



Characterization of the research guidance service in scientific databases

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Submitted on: 10/09/2023. Approved on: 02/26/2025. Published on: 09/22/2025.

ABSTRACT

Libraries offer a range of information literacy services as part of the traditional suite of reference services. At the Sectoral Library of the Centro de Ciências da Saúde – Medicina, the most frequently requested service is guidance for research in scientific databases. This service encompasses the development of complex search strategies and user training in the effective use of these databases. Accordingly, this article aims to characterize this specific service. The study is exploratory in nature and adopts a case study approach based on data extracted from library service records between 2021 and 2022. During this period, the number of consultations increased by 53%. Master's students are the primary users of the service, and across all academic levels—undergraduate, master's, and doctoral—the nursing program stands out as the most frequently served. This trend is also reflected in the research topics: “nursing” was among the most common descriptors in both years, followed by “Covid-19,” “primary health care,” and “child.” The findings underscore the library's essential role in enhancing the quality of academic research. Users are supported in their research efforts, develop greater autonomy in constructing search expressions, and acquire the skills to navigate scientific databases more effectively.

Keywords: search strategies; information literacy; information needs; information retrieval; reference service.

INTRODUÇÃO

Each field of knowledge has established norms for scholarly communication and dissemination. In the health sciences, journal articles have long served as the primary, medium for exchanging research findings. However, the vast array of information sources along with the overwhelming volume of scientific publications—can make it difficult for researchers to efficiently locate and filter content that genuinely meets their informational needs.

Within this context, the most frequently requested service offered by the Setorial Library of the Centro de Ciências da Saúde – Medicina (BSCCSM in the Portuguese acronym) is guidance for research in scientific databases¹. This classic information literacy service involves librarians meeting individually with students to understand their research topics, collaboratively develop search strategies, and execute searches across all relevant databases to retrieve documents related to the subject. Throughout this process, the instructional skills of the information professional are essential, as the ultimate goal of the service is to go beyond simply retrieving relevant documents; it is to foster the researcher’s understanding of search methods, thereby enabling them to become more autonomous in their future studies.

Faced with inadequate information literacy and the frustration of unproductive search results, students from the Centro de Ciências da Saúde (CCS) increasingly turn to the library for support. In light of the high demand for this service, this study aims to characterize the research guidance provided for scientific database use, drawing on data from consultations conducted by BSCCSM librarians in 2021 and 2022.

This study is justified by its objective to develop a detailed profile of the service and to identify prevalent research areas based on the most frequently used descriptors, offering BSCCSM valuable insight into the informational needs of its user base. From a more strategic perspective, the study may also help identify areas of limited engagement, for instance, academic programs that make less use of the service, thus guiding the library in targeting outreach efforts and strengthening partnerships with academic departments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents reflections on digital literacy in relation to information literacy as practiced in libraries. Understanding these two concepts helps clarify the nature of the service provided at the BSCCSM.

Beginning with digital literacy, it is defined as “[...] é muito mais do que saber ler e escrever ou navegar na internet [...] consiste em saber utilizar esses recursos para aplicá-los no cotidiano, em benefício do próprio usuário” (Moreira, 2012, p. 3)². That is, it constitutes a

1 Technical information on the content of the consultation service can be found in:

CATIVELLI, A.; OLIVEIRA, G. Metodologia para elaboração de estratégias de busca em saúde: relato de experiência da biblioteca setorial do Centro de Ciências da Saúde – Medicina na Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. *BiblioCanto*, Natal, v. 10, n. 1, p. 20–47, 2024. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.21680/2447-7842.2024v10n1ID34873>. Accessed on: Sept. 13, 2024.

2 Translation: “[...] much more than knowing how to read, write, or navigate the internet [...] it involves knowing how to use these resources and apply them in everyday life, for the user’s own benefit” (Moreira, 2012, p. 3, editorial translation).

[...] competência derivada do uso social que o sujeito faz de sua capacidade de codificar e decodificar os signos (letras, números, ícones, emojis, emoticons etc.) presentes nos artefatos digitais, propiciando interação e interatividade (Pimentel, 2018, p. 12)³

A library consultation focused solely on digital literacy might introduce users to databases and demonstrate basic filters and functionalities.

However, during consultations at the BSCCSM, users frequently report that digital literacy alone is insufficient for locating the bibliographic materials required for their academic research. This scenario underscores the need for health sciences libraries to offer services that go beyond basic digital familiarity and align with the goals of information literacy.

Information literacy involves the autonomous capacity for lifelong learning. This capacity can be enhanced with the support of information professionals and educators who foster the habit of information-seeking as a foundation for constructing knowledge (Dudziak, 2008; Goez; Araújo, 2018).

