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Rabine, Julie and Brown, Linda A., "Selection Connection: Creating an Internal Web Page for Collection Development" (2000). *University Libraries Faculty Publications*. 21.

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Notes on Operations

The Selection Connection

Creating an Internal Web Page for Collection Development

Julie L. Rabine and Linda A. Brown

Collection development librarians often use Web resources as they select materials, but only a few libraries have built working Web pages for this purpose. We suggest that a collection development Web page is a valuable asset to an academic library. A Web page designed for internal use can be used to share information among selectors and can provide a single source for links to Web tools used by collection development librarians. We discuss sources of Web-based bibliographers' tools and suggest useful types of information to include on collection development Web sites.

Collection development librarians have traditionally spent time poring over reviews, bibliographies, approval plan profiles, and other selection tools to select resources that will best meet the current and future needs of library patrons. The advent of computer networks and the proliferation of the personal computer have given us increased access to the information needed to make selection decisions, as well as provided a new universe of resources to collect. The World Wide Web permits us to find book reviews in hundreds of sources, search for an elusive out-of-print title, or connect directly to our approval vendor's site to verify volumes shipped or review our approval profile. Identifying and evaluating Web resources for inclusion in the library's catalog or a subject-oriented Web page are becoming regular features of our work.

Since the early days of the Web, acquisitions librarians have seen the value of creating Web sites that would bring together useful resources to help librarians work more effectively (Leiserson 1997). Collection development librarians can also benefit from this approach. A collection development Web site gives a library the

means to custom-build a toolkit for its own selectors (Brown 1999). This toolkit can provide:

- tools to enable selectors to work more efficiently at traditional tasks;
- tools specifically for the selection of Web resources; and
- a medium to communicate with our constituencies.

We will describe the collection development sites at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and other libraries. We will discuss the kinds of tools useful to include on a Web site designed for those working in collection development and suggest places to find these tools.

Collection Development Web Sites

In early 1996, BGSU Libraries and Learning Resources staff began to design a Web site as part of a campuswide effort to develop a Web presence. The various library units and departments began work on Web pages that would present useful information from their respective areas.

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Manuscript received June 1, 1999; accepted for publication August 9, 1999.

That summer the collection development Web site (www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/infosrv/collman/cmpages/cmpage.htm) was mounted. The site was aimed at our selectors in particular, the rest of the Libraries and Learning Resources staff in general, and anyone else on the BGSU campus with an interest in library collections.

Initially the site included a directory of selectors and departmental library representatives, a monthly list of newly acquired books, a page of news about the collections, and the collection development unit's mission statement. In 1997, the unit completely overhauled the general collection development policy and converted it from a linear print document to a fully integrated hypertext document. This policy was added to the Web site to make it readily accessible to all library staff and the university community; it does not exist on paper. The most recent addition to the site is a page of bibliographers' tools, first posted in 1998. This feature is continually being augmented with useful resources recommended by the bibliographers. Many of our bibliographers' tools will be described later, but some of our more recent additions include links to MX Bookfinder, the New York Times Book Review, a currency converter, and the staff-oriented pages produced by OhioLINK, our statewide consortium.

In preparation for this article, we searched for collection development Web sites at other institutions using AltaVista and other search engines with the following search strategies: *collection development and (library or libraries)*; or *collection development and department*. Our search yielded tens of thousands of hits; many were irrelevant or duplicative. Because the search engine ranks hits by relevance, and to create a manageable workload, we scanned the first thousand hits. We reviewed all of the pages that appeared to be academic library collection development department sites. We also

checked some of the metasites described below, such as ACQWeb and T-POT, and discovered additional links to collection development Web sites that were not found in the Alta Vista searches. Virtually any library with a Web site and a collection development staff had a collection development staff directory and perhaps a list of subject liaisons as well. Although it is difficult to obtain an exact count, scores, if not hundreds, of libraries also have some form of a collection development policy mounted on their Web sites.

Through the searching outlined above, we identified about twenty collection development Web sites that had more than a simple staff directory or a collection development policy. Some of the larger sites had links to other useful collection development sites; others had information for faculty, vendors, or others outside the library. The sites listed below are well-rounded and provide information not commonly encountered; they serve as good examples of what information can be offered by a collection development Web page.

