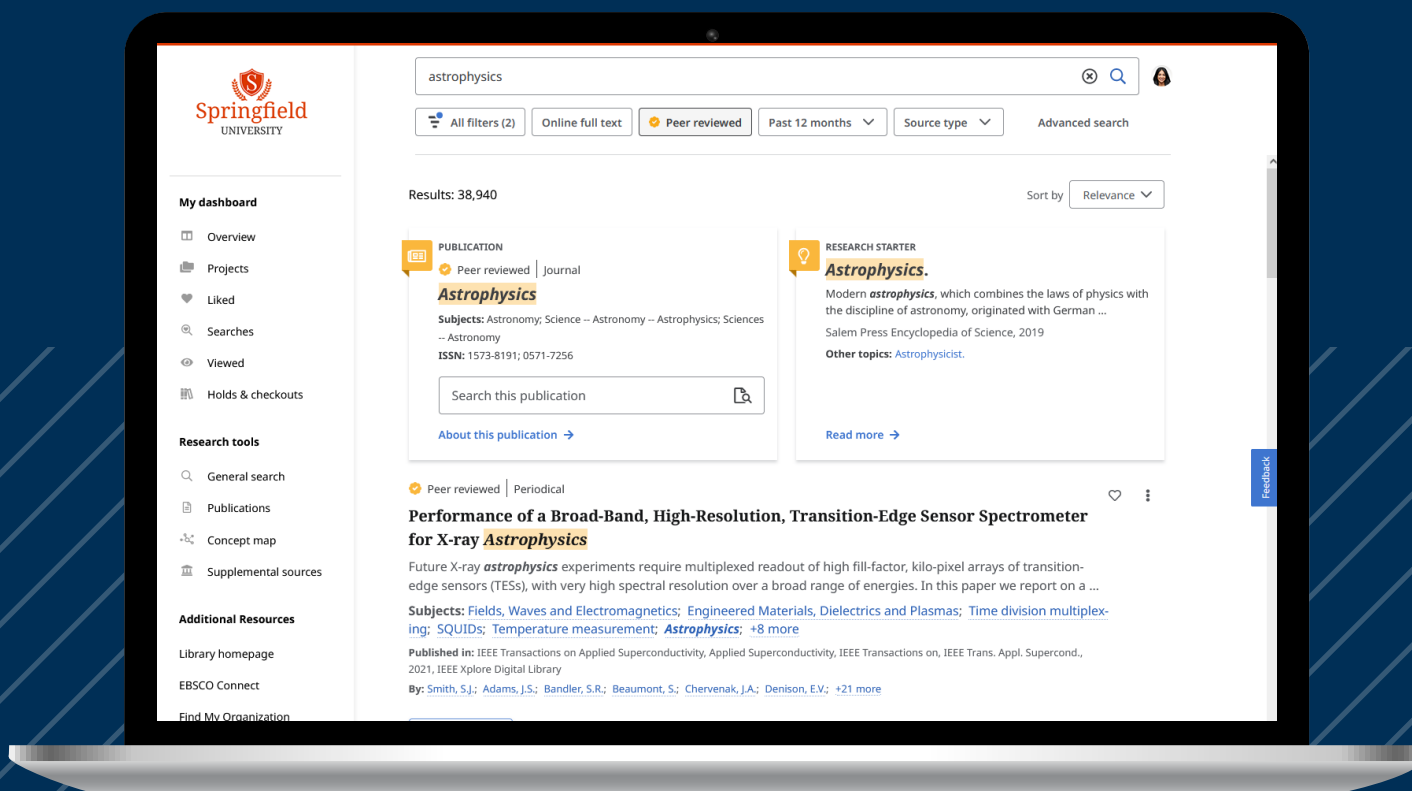
Inadequate Search Technology

Most students are accustomed to starting their search (both as a consumer and as a researcher) through a single search box, and over the years, search technology has expanded to better anticipate users' needs, and library search technology must match. Utilization of a discovery platform during the research process can contribute to building information literacy skills. The functionality of a discovery platform such as EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS), not only meets the UX expectations of a college student but also helps to improve their information literacy.

How a Discovery Service Can Help



A discovery service provides library users a single point of entry into the library's collections. Just as a supermarket is an easy experience open to all that spares the shopper from having to go to the butcher, the baker and so on, the discovery service saves the user from having to bounce between various collections of databases and resources, potentially getting lost and frustrated. It takes the library's catalog, databases, e-books, magazines, videos and music files, and any type of digital content and makes them available through a single search index.



