

Ten Essential Technologies

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Alexa

<http://www.alexa.com/>

Alexa is a for-profit company that has been serving the online community since 1996. Alexa.com provides site analytics, top trafficked sites, and site audits. Some functions are free; others have a cost. Any visitor to Alexa can type in a URL and receive information about that site's traffic. Some lesser-used sites do not seem to register on the Alexa radar, which could be a problem for smaller libraries. However, the subscription plans should provide that necessary function.

Alexa would be useful for sites regarding or created by special libraries. Libraries can monitor visitor use and demographics to the sites. These figures are often needed for reports to funding and/or governing entities. It also could aid collection development, whether to increase the collection for under-served populations or to better serve a special population. The most touted function at the 2012 Digital Library Federation Forum was Search Engine Optimization as a way to increase traffic to the website.

Bamboo DiRT

<http://dirt.projectbamboo.org/>
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Project Bamboo has created Bamboo DiRT to assist in digital scholarly research. It is a collection of useful resources that can help organize and display research. These tools are organized by categories, tags, recommendations, and latest creations or updates. Those in the digital research community suggest sites and recommend others' submissions.

Bamboo DiRT is recommended by many librarians involved in the Digital Library Federation, as heard at the 2012 Forum in Denver. Those new to digital scholarship seem to appreciate it the most as it provides a place to start. Special librarians can use this site to find applications to organize collections, assist researchers, and create public online projects.

Bibliogo

<http://info.bibliogo.com/>

Special libraries support larger, non-library organizations. How do you keep doctors, lawyers or sales people informed of the newest articles available to them? Bibliogo, a literature acquisition and management platform, lets individuals subscribe to alerts and feeds based on a journal's table of contents or saved database searches. It combines this current awareness functionality with knowledge sharing, citation management, and document ordering all in one package, so patrons will always be current in their field.

With Bibliogo, users can access and organize the library's subscription journal articles, create citations, manage bibliographies (including shared bibliographies for collaboration), and automate document delivery. Within limits set by the librarian, patrons can order individual articles that are not currently in the library's holdings. Bibliogo gives patrons self-service resources that free up valuable time.

Boopsie

<http://www.boopsie.com/library/>

Today's patrons want the anytime, anywhere access of a mobile app. How can special libraries offer this when they often operate with minimal staff and no software development support. Boopsie can help by building a cross-platform app customized for your library – your logo, images and content. Patrons just download the app from their phone's app store, or through a link provided by your library.

Boopsie provides a single interface to search the catalog for any ILS, and reserve or renew materials. Through the app, patrons can also access local content (reading lists, event schedules, etc), interact with the library's social network presence (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, etc), and connect with your library by email, phone or text. Boopsie's standout feature is interaction with other library subscription services. It acts as a gateway to search and read materials from databases such as EBSCO, Gale, and Credo. In a world where ease-of-access is a major ebook concern, Boopsie offers one click OverDrive Ebook searches.

Code Year

<http://www.codecademy.com/tracks/code-year>

Code Year is a free, year long program through Code Academy. It begins with basic JavaScript and moves through HTML and CSS to teach users how to make modern, interactive websites. Every week there's a new self-paced, interactive lesson that's fun enough to keep you coming back. There's also a social component, so librarians can earn badges and help each other's progress.

Once the Code Year program is over, users can move on to more advanced courses in JavaScript, HTML and CSS, Python, Ruby, and JQuery.

These days, coding should be a part of every MLS curriculum. Even if one never intends to write code from scratch, knowing how to fix code errors or talk to the web team are invaluable skills. WYSIWYG editors can take you pretty far, but coding on top gives you an extra level of precision that's hard to beat.

Drupal

<http://www.drupal.org>

Drupal is an open source web content management platform that beginners and experienced web-coders alike will find easy and convenient to use. Thousands of websites worldwide run on Drupal including WhiteHouse.gov. The basic platform, Drupal Core, includes system administration, account maintenance, multi-site supports, a multi-level menu system for links, page layout options, and RSS feeds among other things.

Additional community-contributed modules like "what you see is what you get" editors enable users to do nearly anything with their websites. No coding knowledge is required to use Drupal but a handy code editor is built-in. Once a site is set-up, updates are as simple as clicking, typing, and saving. Plus, Drupal can log edits for quick back ups or peace of mind for those, "oops, I deleted half the page!" moments.

Special libraries will find Drupal useful because they can have a professional looking, standards compliant website even if they lack a professional web designer.

Illustrator

<http://www.adobe.com/products/illustrator.html>

Adobe Illustrator CS6 is a powerful, professional quality vector graphics editor with a vast array of features for text and images alike. It loads quickly and rarely crashes unlike some other publication editors. Users can produce great looking logos and advertisements optimized for either web or print use.

The software does have a mean learning curve but the quality of the final products is worth the trouble, especially as marketing becomes increasingly important in libraries. Unfortunately, it is quite expensive so it may not be perfect for all special library budgets.

Omeka.net

<http://www.omeka.net/>

Omeka is a familiar online digital exhibition tool. Omeka.net differs from Omeka.org in that Omeka.net can be used by anyone with an internet connection to create a website to display collections. It does not require additional server space, which is a plus for small special libraries. It does have a free version as well as several reasonably-priced plans.

Omeka is most useful for those special libraries with special collections. It provides a venue for librarians to share the collections with many people without damaging historic and often rare materials. Librarians do not have to be professional website designers to use and customize their own sites. In fact, Omeka.net provides a user guide specifically for librarians (Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media, 2011). The Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (2010) demonstrates how this tool can be effectively used to showcase a unique collection.

Recollection

<http://viewshare.org/>

Just like YouTube makes videos viewable on one platform, Recollection solves a similar problem. Special libraries, archives, and museums capture data in a range of incompatible formats. Not only are the core media being stored differently (text, numbers, photos, video, etc.), but so are the metadata and database structures themselves. Archivists were capturing, describing, and preserving huge amounts of data, but the archives were inaccessible to almost everyone except those doing the archiving.

Recollection is a free, open source platform that lets archivists, librarians, scholars and curators create easy to navigate web interfaces for their digital cultural heritage collections. Recollection will ask you to describe your imported data using an intuitive interface with drop-down menus and prompts. The page can display a map with custom legend as well as graphs, a timeline, a word cloud, a search box, etc. When each archive creates a custom skin, interface, or visualization to solve a particular problem for their collection, it's easy for them to share their solution with other archivists with similar needs. Libraries may use a hosted form or download the code and create their own internal Recollection platform for sharing data.

Wand Scanners

http://www.vupointsolutions.com/magic_wand_portable_scanner_wifi

Scanners can be very important to special libraries, museums, archives, genealogy libraries and any library that needs quick access to digitization. Wand scanners that do not require a computer can make the process portable and convenient, but often with the drawback of not being able to check the scan until you get back to a computer. The VuPoint Solutions Magic Wand Wi-Fi PDSWF-ST44-VP solves this by adding WiFi which allows you to check the scan on a phone or tablet almost immediately after scanning. Not only do you get the versatility that comes with a wand, but you can also look at your scan and share it with others as quickly as checking your phone.

Portable scanners are quickly becoming indispensable for special libraries that deal with both newly created and old content in multiple formats and delicate materials. Wand scanners have already taken the lead in convenience and are catching up in performance. The addition of WiFi and new sharing technology make this hardware worth watching. VuPoint also offers free apps for Android and iOS devices.

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