The University of Texas General Libraries Collections & Information Resources Division (www.lib.utexas.edu/cird). Notable features include extensive lists of links related to various budget and collection issues in academic libraries; collection news; collection and publishing statistics; and an acquisitions manual for faculty. The most unusual feature is an interactive survey form asking users their preference between print and electronic journals.

The University of Wyoming Libraries Collection Development Office (www.lib.uwyo.edu/cdo/default.htm). Striking features include: numbers and costs of serial titles cancelled and added; budget information; trial databases; and an internal newsletter published by the department.

The Louisiana State University Libraries Collection Development Department (www.lib.lsu.edu/colldev/

[cdm.html](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/colldev/cdm.html)). Interesting features include: full text of articles published by the collection development staff; links to vendors' sites; links to local information including a staff development schedule; and notes from the previous year's staff development workshops. It also includes collection development tools and policies, and a list of newly received materials.

The University of Maryland Libraries Collection Management and Special Collections Division (www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP/CLMD/colbuilding.html). Presents gifts information; materials selection process; collection statistics; collection development policies; resources for selectors; and a directory of selectors. The information about gifts to the University Libraries includes policy regarding appraisals and possible tax deductions.

Literature Review

A number of authors address aspects of a Web page for collection development or provide good ideas for collection development Web page content, although none provides an overview of the subject. In a general discussion, Henderson (1996) promoted the use of Web resources for acquisitions work, some of which spills over into collection development. For example, sites for bibliographic verification or current awareness are useful for both acquisitions and collection development. Her definitions and short explanation of Web basics provide a good introduction to Web page development for the uninitiated. Johnson (1997) examined 31 acquisitions and collection development Web pages and listed their contents. He focused on design rather than content, and through his critique of several sites, provided insight into Web design features that work well. He also offered ideas for content in suggesting useful links to include on a collection development Web page.

Arlen et al. (1998) and Bybee et al. (1998) each offered an excellent review of sites and metasites that could be useful tools and sources of tools for selectors. Other authors addressed more specific issues related to collection development. Johnson (1998) provided a synopsis of a 1998 ALA Midwinter ALCTS Out-of-Print Discussion Group session, and examined the changes in the out-of-print market brought about by the Internet. A brief discussion of copyright sites with an accompanying list of government sites was published in *Information Outlook* (Copyright resources 1998). Balas (1997) discussed Web resources that address preservation issues in both the traditional and digital realms. Smith (1998) surveyed the Web pages of major book and serial vendors, which frequently contain useful tools and information for collection development librarians.

Since the Web became available, librarians have been concerned with selecting useful and accurate Web resources. Piontek and Garlock (1995) outlined strategies for identifying and evaluating free Web sites. Rioux (1997) gave a rationale and general evaluation criteria for selecting any type of Web resource. Her reasons for selecting and suggestions for evaluating Web resources paralleled traditional standards for print collection development.

Tools for Bibliographers

A collection development page can serve as a gathering point for a customized set of both outside and local Web resources that are useful bibliographers' tools. Selectors can bookmark this page for quick reference or use it as a browser home page if collection development is a major job focus. Asking selectors for frequently consulted or particularly useful sites to add to the page is an effective way to share knowledge of resources.

If your library deals frequently with vendors that have Web sites, those sites would be valuable additions to a collection of tools. A book vendor's database might be searchable, might allow specific items to be marked for order, or might allow orders to be placed electronically. Often customized reports can be generated online to track local purchasing patterns. Serials vendors also can offer searchable databases of periodicals and series, online subscription renewals, or document delivery services. In addition to links to the vendors dealt with directly, links to other vendor Web sites might be considered. Many book and serial vendors have mounted collection management information on their sites such as documentation of pricing and publishing trends, policy information, and links to other Web sites. Smith (1998) reviewed and described major vendor sites and their features.

A number of bibliographic and research databases, such as Books in Print, Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, ERIC, Library Literature, Book Review Digest, and WorldCat, are convenient and useful to have on the desktop if they are subscribed to locally. Selective inclusion of library science electronic journals, whether free or subscription-based, can help collection development librarians stay up to date. Some of these sites also include book reviews in subject areas of interest; such sites include, for example, CHOICE (subscription), American Libraries (<http://ala8.ala.org/online>), Library Journal Digital (www.bookwire.com/ljdigital), and LIBRES: Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal (<http://aztec.lib.utk.edu/libres>) (all free). Discipline-specific e-journals that provide book reviews in particular subject areas are also appropriate.