Search Technology

Essentially, EDS is a learning environment. The “brain” of EDS is the Knowledge Graph. It is thanks to the Knowledge Graph that library users can access expert information even if they are not expert researchers. The Knowledge Graph maps new datasets that incorporate natural language, extensive subject vocabularies and a vast array of synonyms and concepts. This enhances search and relevance rankings for EDS.

Relevancy

Like all search engines, EDS begins by finding records that contain the words that match the user’s search query. Some matching fields are considered more important than others for relevance scoring purposes and are weighted to take advantage of their relative importance.

The fields below are the most influential fields used in relevance ranking calculations and are listed in order of influence.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| ✓ Subject heading | ✓ Abstract |
| ✓ Title | ✓ Authors |
| ✓ Author-supplied keywords | ✓ Full-text |

Additional metadata fields, beyond those listed above, also contribute to relevance scoring.

Specific content attributes of matching records may also contribute to relevance scoring. These content attributes include:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| ✓ Publication date | ✓ Peer reviewed or not |
| ✓ Publication type | ✓ Document length |

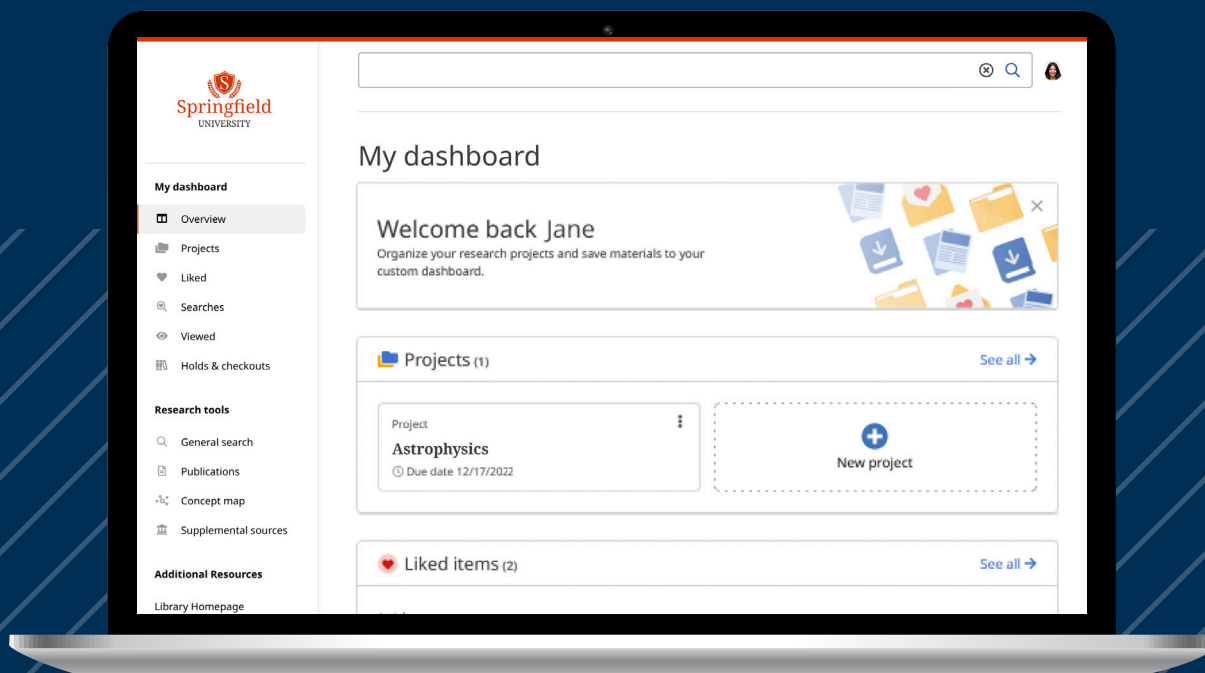
As an area of active development, we continually tune and improve the EDS search technology to give users the results they want for every search, in every context.

Intuitive UI

An intuitive UI does more than just look good. It meets user experience expectations but also helps to foster information literacy skills and helps students build better connections in their research. EDS offers the following features and functionality that can take research to the next level.