Information literacy is acquired when individuals develop the essential skills to locate the information they need (Gasque, 2010, p. 84). In an increasingly digital environment, this task is not always straightforward. It is important to emphasize that the ability to identify and select relevant documents must evolve in step with rapid technological changes.

Along these lines, Evanfelista et al. (2008, p. 78) observe that information literacy encompasses skills related to the use and mastery of technologies for accessing information, from recognizing the need for information to understanding sources, developing search strategies, and retrieving information.

It becomes clear that information literacy calls for users to be active and critical agents in how they use and interpret information. Moreover, it

[...] mobiliza e integra saberes – e não somente atitudes – pertinentes a cada situação em particular, a qual passa por operações mentais complexas, e que permitem determinar e realizar uma ação adequada à situação. A competência em informação necessita, para este fim, ser construída em formação, o que estabelece a profunda relação entre educação e desenvolvimento da competência em informação (Vitorino; Piantola, 2020, p. 56)⁴.

This perspective highlights the essential role librarians play in the document search process, especially in a landscape where databases are continually updated and search technologies are constantly evolving.

3 Translation: “[...] competence derived from the social use that an individual makes of their ability to encode and decode signs (letters, numbers, icons, emojis, emoticons, etc.) present in digital artifacts, enabling interaction and interactivity” (Pimentel, 2018, p. 12, editorial translation).

4 Translation: “[...] mobilizes and integrates knowledge—not just attitudes—relevant to each specific situation, involving complex mental operations that enable the determination and execution of appropriate actions. For this reason, information literacy must be developed through training, establishing a profound link between education and the development of information literacy” (Vitorino; Piantola, 2020, p. 56, editorial translation).

In the context of the health sciences, the librarian plays a crucial role as an information intermediary in an environment saturated with data, research, and practices that demand precision and rigor. In this regard, Alves and Reis (2020, p. 252)⁵ argue that information literacy in the health sciences encompasses:

diferentes processos e ações, alguns dos quais resultantes da educação e comunicação em saúde, nos quais um indivíduo ou coletivo, mediados por um profissional, instituição e/ou sistema de saúde (público e/ou privado), possam otimizar seus conhecimentos, habilidades e atitudes (informáticas, comunicativas e informativas), para lidar de forma adequada, eficiente, crítica e ética, com a informação para saúde, em diferentes contextos (pessoal, social, ambiental) e formatos, e assim tomar decisões assertivas para a sua saúde e da sociedade em geral.

Thus, as an information mediator, the librarian plays a fundamental role in the health field by guiding users in locating, evaluating, and critically using information. They empower individuals to access reliable and relevant sources, helping ensure that health-related decisions are based on accurate, trustworthy, and up-to-date information, ultimately contributing to higher-quality research within the academic community.

The following section presents the research setting, providing context for how the BSCCSM delivers this service.

Contextualizing the BSCCSM

The BSCCSM is located within the Hospital Universitário (HU) Polydoro Ernani de São Thiago, both of which are part of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

Established in 1980 on the Trindade University Campus, the HU was created to support UFSC's health-related academic programs and serves as a teaching hospital. Today, it operates across all three levels of healthcare – primary, secondary, and tertiary, and functions as a state-level reference center for complex pathologies, both clinical and surgical, with high demand in areas such as oncology and major surgical procedures across various specialties (UFSC, 2023). To meet this demand, the hospital employs approximately 1,800 staff members, including healthcare and administrative personnel. All patients are exclusively users of Brazil's public healthcare system, the Sistema Único de Saúde (SUS).

The hospital's clinical staff is composed primarily of employees from the Empresa Brasileira de Serviços Hospitalares (Ebserh), alongside faculty from the Centro de Ciências da Saúde (CCS). Together, the HU and CCS form a central hub for teaching and research, serving as a key healthcare reference for the city of Florianópolis, SC, and the surrounding

5 Translation: "different processes and actions, some of which stem from health education and communication, in which an individual or collective, mediated by a professional, institution, and/or health system (public and/or private), can optimize their knowledge, skills, and attitudes (related to information technology, communication, and information), to adequately, efficiently, critically, and ethically handle health information in various contexts (personal, social, environmental) and formats, and thus make well-informed decisions for their own health and for society at large" (Alves; Reis, 2020, p. 252, editorial translation).

region. The CCS offers undergraduate programs in Nursing, Pharmacy, Medicine, Nutrition, Dentistry, and Speech Therapy. Additionally, it hosts 14 graduate programs, including master's and doctoral degrees, as well as residency and specialization tracks (UFSC, 2025).

Given this context, the BSCCSM's user base is notably diverse. Its spaces are most frequently used by students and faculty from the CCS, clinical staff from the HU (including both Ebserh and UFSC personnel), and, on occasion, hospitalized patients. This diversity is also reflected in the educational and professional backgrounds of users, which range from undergraduate students to residents and graduate students—many of whom are experienced healthcare professionals.