Links to professional organizations or scholarly societies can be helpful to selectors, whether these organizations are library or subject related. The

American Library Association site (www.ala.org) gives library news and information about conferences, while users can select divisions and sections for relevancy to collection development activities or the subjects collected at a given library. The Scholarly Societies Project (www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/society/overview.html), produced by the University of Waterloo, lists links to more than 1,400 scholarly society home pages. Visiting this site is an excellent way to find more specialized library associations as well as societies devoted to the disciplines collected at a library. Because many scholarly societies are also publishers, this site can be a useful reference source for bibliographers in its own right.

In addition to the items already discussed, the bibliographer's tools page could also include links to online bookstores and book review sources, guides to Internet resources, and technical services resources. These links not only save steps, but also serve as a valuable reminder that these resources are available.

The collection development Web page can be a convenient way to provide access to current policies, procedures, and other useful local information to all selectors. These can be updated as necessary, and selectors can easily reach them without tracking down the collection development officer or keeping their own files.

We found that a collection development policy works especially well as a hypertext document. When we were revising the BGSU policy (www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/infosrv/cdpolicy/cdpolicy.htm), the flexibility in structure that hypertext offers allowed us to bring together related sections of the policy while avoiding repetition. We could easily refer to core selection criteria, priorities, collection levels, and other foundational information wherever they were needed by adding a hypertext link. Scattered references to a single

topic, such as BGSU's role in the OhioLINK consortium, could be linked to one brief document providing the necessary background information.

Detailed collection development statements for each discipline represented on campus can be linked to the main policy and to each other where cross-references are desirable. While BGSU's subject-specific statements are still largely in the planning stages, other libraries are closer to finishing this task. The University of Pennsylvania Library is working on a project to make its collection development policies available on the Web (www.library.upenn.edu/services/collections/collections.html). The subject-specific portions of the policy are nearly complete and are a good example of a detailed and comprehensive policy.

In addition to local library materials, bibliographers can also take advantage of their own institution's Web pages, which can provide information vital to the collection building process. A Web-based course catalog, if available, would be a worthy addition to a collection development page. Facts and figures on enrollment by major and by class standing are also sometimes posted to the Web by universities and are useful to the selector. Academic departmental Web pages often contain information on programs, curricula, faculty research interests, and upcoming events that could be helpful to the selectors working with individual departments.

Library Metasites

The best place to start looking for potential bibliographers' tools is often a library-related metasite where much of the work has already been done. The builders of these sites have selected useful resources and organized links to them. Explore these sites to find individual links that will be useful to your selectors, or add a link to the whole metasite. Many of these sites are also searchable, adding to their

usefulness. Arlen et al. (1998) and Bybee et al. (1998) discussed and described a number of metasites directly related to collection development and acquisitions. We will focus here on several that we have found to be particularly useful.

AcqWeb (www.library.vanderbilt.edu/law/acqs/acqs.html). This Web site is based at Vanderbilt University, has excellent comprehensive coverage, and is international in scope. It is intended to be the "acquisitions and collection development librarians' and staff's gateway to the world of publishing" (Cook 1997, 40). The Collection Development subdivision offers links to sites for selecting Web resources, book review sources, and a list of collection development policies. AcqWeb includes a link to A Tool Kit of Links and Documents for Collection Development and Management Librarians (<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/cts/acq/cd>), which lists dozens of resources for bibliographers. AcqWeb also includes links for publishers, collection development and acquisitions departments, out-of-print dealers, reference resources, scholarly articles discussing electronic information issues related to acquisitions and collection development, and even library humor.

T-POT—Technical Processing Online Tools (<http://tpot.ucsd.edu>). This Web site was built by Technical Services staff at the University of California at San Diego. Its primary focus is acquisitions, serials, and cataloging, but it includes some links to sites for collection development. T-POT includes a section, titled Top 200 Technical Services Benefits of Home Page Development (<http://tpot.ucsd.edu/Cataloging/Misc/top200.html>), with more than 700 broadly categorized links to other sites ranging from HTML basics to electronic journals in library and information science, to a cliché finder.

The Internet Library for Librarians (www.itcompany.com/

[inforetriever/index.htm](http://www.itcompany.com/inforetriever/index.htm)). This Web site is produced at Infoworks Technology Co. by a staff of librarians and MLS students. More than 2,000 sites covering all branches of librarianship are included. The site offers a section, titled Acquisitions/Serials/Collection Development, which includes information on the acquisition of foreign materials, licensing of electronic products, publishers' catalogs, and general resources.

