

University of Minnesota (Twin Cities)
Report to the Digital Library Federation
Spring, 2004

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I. Collections, services, and systems

A. Collections

A Summons to Comradeship: World War I and II Posters

Two of the most significant collections in the world of posters from World War I and World War II are located within close physical proximity, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Both the University of Minnesota Libraries and the Minneapolis Public Library have collections containing posters from government, commercial, and charitable organizations. With major funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the University of Minnesota Libraries and the Minneapolis Public Library have purchased a state-of-the-art digital camera for oversized materials, scanned, and are cataloging over 5,000 posters from these collections.

<http://digital.lib.umn.edu/warposters/wpsearch.html>

Kautz Family YMCA Archives

This collection includes selected historical images from the Kautz Family YMCA Archives. The majority of images come from the photo collection, but the database also includes some images from the postcard, book, periodical, and archival record collections. Images currently available include all material used in our exhibit on the history of African Americans and the YMCA (presented in October 2003 in Washington D.C.).

<http://special.lib.umn.edu/ymca/yimages/>

Social Hygiene Posters

These 212 images produced primarily by the American Social Hygiene Association and the United States Government have received quite a bit of attention, including coverage on NPR and a spike of blog enthusiasm. Topics covered include dance, family health, friendship, health & Health education, home economics, hygiene, mental health, military education, physical fitness, prostitution, reproduction, sexual abstinence, sexually transmitted diseases, and women.

<http://special.lib.umn.edu/swaha/IMAGES/home.html>

B. Services

FindIt (OpenURL)

We introduced an SFX OpenURL resolver in Fall 2003 to help library users move from bibliographic citations to full-text (and other relevant services) in the most direct way possible. Branded as "Find It: University Libraries Linking Service," this link resolving service provides researchers with contextually rendered links from one licensed resource to another. The technology will also support the development of other article-level linking services, including from e-reserves and online course environments. Working with our University's Office of Information Technology and MINITEX (a regional library resource sharing network), we also host this link resolving service for all our three coordinate campuses and for three other regional institutions.

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/finditfaq.phtml>

RefWorks

This one-year (2003-2004 academic year) pilot project introduces site-licensed, web-based citation management software to LUMINA (our web site) and other online campus environments. RefWorks provides for direct connections to numerous publicly available databases for searching and citation retrieval, direct export into personal accounts for an increasing number of licensed online files, and several hundred, centrally updated import filters for text downloads. The software supports the generation of bibliographies in several hundred citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA, Turabian, etc.). In its first five months of availability, nearly 2,500 accounts have been established by University faculty, staff, and students managing over 100,000 references.

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/refworks/>

C. Systems

MNCAT (Aleph)

We brought up our new ILS, Aleph500, during Summer 2002 and then moved all of the coordinate campuses of the University to that same server during Summer 2003. While we have much work ahead of us, we consider our implementation of Aleph to be successful to date. This transition to a new library system was funded by the Minnesota legislature as part of the statewide MnLINK project, which also aims to bring many other institutions onto a second Aleph server managed by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

<http://mncat.lib.umn.edu/>

LibData

This is a library-centric content management system that wraps easy-to-use web authoring tools around a master database of key e-resources and tools. Librarians use LibData to create customized course pages for faculty with descriptions and links to specific library resources and services. LibData currently drives the Libraries' Research QuickStart (<http://research.lib.umn.edu/>) and CourseLib (<http://courses.lib.umn.edu/>) services, many of our web site pages, and an increasing number of other in-depth subject resources pages. We have also developed the ability to drive LibData-generated pages through the campus portal at a personalized level. Through personalized portal Toolkit presentations, students now receive links to QuickStart pages that are topically relevant to the courses they are currently taking. LibData was built with open source components (Apache, MySQL, and PHP) and was released as open source software under the GNU Public License in mid-November 2003.

II. Projects and programs

A. Projects

UThink (a weblog initiative)

This project provides faculty, students, and staff with their own individual blogs hosted by the University Libraries for courses, course assignments, scholarly communication, or personal essays and opinion. The architecture melds MovableType with the University's .x500 directory system, which creates interoperability potential with our campus portal, Web CT, and the E-Portfolio system.

<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/>

EAD Initiative

The Libraries' Special Collections and Archives staff are working closely with our Digital Library Development Lab to create a robust XML-aware database architecture to support the indexing and discovery of archival finding aids developed using the Encoded Archival Description (EAD) metadata standard.

<http://wiki.lib.umn.edu/Staff/FindingAidsInEAD>

Undergraduate Virtual Library

We are creating a carefully designed program of services, tools, and collections with a goal of demystifying and streamlining the research process for the 18-22 year old "Millennial Generation" of undergraduates. In Fall 2004 this project will introduce a "metasearch" tool that will allow for searches across multiple, clustered databases, a simplified interface to MNCAT, and other tools including the possibility of collaborative filtering, a process whereby a user of the site benefits from the experience of previous users.