How the Service is Provided

The scientific database search guidance service is offered by the Biblioteca Universitária (BU) of UFSC to all members of the academic community. To ensure decentralized access, each sectoral library within the institution is responsible for assisting users in its corresponding field of knowledge. In this structure, the BSCCSM supports users in the health sciences.

To schedule a session, users complete a protocol⁶ provided by the BU, indicating the objectives of their research along with relevant descriptors or keywords related to the main topics they wish to explore in the literature. Once completed, the protocol is submitted to the library, and an appointment is arranged.

The online version of this service was launched in 2020 in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. As research in health-related areas – especially studies on COVID-19 – continued, and undergraduate and graduate programs shifted to remote instruction, the BU/UFSC adapted the service to meet the demands of that period.

The transition proved successful, and both online and in-person consultations remain available today, with the choice left to the user. To date, remote sessions have been the preferred format, even among users based in Florianópolis/SC, where the library is physically located. Factors such as traffic and urban mobility likely contribute to this sustained post-pandemic preference for remote meetings.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs an exploratory research, a methodological approach that allows researchers to become acquainted with the subject of investigation. It serves a basic purpose, which Gil (1999, p. 46)⁷ defines as a study that aims to “proporcionar um maior conhecimento para o pesquisador acerca do assunto” thereby laying the groundwork for future investigations if needed.

6 UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA. Biblioteca universitária. Protocolo destinado para orientação de pesquisa em base de dados. 2022. Available at: <https://repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/201414>. Accessed on: 21 fev. 2025.

7 Translation: “provide the researcher with greater knowledge of the topic,” thereby laying the groundwork for future investigations if needed” (Gil, 1999, p. 46, editorial translation).

Exploratory methodology accommodates a variety of data collection techniques, including case studies, observations, interviews, and historical analysis. These techniques may yield both quantitative and qualitative results. Importantly, exploratory research does not seek to test a specific hypothesis, but rather to identify patterns, generate concepts, or suggest possible solutions—an approach aligned with the objectives of this study (Gil, 1999).

This article adopts a case study design. To collect and analyze data on the scientific database search guidance service offered by the BSCCSM, all archived consultation protocols from 2021 and 2022 were reviewed. Information from these records was manually extracted and entered into spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel, enabling data quantification and the generation of charts.

For thematic mapping, the open-source software VOSviewer was used to construct and visualize term co-occurrence networks. During the consultations, standardized health sciences thesauri – DeCS and MeSH – were employed to normalize the descriptors used in search strategies. Typically, multiple descriptors are combined to formulate a single strategy. Therefore, co-occurrence analysis was used to identify the most frequently employed descriptors each year and, more importantly, the semantic relationships among them.

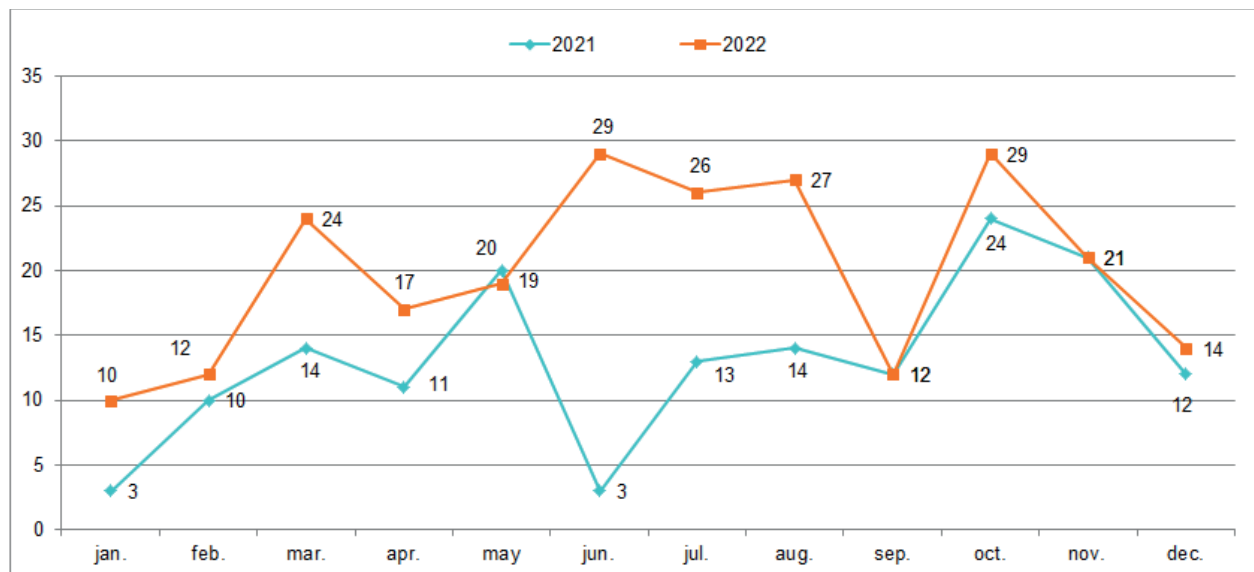
VOSviewer was configured as follows: In 2021, a total of 295 descriptors were used. The minimum frequency for a descriptor to appear in the visualization was set at three. This setting resulted in 28 descriptors appearing at least three times; of these, 26 showed co-occurrence relationships and are displayed in the figure. The descriptors without co-occurrences were “queimaduras” and “currículo.” In 2022, a total of 425 descriptors were used. The minimum frequency for inclusion in the visualization was raised to four due to the higher volume of descriptors that year. With this setting, 30 descriptors met the minimum frequency threshold, and 28 of these had co-occurrence relationships and appear in the figure. The descriptors that did not show co-occurrences were “educação” and “terapêutica.”