Tools for Selecting Web Resources

Selecting Web resources often involves a different process than does selecting print materials. When selecting print materials, librarians identify gaps in collections or learn of new programs or areas of research that need support, and continue to develop collections for ongoing programs. With this in mind, they review the standard sources, e.g., *CHOICE* and *Books in Print*, which allow them to learn about new publications and resources that meet the identified information needs.

While this might be possible in some cases with Web resources, as some standard sources are expanding their scope to include Web-based resources, the process often becomes the proverbial fishing trip—casting a net broadly to see what comes in, then sorting to select only those resources that will support some aspect of teaching and research at the institution. Internet search engines or any of the tools described below will help selectors cast the net. Rioux (1997) likened the process to hunting and gathering wild fruit in a jungle rather than harvesting the cultivated crop of print materials. Despite the ad hoc process, Web resources do get selected, usually to supplement the print collections, but in the future we will see Web resources selected as integral parts of the collection. The Web collection thus created can be organized into a set of Web pages, or cataloged with a direct link leading from the bibliographic

record in the library catalog to the resource itself. The collection can include links to large metasites as well as to specific sites or portions of sites.

Any of the numerous Web search engines available—Yahoo!, AltaVista, or HotBot, for example—can be used to locate and identify sites to add to a Web resources collection. As with the search for bibliographers' tools, however, the search for Web resources is made easier by metasites that organize and categorize useful Web sites on many topics. Sites that rate or evaluate Web resources can be especially helpful. Following are some examples.

The Internet Scout Project (<http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/scout>). This site is produced at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and is funded by the National Science Foundation. Begun in 1993, it is the oldest Web resource selection tool (Calcari 1997). It lists the best scholarly Internet resources and a brief review of each, provided by librarians and subject experts. It primarily covers the areas of business and economics, science and engineering, and the social sciences. It includes background information for the novice, evaluative descriptions of search engines and subject related sites, and a "Kids Report" of sites designed for children. The site also includes an electronic mailing list that announces new sites every two weeks.

BUBL-LINK (<http://bubl.ac.uk>). This site is produced by librarians at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, Scotland, and is funded by the United Kingdom's Joint Information Systems Committee. It contains more than 10,000 Internet resources in all disciplines, which all have been evaluated and are accompanied by brief descriptive annotations. It is international in scope, cataloged according to the Dewey Decimal Classification system, and both browseable and searchable.

The ARGUS Clearinghouse for Subject Oriented Internet Resource Guides (www.clearinghouse.net). Librarians and MLS students working

with staff at Argus Associates produce this site. They have compiled Internet-accessible topical guides that link to other Internet information resources for students, researchers, and educators. Sites listed in the guides are evaluated on several criteria (such as resource content and design) using a five-point rating system; in addition, each site is given an overall rating. Guides are reviewed annually and are both browseable and searchable.

Conclusion

Materials selection is often performed by a variety of people in any given library, each of whom may or may not have collection development as a major responsibility. By designing a Web page, collection development librarians can create a convenient means to harness Web technology for their own use. As libraries become more fully wired and librarians rely more on electronic communication, the 24-hour accessibility of the Web makes it a logical solution for providing information to all selectors, even if they work in different locations.

As we have seen, many resources on the World Wide Web can enhance a selector's ability to work effectively. Ready online access to such resources as Books in Print, vendor databases, or a currency converter can prevent trips to the reference desk and photocopier. Other aspects of our jobs have been revolutionized by the Web; for example, searching for out-of-print materials, a task that once took years and was sometimes impossible, has now become simple and routine using Web-based search engines designed for this purpose (Hamilton 1999). We believe that organizing links to useful Web resources frequently used by a library's staff is worth the effort.

The Web itself has become a new arena in which to practice our trade of selecting, but it can be a time-consuming business to hunt down individual

Web sites that might be useful. Many excellent Web sites maintained by librarians include evaluations and subject-oriented collections of Web resources. These review sites can aid in discovering Web resources that would make valuable supplements to academic library collections. By gathering links to review sites into one place, collection development librarians can easily remember and make use of them.

Web-based bibliographers' tools for selecting print and Web resources offer convenience and efficiency. A thoughtfully designed Web site will allow collection development librarians to bring together resources in the way that is most effective for each individual institution and build their own custom-made toolkit for selectors.

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