<http://staff.lib.umn.edu/ug/>

RedLightGreen

Developed by the RLG and in concert with other universities around the country, this project focuses on evaluating an experimental web catalog of books with undergraduates to determine whether effort to develop a simple interface with sophisticated results (a la Google) provides benefit in bibliographic searching.

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/books/rlg.phtml>

Projects in progress 2003: The following two projects are updates on or of projects mentioned in past DLF reports.

IMAGES

This project delivers a searchable repository of aggregated metadata of continuous-tone visual images from collections around the campus. Supported by the IMLS grant for the War Posters project (see Collections above), this aggregation tool shares its metadata with OAI harvesters and provides cross-collection searching of our campus resources.

<http://digital.lib.umn.edu/>

Dissertation Calculator

Leveraging from work done for the University Libraries highly successful “Assignment Calculator,” the Dissertation Calculator allows students to enter in the projected completion date of their thesis or dissertation. The tool calculates suggested deadlines for 18 stages of the drafting process and provides important resources and advice for each of these stages. Content driving the tool is being created by a team from across the Twin Cities campus which includes the Libraries, the College of Liberal Arts Writing Center, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and the Center for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy with input from the Graduate College.

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/disscalc/>

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/help/calculator/>

Internal staff project: The following project is focused on supporting our own staff, but we thought it might be of interest to the DLF community.

Staff Wiki

We have begun to use a collaborative open source web site development tool called PmWiki to manage our internal staff web. We are curious to see whether a wiki facilitates greater staff participation in the maintenance of a web site.

<http://wiki.lib.umn.edu/>

B. Programs

Publication, the Public University, and the Public Interest: A University-wide Conference on Scholarly Communication in a Digital Age

This one-day conference in Fall 2004 will explore current challenges in scholarly communication and publication, with particular focus on public universities and their foundational commitments to the public interest. The conference reflects demonstrably increasing interest in alternatives to traditional publication systems, and will foreground opportunities and risks in the transformations now underway. Speakers will include representative stakeholders with expertise in publishing, intellectual property, academic policy, and institutional management of knowledge assets.

III. Specific Digital Library Challenges

We recognize that the "digital library" is much more than collections. The services that make up the user's experience of our digital library must be woven together into a coherent fabric that integrates with our campus infrastructure. To provide this integration, we have created a Digital Library Development Lab. Working in collaboration with others around the Libraries and the University, the Lab produces an information environment that significantly advances end-user resource discovery, retrieval, and use. Key to this activity is the development and support of a highly integrated and secure information architecture, created with the flexibility that that can respond and adapt to the changing needs of our user community. The Lab is responsible for the design and development, and/or acquisition and implementation of the tools that make such an environment possible. The Lab also maintains and operates some of those tools while managing the growth of the underlying technical architecture of the system.

The Lab's strategies are guided by the following goals:

1. Provide a robust and integrated information experience. The current information environment is a complex and highly segmented space. A key challenge for the Lab is to instantiate the virtual information environment as robustly as the corresponding physical environment. The Lab aspires to smooth information boundaries through the presentation of resources and services in meaningful and easily navigated interfaces.

2. Add value to each component of our information environment. The simplicity and convenience of Internet search engines are alluring, but their results are often incomplete. The Lab strives to couple simplicity of access with the levels of both recall and precision, and the availability of meaningful navigation paths that are required by our community of users. In addition to improving retrieval effectiveness, strategies should seek to add value to contextual activities — such as teaching learning, and research — through the provision of flexible resource and service options, and support for post-retrieval application. In addition to search and retrieval mechanisms, users also must have access to expert guidance at their point-of-need, regardless where they happen to be or what time it is.

3. Build a common architecture that integrates with campus services and learning communities. The interweaving of the information resources and services into the campus enterprise depends on the capacity for library systems to integrate with both campus administrative and academic systems. Development and implementation decisions must hold a commitment to standards. The Lab must design an architecture, a framework through which the components of our systems and other campus systems interact and interoperate, that ensures our efforts actually result in an integrated environment for the user. While the Lab's strategies are conceived and implemented with the intent of serving the entire University community, they may also include customized presentations and services for specific user segments or communities of interest.

4. Make effective information services scaleable and extensible. The challenge always facing the University is to do great things for so many. The Lab must devise strategies, some certain to be experimental, that deliver superior and preferred resources and services to the entire community. It must seek innovative ways to reduce the support and maintenance requirements while delivering valued information resources and services to a large community.

We are excited about the progress our Digital Library Development Lab has already made and look forward to the challenges ahead.

<http://www.lib.umn.edu/digilab/>

IV. Position Available

The University of Minnesota Libraries seeks a Director of Digital Collections eager to provide innovative and expert leadership. We seek a librarian who knows best practices in digital content management, is an excellent communicator, and is skilled at collaboration and building partnerships.

<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/employment/openings/job122946.html>