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The collected data were organized into three distinct categories: Analysis of Service Demand, which includes consultation numbers and seasonal trends; User Profiles, which explores user characteristics like academic program, degree level, and gender; and Analysis of Subject Descriptors, which maps the most researched topics.

Analysis of Service Demand

The analysis reveals growing demand for the service over the studied period, as shown in **CHART 1**. In 2021, BSCCSM conducted 157 consultations; in 2022, this number rose to 240, an increase of 53%. Several factors may account for this significant growth.

CHART 1 – Annual Analysis of Consultations Held at BSCCSM

Source: Research data, 2023.

Until mid-2021, the BSCCSM was staffed by a single librarian responsible not only for consultation services but also for administrative management and other training activities. Due to high demand, some consultations were redirected to the Competency in Information and Research Support Sector at the UFSC Central Library. However, data from these external consultations are not included in this study. In August 2021, a second librarian joined the BSCCSM team, allowing the sectoral library to manage all consultation requests from health sciences users directly.

Still, the staffing change alone does not fully explain the increase in consultations; rather, the growing demand likely justified the expansion of the team. Each year, awareness of the service has increased within the CCS community, contributing to its broader adoption.

The service's rising popularity highlights the strategic importance of information literacy in the health field. As noted by Alves and Reis (2020, p. 246)⁸, such services enable librarians to “realizar atividades diferenciadas e agir de maneira estratégica e protagonista dentro de diferentes instituições de saúde”. This case study affirms that perspective: the sustained demand illustrates the BSCCSM's central role as an information intermediary within UFSC.

Promotion of the service has occurred primarily through word-of-mouth. Satisfied users frequently recommend it to classmates, and faculty members often encourage their students to seek out the consultations. Notably, no formal outreach took place via social media or institutional mailing lists during the analyzed period. The only structured promotion occurred during training sessions conducted by BSCCSM librarians for undergraduate and graduate classes in the Centro de Ciências da Saúde, but these sessions reached only limited groups and therefore do not fully explain the growth in demand.

8 Translation: “perform differentiated activities and act strategically and proactively within various health institutions” (Alves; Reis, 2020, p. 246, editorial translation).

Considering the volume of consultations, the service's scale becomes even clearer when viewed in light of the academic calendar. The Brazilian Ministry of Education mandates a minimum of 200 school days per year. Based on this standard, the BSCCSM conducted more than one consultation per academic day in 2022 to meet demand.

Each session lasts an average of one to two hours, plus additional time for preparation and follow-up, totaling approximately two and a half hours per consultation. This constitutes a significant portion of the librarians' daily schedules. These figures demonstrate that the consultation service has become an integral component of the BSCCSM's routine, rather than an occasional offering. This underscores the need for institutional planning in university and hospital libraries to support information literacy services, including appropriate staffing, infrastructure, and continuing professional development. As Biaggi and Castro Filho (2017, p. 2)⁹ advocate:

Tal área carece de estudos voltados à atuação do profissional bibliotecário dentro deste contexto, pois a prática profissional do bibliotecário é essencial para identificar que tipo de informação uma instituição necessita para tomar decisões, traçar os planejamentos que a regem, determinar sua gestão administrativa, financeira e pessoal, programar sua coordenação de atividades, assim como a regulação, o controle, a avaliação e a prestação de serviços de saúde. Essas ações precisam ser estruturadas e bem organizadas, para e que atendam às necessidades de seu público, que, nesse caso, concentra-se na área da saúde.

