2001

OCLC’s CORC in the Library

Terry Ballard
Gill Library, College of New Rochelle, tballard@cnr.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.cnr.edu/gill-publications
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Gill Library at Digital Commons @ CNR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Gill Library Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CNR. For more information, please contact lfazzino@cnr.edu.
The Systems Librarian

OCLC’s CORC in the Library

The Cooperative Online Resource Catalog is good news for this university

T

The whole e-book situation went beyond theory at our library at the end of the Fall 2000 semester. One night, I happened to check QCat—Quinnipiac University’s OPAC—for Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn, so a student who really needed it could start working with a copy of a classic. Being on line in 2001 means that you have potential access to a growing library that contains all of the world’s major classics prior to 1900.

It also adds a new level of complication for those of us who work with online catalogs. These machines have been adding more and more clever ways to answer the question: what is the card catalog answered for our parents? What’s in the library, and where can I find it? Adding links to online resources challenges our concepts, because the library does not “own” them in the classic sense. The scanned pages of Huckleberry Finn are on a server in Bloomfield, Virginia. Do we provide MARC records because the library owns the books or because we can use the catalog to make them available to our users? If the latter is true, then it’s perfectly legitimate to include that electronic item in our online catalog.

If we’re going to make links to Web resources, we need to go beyond the first tentative step that we followed in our library: adding a link to an existing MARC record. We should have a record that describes in detail which edition of the book was scanned, who was responsible for the work, and what the book is about. Fortunately, OCLC has been working on such a project, and all of us will be the winners.

CORC

The OCLC Cooperative Online Resource Catalog (CORC) began in January 1999 as an initiative to help librarians make sense of the free resources available on the Web. According to Bill Carney, a consulting market analyst at OCLC, the initial goal was to sign 100 libraries into a test phase during which they would select Web resources and catalog them in standard MARC or Dublin Core format. Dublin Core was devised by OCLC specifically for describing electronic resources. By June 2000 the CORC records were added to the main OCLC database.

In the December 2000 issue of Information Today [page 26 and http://www.infortoday.com/dec00/hogan.htm], OCLC CEO Jay Jordan described the project to Tom Hogan: “What we are doing with CORC is involving libraries in a selection process and producing, on behalf of library patrons, a mechanism to screen out some of the garbage that we all know is out there on the Web. This is just simply an additional category of information objects from our standpoint. But we’ve done this on a global scale, and we have 489 libraries from 24 countries from around the world partici-pating with us in a) developing the tools set on the fly and b) building the catalog of Web resources.” In other words, CORC catalogs the Web resources in ways that OCLC libraries have treated other media—giving the sites full subject headings and call numbers. The ability to catalog CORC records has since been thrown open to any OCLC member institution. Librarians who want to investigate CORC need only go to its Web site at http://corc.oclc.org and log in with their library's regular password to get to the cataloging module.

After I logged onto the service, I searched for “Quinnipiac.” It turned out that seven Web pages had already been cataloged, but all of them were the name “Quinnipiac College”—a title that was discarded in favor of Quinnipiac University 6 months earlier. I was happily surprised to find that I had the right to make the corrections on the spot. Back in my cataloging days, only a few selected institutions had the right to correct a record in OCLC, so I approved of this de-cumulation. It took only a day or so, but later that week the corrected records showed up in FirstSearch’s WorldCat database.

There are oddities with the concept of mixing books, media, and Web resources in one online catalog.

When I called it up in CORC, an error message on the bottom said that the URL was invalid, but when I clicked on the link in the 856 field, it worked perfectly.

When using the option to catalog an entirely new record, CORC will not only display the resource, but extract data from the Header and Metafield data to create the record, and it will create a fixed field fixed field for computer files. I found this to be quite useless. It allowed me to make a new record describing our library's Web server in about 15 minutes. The rest of the time was spent selecting headings and descriptive material in the notes fields. An added bonus is the credit that our library gets for original cataloging. Later, I looked at the same record in Dublin Core format. At first glance, the new format didn’t look radically different from MARC.

I asked Bill Carney about the relationship between CORC, NetFirst, and FirstSearch. He said that NetFirst is still a very active agency at OCLC, in which the company participates. It allowed select and catalog for-merly planned automated resources in CORC, but CORC records do not display in NetFirst. In any case, I find it exciting that librarians will be working together to create a catalog of useful Web resources.

What to Do with It

Our library is always actively pursuing ways to increase access to worthwhile full-text materials on the Web. We already have a page of links to e-text sources at http://invictus.quinnipiac.edu/texts.html, and we can look through those links to find particular works. However, our goal will be to use QCat’s indexing capabilities, so the marriage of MARC and Web resources is good news for us. I would like to add some of the more impressive scans such as the ones at University of Virginia—to our catalog, and CORC is providing that capability. This will be a way for librarians to add classic works that we may have missed in our paper acquisitions. It will also be a way to supplement a collection of e-books that we have begun to acquire through our subscription to netlib.

There are oddities with the concept of mixing books, media, and Web resources in one online catalog. One of the initial CORC volunteer libraries cataloged QCat. If I downloaded the MARC record that describes QCat into CORC, the catalog would have a record for itself, which would then provide a link to QCat. This kind of recursive situa-tion reminds me of the puzzle that comedian Steven Wright posed: “What’s another word for theses?”

Terry Ballard is the automation librarian at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut. He can be reached at ballard@quinnipiac.edu, or through his Web page at http://www.geocities.com/terryballard.

Clearwater Public Library System

Clearwater purchased Polaris as an upgrade from GIS’s GALAXY system, which the library has used since 1992. In making this decision, Clearwater joined a number of other public libraries that have migrated from GALAXY to Polaris to provide a more technologically advanced automation system, according to the announcement. Polaris offers full Windows functionality and helps public libraries in adopting new technologies in the future that are of their patrons’

“Polaris delivers satisfied patrons,” said John Szabo, director of the Clearwater Public Library System. “It features an easy-to-use public access catalog and requires little patron education, and its Windows NT foundation makes it a ‘friendly face’ for users.”

Clearwater Public Library System has 97 user licenses, approximately 400,000 volumes, and five branches.

“We upgraded to Polaris because we were ready for the latest technology,” said Linda Lange, Clearwater Public Library System’s automation coordinator. “I love the ease of Polaris and the fact that it’s so easy to maneuver through the staff client. We’ve also appreciated the support we’ve gotten from GIS.”