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# Open Access Collections: What Is Your Number?

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# OPEN ACCESS COLLECTIONS.  WHAT IS YOUR NUMBER?

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This paper is a summary of a project that I completed at Florida Gulf coast University (FGCU) library.  Main purpose of this paper is to inform readers about 82 free journals and digital collections that we have set up online access to and in turn, learn from others about the availability of similar free collections.  If you would like to inform about such collections please contact the author and share your experience about working with open access based collections.

Although we uses SerialsSolutions (SSOL) products for setting up access, activating and displaying these free collections in our e-journal portal and OPAC, please note that this paper is not written for promoting SSOL products.  **Collections discussed in this paper are based on open access and freely available to all.**  Any library or individual can access these collections by using simple hyper linking web technology. However, if you are SSOL products subscriber, additional benefit for you would be the possibility of getting the MARC records, if and when available, and manage these collections through their data management home.  A world of advice for SSOl subscribers is to check with SSOL before you decide to track these collections through SSOL for it may mean extra cost as their charges are based on the number of journals/collections they track for you.  However, libraries that are placed in the premier category have no cause to be concerned about the additional cost as their charges are not based on the number of tracked collections.

Let us now get into the nitty-gritty of this project.  How did this project start for FGCU library? I am a member of the SSOL Listserve.  I was alerted by a raging discussion about the open access journals and digital collections that other SSOL subscribers were able to set up online access to. I contacted SSOL and got a list of 82 such open access collections from them.  This was too good to be true as these open collections had the potential to provide access to more than 25,000 journals from all over the world. I circulated this list to our library faculty and subject librarians to gauge their interest. Initially library faculty was skeptical about providing access to these so called free open collections but at the same time they were willing to experiment.  So, I went ahead and established online access to these collections, and after a thorough test of the full text availability of these collections, we went ahead and advertised these collections to the extended university user community as well.  Some of the subject librarians have also added these collections to their subject guides.  As far as getting systems department involved for checking technical issues and setting up EZ- proxy etc. is concerned, it was no issue at all because these are open access collections.

A list of these free collections is saved on Google docs and you can access it from the following link.

http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ak7rAFSoeIbIdEhLTW8yQWhKS0xJYWZWNXVILVUxeFE&hl=. en

This spreadsheet lists the URL and name of the collection.  Number of total number of available titles and comments, if any, are included in this spreadsheet.  If you have any problems accessing this list, please feel free to email me at abhatt@fgcu.edu.  You can simply point your browser to the intended URL and establish access.

**Some Statistics and a note about subject collections:** Since we subscribe to SSOL products we are able to provide access to seven (7) special subject specific collections. These collections are pulled together by SSOL as a special customer friendly gesture.  My understanding is that SSOI staff is constantly making efforts to locate free journals in various subject fields and compile these titles under specific subject categories.  If you do not subscribe to SSOL products, it is not possible for you to provide access to these collections which is a real disappointment considering that through these collections we have access to almost 4784 free journals.  I have observed an Interesting fact. Number of free journals in these collections keeps on increasing as SSOL keeps adding new freely available journals to pertinent subject categories.  This is really a good customer service for us.

It is not practically possible for me to provide a URL for each journal under these subject specific free collections but I have provided a list of titles available in each of these collections. Libraries that can dedicate committed staff members to this project might want to search for these titles, locate the URLs and establish access.  It is a tedious task but I still wanted to provide the list of free titles.  This way, if a library is interested in specific title, they will be able to locate the URL and provide access.

Here are the links to the lists of free journals that are available under each subject specific collections.

- Arts & Humanities (537) , ( 785)
  http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ak7rAFSoeIbIdHlmdTVQVFNWS1AycEtmY3FJYThjVVE&hl=en

- Business Journals (249),  (284)
  http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ak7rAFSoeIbIdFoxdU92UlJzVHlaZzh4SWxBQnVwaGc&hl=en

- General Interest (104),  (179)
  http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ak7rAFSoeIbIdFppME9rdjdfck5wTWxLRVFYTzNwR0E&hl=en

- Freely accessible (1046),  (1823)
  http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ak7rAFSoeIbIdExSbmd4TFVuSTM1VndkbElGdTEwZGc&hl=en

- Social Science (810),  (999)
  http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ak7rAFSoeIbIdDU4cHhfdk5qbk9kQjAyVkNCRktKa2c&hl=en

- Sciences (2034),  (2368)
  http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=0Ak7rAFSoeIbIdEwwZjQ3YjlfTFctaTBNcld6Wm9TM0E&hl=en

For easy reference, these title lists includes ISBN/ISSN number, dates of availability and title ids as well. **Note:** First number in the bracket is the total number of journals that we had access to about 6 months back and the second number indicates our current access.  Since we activated these free collections, SSOL has added almost 1654 open access titles in total to these collections, which is great for us.

So what are you waiting for? You can also set up electronic access to these collections very easily. I, however, advise that before you begin, you consult with your library faculty and subject librarians and inform systems department about this project. As for as placement of these collections on your web site is concerned, there are multiple possibilities. You can link them from "special collections", "e-journal portal", "subject guides" , "A to Z lists", "e-database" and "e-resources" pages. If necessary, a disclaimer about their free status can be placed against the title. Since these are free collections, there is, actually no guarantee and readers might come across broken links. As far as MARC records are concerned, this could be an issue for the libraries who are not SSOL subscribers. We get our MARC records from SSOL and they are electronically loaded to our OPAC.