The shift to remote service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic likely contributed to the increase in consultations. Many CCS graduate students reside in other cities, states, or even countries. For instance, students from the Professional Master's Program in Nursing Care Management have included participants from Porto Velho (Rondônia) and Macapá (Amapá), both in northern Brazil. Consultations have even been conducted in Spanish for graduate students based in Chile.

Without the remote option, many of these users would have been unable to access the service. In fact, during consultations, many report that they have never, or only rarely, visited the BSCCSM in person.

Regarding seasonal variation, **CHART 1** shows that consultations continued during academic breaks, though at reduced levels. A comparison of monthly data from 2021 and 2022 shows that school breaks did not occur in the same months in both years due to pandemic-related adjustments to the academic calendar. In 2021, the break fell in June; in 2022, it occurred in September. January saw low demand in both years. Some of these lulls also coincided with the librarians' vacation periods, which affected the number of available

9 Translation: "This area lacks studies on the librarian's role in this context, as the professional practice of the librarian is essential for identifying what type of information an institution needs to make decisions, plan its operations, and manage its administrative, financial, and personnel functions, as well as coordinate activities and regulate, monitor, evaluate, and deliver health services. These actions must be structured and well-organized to meet the needs of their target audience, which, in this case, is concentrated in the health sector" (Biaggi; Castro Filho, 2017, p. 2, editorial translation).

sessions. Still, the data confirm that demand for the service is ongoing and occupies a substantial share of the librarians' workload, requiring continuous professional development and institutional support.

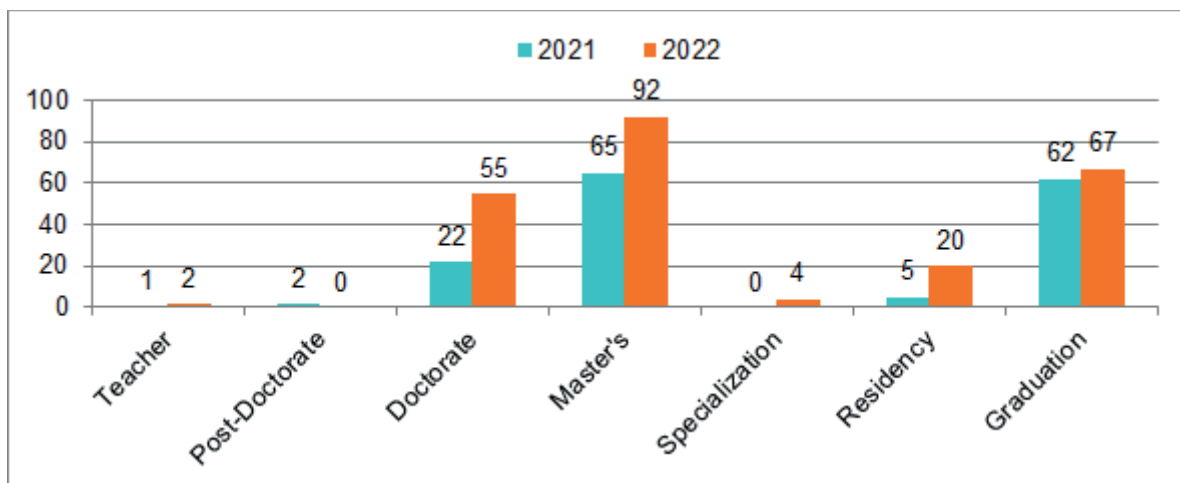
Finally, it is important to note that the service has extended beyond the UFSC community. During the study period, four consultations were provided to users from the Instituto Federal de Santa Catarina (IFSC) and two from the Universidade Aberta do Brasil (UAB). However, some requests had to be declined due to the full schedule of internal demand.

User Profile Characterization

Understanding the characteristics of the user community is essential for the effective delivery of any service. In the specific case of the CCS, identifying the academic origins of demand for the scientific database search guidance service provides a clearer picture of the user profile served by the BSCCSM.

As shown in **CHART 2**, the primary users of the service were master's students, who accounted for 39.5% (157) of consultations over the two-year period, followed by undergraduate students at 32.5% (129), and doctoral students at 19.4% (77).