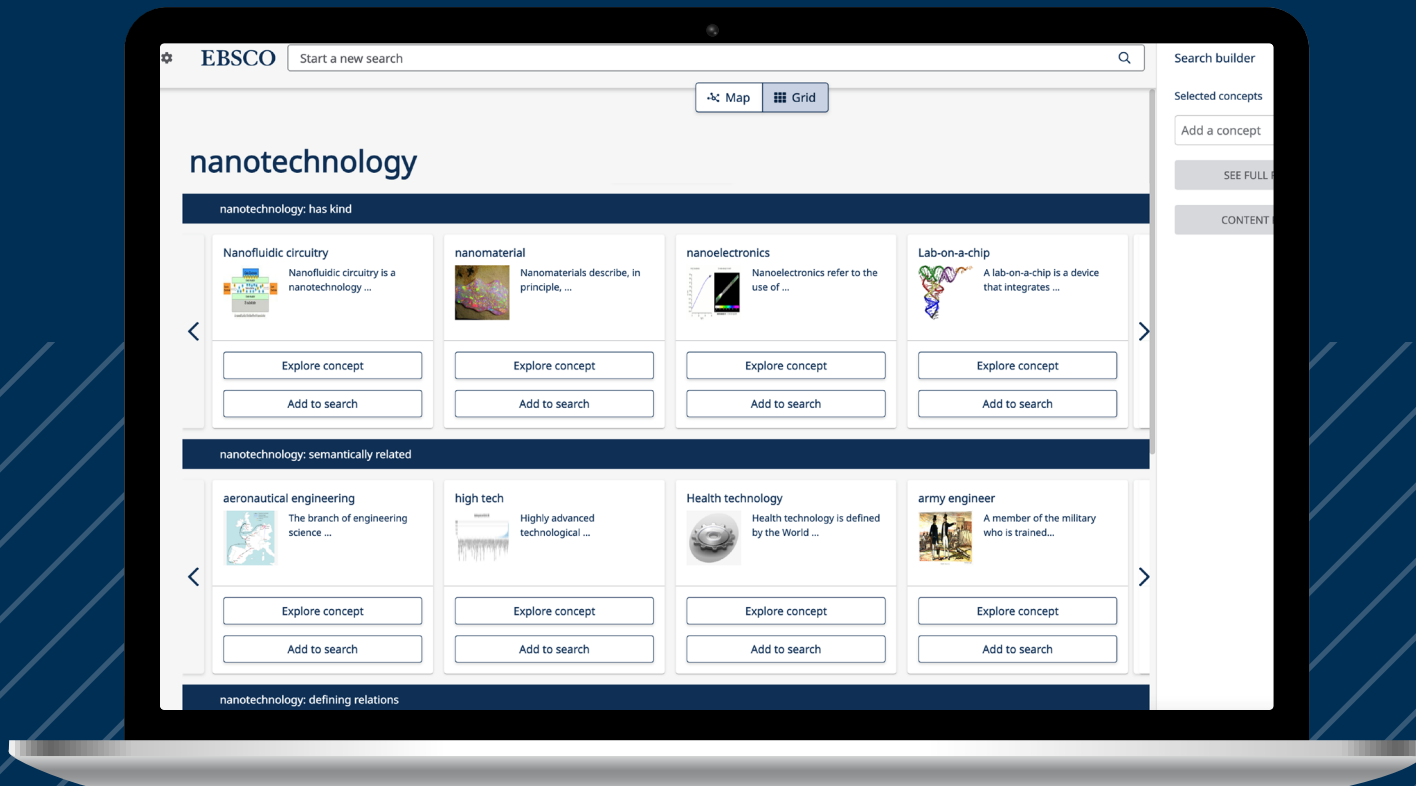


Personalized dashboards - The dashboard serves as the student's virtual personalized "home" in the library, where folders can be kept, users can see searches and projects they created, and liked items can be "stored."





Visual aids – A discovery service that offers visual representation of related subjects and concepts helps students further explore their topic of interest and make new connections across related topics.





Citation tools – Students citing articles from EDS can choose their preferred citation format, copy the citations, export them to tools such as Zotero™ or NoodleTools™, or email them. They can share to Google Drive™, Google Classroom™, or create a link to share on other platforms.



Accessing full-text - Users can also click to open the full text of an article in PDF or HTML formats. With the PDF viewer, the user can cite, share, and add to a project, just like in the results list. Within the viewer, users can also see how many copies are available to the library, and whether the title is currently in use.



Accessing e-books - EDS also has a fully accessible e-book viewing experience for EPUB (HTML) and PDF e-books. The viewer lets users cite, share, and download whole e-books, or select individual chapters from the table of contents. Users also search for terms directly in the e-book viewer.



Mobile

Leveraging a discovery mobile app matches your digital natives' UX needs. With an enhanced mobile experience, a student's research can be quickly accessed and saved, allowing progress to be made anywhere, anytime. Users can discover new content based on previous activity and take advantage of mobile device technology such as biometric authentication and voice to-text searching. They can also keep articles organized with cross-device synchronization and share resources with friends.

Conclusion

The functionality of a discovery platform such as EBSCO Discovery Service, not only meets the UX expectations of today's community college students but also leverages an intuitive UI and enhanced search technology to help build connections in research and grow information literacy skills. Enable students to improve their research skills while simultaneously growing usage of your library's resources (and reputation).

[Learn more](#)