Now that I have given you information about these free collections, you might want to know what is our real time experience with these so called free collections. Initially I had set up access to 92 collections but I later found that 7 collections did not actually provide any full text, so they were promptly deactivated. We provide access to these collections through our e-journal portal and OPAC. There is no need to provide any IP ranges to the collection authorities and set up any proxy information as they are free for all. However, SSOL subscribes would need to check the "Omit proxy from this database" button while activating these collections.

Establishing access to these collections was just a part of the project, testing them to check their reliability was another big task. My curiosity centered around following issues:

1. Do they really provide full text?
2. Are there any copyright issues involved?
3. What kind of search interface features they present?
4. Are they user friendly?
5. What kind of navigational possibilities are present?

I tested each and every collection and observed that some of these collections, however, required use of recommended browsers, operating system, java scripts, cookies and specific adobe version etc.

**Copyright and licensing issues:** I observed that none of these collections required users to sign the traditional license agreement. So there is no need to be concerned about a license agreement or copyright issues. Some collections, however, do require users to sign an agreement of usage terms before accessing full text. Quite a few of these collections required registration and insisted on completing the "sign on' feature before providing access to the main collection or extra features. Image signatures are present in some cases and these in general are not a problem unless they are in foreign language and your key board does not support such typing. Few of the collections, however, do display copyright information and specifically mention about copyright of online only journals remaining with the author, other journals remaining with the publisher, and having similar restrictions for online journals as for print journals.

**Collection peculiarities:** In general, these collections are a mix bag and are much more than just full text journals. They are mix of free and priced collections, older (not offered any more) and new journal collections. Some collections are current but quite a few of them are historical collections dating back to 18$^{th}$ century and providing information from a specific period only. Quite a few of these collections are in fact digital library projects and archives that host documents and journals in full text.

Some of them are in the form of institutional repositories that provide access to working papers, conference papers, reports and journal articles. These institutional repositories are based on open source applications like D-space and E-Print and one can submit their articles and suggestions as well.

**Useful features:** Following user friendly features are present in most of the collections:

1. Mailing lists and e-mail notification for my favorite journal accounts; new additions & launches; additions of significant back file holdings notice; change policies for free access; format conversion to subscribed version; and availability of usage data.
2. RSS feeds, discussion forums, user forums, press rooms, blogs, upcoming events and feedback options.
3. Collection Statistics, user counters and annual reports.
4. Author instructions for manuscript submissions.
5. Citation help and bibliographies of related books and journals.
6. Links to local knowledge, online courses, relevant people, organizations, international networks and working groups.
7. What is new and papers in press.
8. Galleries, compliances and credits & donation options.
9. Membership options and instructions for "Follow us on face book and twitter" options.
10. Newsletter archives, book series and supplemental material.
11. Plug in information and new tools and technologies.
12. Job openings.
13. Help features such as FAQ, A to Z searches, indexes, help desks, site maps, searching tips, research assistances, tags, glossaries, text versions, directories and user manuals etc.

**Status of Full Text:** Full text errors and missing content issues is not completely absent. Broken links do exist, so the big lesson here is that they are not 100 % full text. I also noticed that there is constant change in the status of full text availability. Some journals provide back holdings for certain numbers of years in free access but restrict rest of them to subscription mode. Embargo issues are also not uncommon and some of the journals are simply behind schedule. Citations with hyperlinks to external full text are in abundance. Hyperlinks for permanent archives of full text are also helpful features guiding users in right direction.

**Search Interfaces:** I looked through the search interfaces in great detail and came across following interesting features and facts:

1. Most of the search interfaces are individually designed, developed and maintained by the owners of the collections.
2. Some of the international collections provide bilingual search interfaces.
3. Referring URLs to commercial vendors: simple web presence for initial introduction only.
4. No search options at all: just a long list of what is available.
5. Some have site indexes and are linked with Google for further searching options.
6. Some of the collection owners collaborate with commercial vendors: it is problematic because if you subscribe to the e-journal packages by this vendor then it could be confusing for your readers to differentiate between paid and free full text.
7. Links to additional information resources and possibilities to preview images.
8. Provide browsing feature for subject, journal title or article browsing
9. Include filters and limit options for peer review, full text, content types and dates etc.
10. Possibilities to review search histories.
11. Some collections provide link to pay per view options as well, ex: project EUCLID.

12. Possibility to create your own digital library and tagging documents, ex. Gallica.


**General problems:**

1. Could be confusing to your patrons when you have access to commercially subscribed collection by the same vendor. For ex: Blackwell. We have access to 800 paid subscriptions and 58 free access journals and both are available from the same platforms.  Full text icon could be on or not for the free journals.
2. No translations available for some of the international collections.
3. Image signature for login or to read PDFs could be problematic if it is in foreign language and your computer keyboard does not support the data entry in specified language.
4. Web site issues: download times and http errors.
5. Virus issues and pop blockers.
6. Government collections: currency, missing documents, shifting responsibilities and website errors.
7. Beta collections: what happens when they move to pricing models? There are no answers.
8. PDF related issues: in various languages, article by article, full issue of a journal or page by page format.
9. Problematic when publisher moves free journals to subscription models: ex: Informaworld.
10. Foreign language and translations.
11. Outdated "About Us" information.
12. Special equipment/monitors might be required to read some of the digitized collections for newspapers.

All in all, we have found these collections to be helpful and have taken great care to advertise these collections through our newsletter, "what is new" column on our web site, through our subject guides and the local university newspaper.  I believe that they are a great "add on" to our subscribed collections and are being used well by our user community.