CHART 2 – User Analysis by Academic Level at BSCCSM



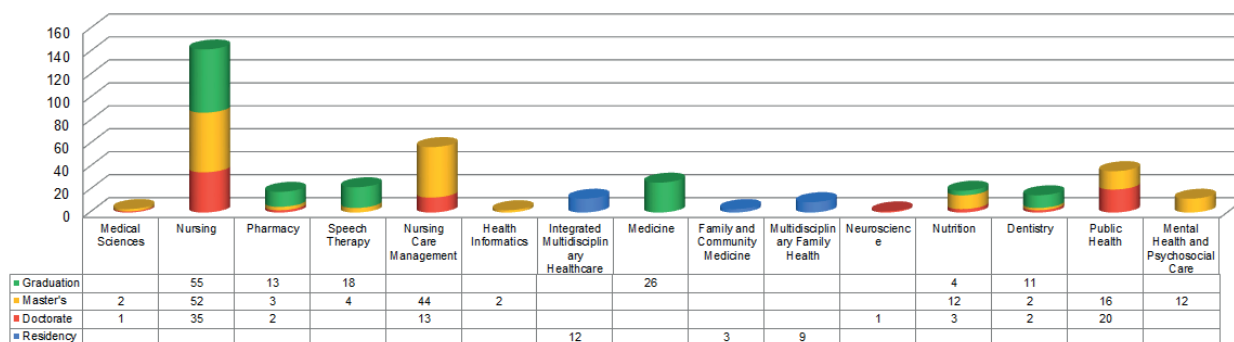
Source: Research data, 2023.

The predominance of master's students likely reflects the heightened academic rigor at the graduate level, including the pressure to publish scholarly articles both for program completion and academic visibility. Undergraduate students generally seek out the service near the end of their studies while preparing their final monographs.

Doctoral students also showed a notable increase in service use, with a 150% growth from one year to the next. Consultations with medical residents increased by 300% in the same period.

With regard to users' academic programs, **CHART 3** presents the distribution of consultations and highlights the most frequently served programs.

CHART 3 – User Analysis by Program at BSCCSM



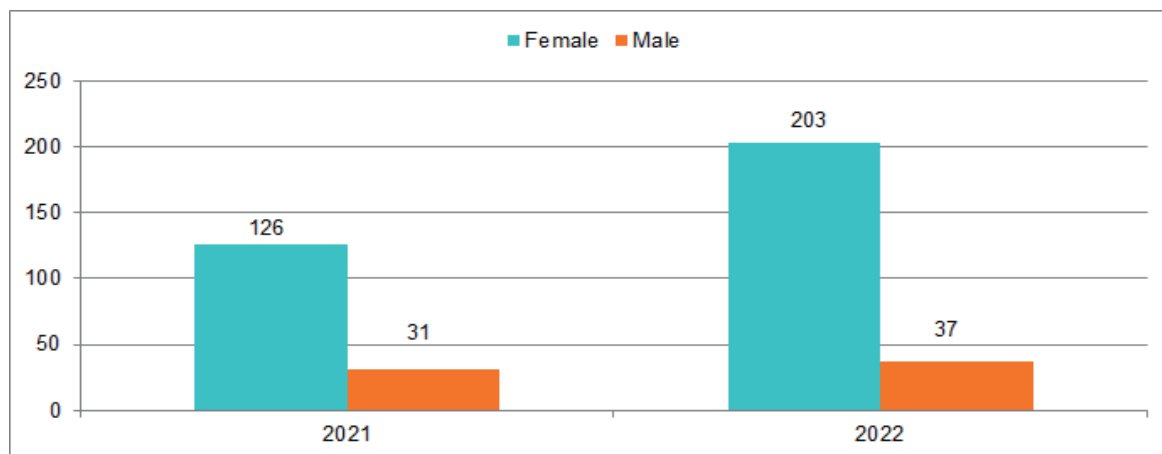
Source: Research data, 2023.

The Nursing program had the highest number of consultations across all academic levels, undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral. In addition, the three consultations provided to faculty and the two to postdoctoral researchers (not shown in **CHART 3**) were also affiliated with Nursing.

The second most served program was the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Gestão do Cuidado em Enfermagem, which offers both master’s and doctoral degrees. This data positions the Department of Nursing as a key partner of the BSCCSM and points to the existence of a consolidated research culture in which both students and faculty engage with the library early in their literature review processes. This relationship has been cultivated over many years at BSCCSM. In this context, Pinto, Silveira, and Lehmkuhl (2023, p. 144) note that the initial efforts to implement this service date back to 2001, demonstrating that establishing a trusted reference service requires time and continuity.

Among undergraduate programs, Medicine ranked second in number of consultations, while Nutrition recorded the fewest. Although the master’s program in Nutrition showed higher engagement (12 consultations), the undergraduate program had only four consultations during the period—revealing a potential gap that could be addressed through closer collaboration with faculty in that department.

To complete the user profile analysis, gender was also examined, as shown in **CHART 4**.

CHART 4 – User Analysis by Gender at BSCCSM

Source: Research data, 2023.

A total of 329 consultations (82.9%) were with users identifying as female, while 68 (17.1%) were with male users. This significant disparity raises important questions regarding gender equity in the health sciences and how it manifests in library service usage.

