

### **Indicative Abstract**

Lancaster, F.W. (1998). Chapter 7: Abstracts: Types and Functions. In his *Indexing and Abstracting in Theory and Practice* (94-106). Champaign, IL: University of Illinois.

Distinctions are made between indicative and informative abstracts, with discussion on characteristics and purpose of each. The type and format to be used for various audiences, situations, and types of works is examined, with examples provided. The purpose of the abstract is discussed, with focus on its function in facilitating selection, substituting for actual reading, and its role in computer-based retrieval. Discussion of abstracts developed mainly for computer-based retrieval, such as the mini-abstract and telegraphic concludes the chapter. (CCH)

## **Informative Abstract**

Meadows, J., Yates-Mercer, P., & McVey, D. (1997). The training of library and information staff in the handling of online electronic journals. *Journal of Information Science*, 23:2. 163-167.

With the proliferation of online journals, the accessibility and ability to assess online journal publications by information professionals is called into question. Students at three universities were studied as they participated in assessing and accessing content of electronic publications in order to determine whether the training of information professionals in the handling of electronic journals is necessary. Students created the journal InfoTrain by inputting abstracts from Master's dissertations and reports on third-year undergraduate projects. Student comments on the abstracts consisted of three main complaints; grammar and style, layout and structure, and the inclusion of unnecessary detail or irrelevant material. Students were then asked to assess the readability of the abstract and its ability to convey the contents of the dissertation, as well as compare the browsing and searching capabilities of InfoTrain with two other electronic journals. Data from the study shows the ability to assess electronic articles is on par with its print counterpart, and that accessibility increases with a simpler user interface. Some training of library and information professionals will be necessary to assist customers in navigating efficiently through online journals. (CCH)

## **Structured Abstract**

Meadows, J., Yates-Mercer, P., & McVey, D. (1997). The training of library and information staff in the handling of online electronic journals. *Journal of Information Science*, 23:2. 163-167.

*Objective:* To determine whether there is a need to train information staff in the access and assessment of online publications.

*Participants:* Students enrolled in library and information courses at Loughborough University, City University in London, and South Australia University.

*Design:* Using abstracts from Master's dissertations and reports on third-year undergraduate projects, the online publication InfoTrain was created. Students were asked to assess the information and accessibility of three electronic publications; InfoTrain and journals from the Institute of Physics (IOP) and the Institute of Electrical Engineers (IEE).

*Results:* When assessing the quality of the abstracts, the three most common criticisms were grammar and style, layout and structure, and the inclusion of unnecessary detail or irrelevant material. The majority of students were able to correctly identify hypertext links within the IOP (92.7%), IEE (88.2%), and InfoTrain (83.3%) journals. Hypertext links to other documents were less easily recognized, particularly in the IEE (with 38.2% correctly identifying the outside links). Most users were also able to correctly acknowledge their inability to add links in IOP (92.7%), IEE (73.5%), and InfoTrain (95.2%). Finally, while students were able to correctly answer if the journals had other facilities in IEE (79.4%) and InfoTrain (76.2%), only 41.5% answered correctly for the IOP.

*Conclusions:* The ability to assess content is on par with that of print, and accessibility increases with a simpler user interface. Therefore, some training in the handling of electronic publication is necessary for information staff. (CCH)