The predominance of women in health-related professions is well documented. According to Wermelinger et al. (2010), women are highly concentrated in fields such as domestic work, social services, education, and health. The authors note striking figures for the health sector in particular, where women account for nearly 70% of the workforce. Nutrition is the most feminized field, with women representing approximately 95% of professionals. Within this broader context, the BSCCSM's user demographics reflect the gendered distribution of professional roles. As Machin *et al.* (2011, p. 4504)¹⁰ explain: “gênero, enquanto princípio ordenador do pensamento e da ação, constrói atributos culturais aos sexos desde uma perspectiva relacional”. In other words, gender shapes the social norms and roles individuals occupy.

Scholars have also approached this issue through the lens of masculinity. Machin et al. (2011) argue that spaces associated with care, such as those in the health field, are culturally coded as feminine and may be viewed as inappropriate or undesirable for men. As a result, Nursing programs tend to enroll mostly women, while Medicine—often regarded as a more prestigious profession—shows a more balanced gender distribution.

This trend is confirmed by admissions data from UFSC's Medicine program in Florianópolis. In 2021, 17 of the 25 students admitted (68%) were male and eight (32%) were female (Coperve, 2021). In 2022, of the 70 available slots, 40 (57.2%) were filled by men and 30 (42.8%) by women (Coperve, 2022).

Looking specifically at library service usage by program, the undergraduate Medicine program was the only one in which consultations with male users outnumbered those with

¹⁰ Translation: “Gender, as an organizing principle of thought and action, constructs cultural attributes assigned to the sexes from a relational perspective” (Machin *et al.*, 2011, p. 4504, editorial translation).

female users. In 2021, there were nine consultations with men versus seven with women; in 2022, there were seven with men and three with women. These findings suggest that library users broadly reflect the demographic composition of their respective academic programs. In the case of CCS students, gender disparity in service usage is clearly evident.

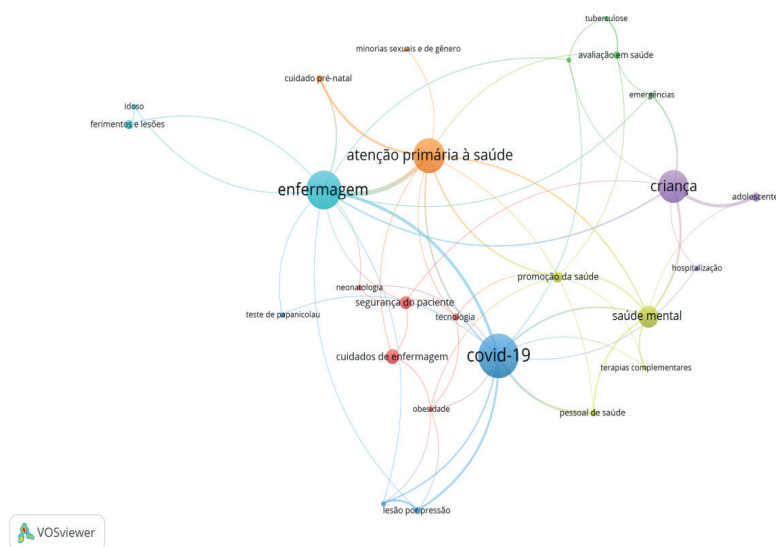
The following section presents the most frequently researched topics among users of this service.

Analysis of Research Areas

Using the VOSviewer tool, two visual maps were generated based on the descriptors employed by users in 2021 and 2022. These graphs reveal the most frequently addressed topics, as well as thematic connections between research areas. Larger clusters represent the most commonly used descriptors, while cluster colors indicate which terms were often searched together.

In **FIGURE 1**, the points for educational technology (in green) and equipment and supplies (in blue) are not labeled due to VOSviewer’s limitations in displaying all cluster names within the image.

FIGURE 1 – Most Searched Subject Descriptors in 2021



Source: Research data, 2023.

In 2021, the most frequently researched topic was Covid-19, with 24 occurrences, followed by nursing (21), primary health care (19), and child (18). These findings reflect the fact that Nursing is the academic program most actively using the scientific database search guidance service, which naturally highlights its core research interests. Additionally, the pandemic context, represented by the descriptor Covid-19, prompted health professionals

across disciplines to seek guidance on managing their daily routines, contributing to the high frequency of terms like primary health care. According to the *Ministério da Saúde* (2023), **primary health care** refers to:

[...] primeiro nível de atenção em saúde e se caracteriza por um conjunto de ações de saúde, no âmbito individual e coletivo, que abrange a promoção e a proteção da saúde, a prevenção de agravos, o diagnóstico, o tratamento, a reabilitação, a redução de danos e a manutenção da saúde com o objetivo de desenvolver uma atenção integral que impacte positivamente na situação de saúde das coletividades. Trata-se da principal porta de entrada do Sistema Único de Saúde (Ministério da Saúde, 2023)¹¹.

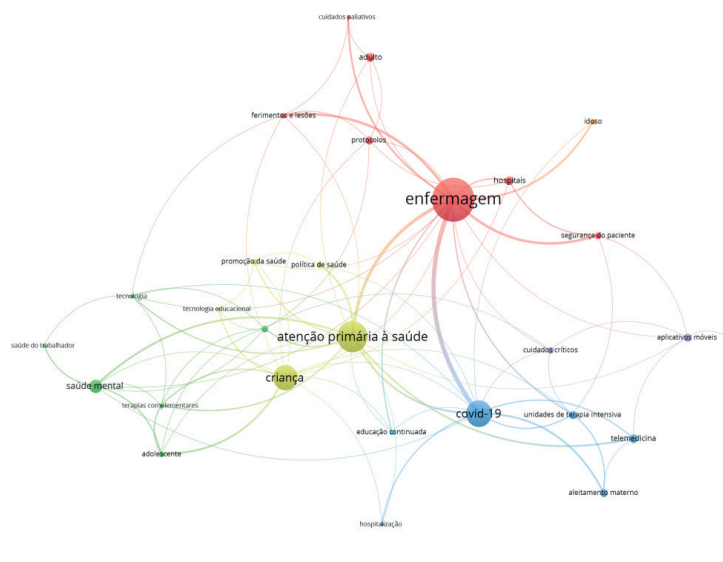
The prominence of the descriptor child may be linked to the Pediatric Emergency Unit of HU/UFSC, which inaugurated new facilities in 2021 with the aim of becoming a reference center for pediatric care (UFSC, 2021).

Another notable theme was mental health, which gained prominence during the pandemic. The context of prolonged isolation led to a wave of studies focused on the mental well-being of healthcare professionals, particularly concerning the pressures they faced during this period.

In 2022, new topics emerged, such as **educational technology**, **mobile applications**, and **telemedicine**, reflecting the continued impact of the pandemic. The widespread adoption of remote services spurred research into their implementation and effectiveness.

The most frequently used descriptors in 2022 are shown in **FIGURE 2**.

FIGURE 2 – Most Searched Subject Descriptors in 2022



Source: Research data, 2023.

11 Translation: “[...] the first level of health care, characterized by a set of individual and collective health actions that include promotion, protection, disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, harm reduction, and health maintenance—aimed at developing comprehensive care that positively impacts the health status of communities. It is the main gateway to the Sistema Único de Saúde” (Ministério da Saúde, 2023, editorial translation).

Again, in **FIGURE 2**, some points, *nursing care* (green) and *suicide* (purple), are not labeled due to VOSviewer's graphical limitations.

In 2022, *nursing* became the most frequently searched descriptor, with 38 occurrences, surpassing *Covid-19*, which fell to 23. This aligns with the broader data showing that Nursing remains the field with the highest number of service requests.

The continued relevance of *Covid-19* as a research topic reflects a global surge in academic output on the subject, a trend not limited to health sciences, but also present in fields such as sociology (Marques, 2022). While it remained a key area of interest, the decline in related searches from 2021 to 2022 is consistent with expectations: the rollout of vaccines and the decreasing severity of the pandemic allowed researchers to resume work on previously established lines of inquiry.

CONCLUSION

One of the central questions guiding this study was: Which UFSC programs and user categories most frequently utilize the scientific database search guidance service? Based on data extracted from librarian consultation protocols, it is clear that Nursing, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, is the primary requester of the service. This pattern reflects a well-established relationship between the library and the field of Nursing.

In terms of user profiles, the highest demand comes from undergraduate and master's students, particularly women. Master's students constitute a key user group: typically at the beginning of their graduate studies and under pressure to produce research, they often require more structured support. Although undergraduates represent a larger portion of the academic population, not all of them seek out the service, likely due to limited time for in-depth research and the comparatively lower expectations placed on undergraduate work.

Accordingly, the study's objective has been achieved: the data presented support a detailed characterization of the service offered by the sectoral library. This characterization enables the BSCCSM to better understand the scope and reach of its services, while also identifying areas that warrant further development or targeted outreach.

The scientific database search guidance service offered by the BSCCSM is clearly valuable to the students and professionals who use the library, not only due to high demand, but also because of its critical role in promoting information literacy. Through these consultations, users receive tailored research support, gain autonomy in constructing search strategies, and develop the skills to navigate scientific databases effectively.

This study also aligns with the recommendations of Biaggi and Castro Filho (2017), contributing to a field the authors identify as underexplored. By highlighting the role of librarians in the health sciences context through the provision of this service, the study reinforces the relevance of university and hospital libraries and supports institutional decision-making aimed at strengthening users' information literacy competencies.

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