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Adding a New Dimension: E-Books

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The Systems Librarian

by Terry Ballard

Adding a New Dimension: E-Books

The next link in the online library evolution is already here

OPACs have come a long way. When I first started working with them in the early 1980s, they were, literally, "electronic card catalogs." The information in them was derived from the data used to print catalog cards. The most important difference was that the card catalog showed only information about book titles in general. The OPAC could tell you whether or not the book was checked out and, if so, when it was due to be returned.

For a time, the two systems coexisted at my library. One day, however, cards stopped arriving at the catalog and we started to concentrate on making the OPAC

The preceding may seem like a lot of time spent in the past, but I think it's too easy for us to concentrate on the next program or gadget out there and lose track of the fact that we are in the middle of one big unfolding story: specifically, the ways in which we are using technology to get people to the information they need.

Back to the Future

At my library, we were aware that e-books were on the Web, but did not pursue the matter aggressively until early this year. One thing that influenced me to add e-books to our system was an improvement in our Innovative Interfaces catalog that allowed for regular, systematic checking of every link in the online catalog. While many of the e-books were mounted by substantial sites like the University of Michigan's Making of America project, others appeared to be run on some sort of shoestring operation. I knew that some of these would soon disappear, so it made me nervous to have thousands of links but no reliable quality control. Knowing that I could always check validity at the push of a button, I felt it was time to go into full production of e-book links. We were going to add a brick to the virtual library

What to Do First

I knew that we wouldn't be finding e-books of Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Faulkner. Their works are all copyrighted and unavailable (as they should be). I started with the 19th century and worked back. Using Yahoo!, I found a page devoted to Dickens that led to links by a company called Bibliomania.com. It's hard to tell what Bibliomania.com is all about, because its Web site gives no history of the company nor any means to contact it. On the other hand, it has a stunning collection of available literary classics, including the complete plays of Shakespeare.

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the prime source of information about our collection. A year or so later, the cabinets disappeared altogether, and few people seemed to notice.

By then, the OPAC had improved a bit. The biggest gain was in keyword searching. Instead of just listing data, the OPAC could combine things in a way that a card catalog never could. We could pose such queries as, "Show me every title that mentions Mark Twain and cats," and get results. We take it for granted now, but that was very liberating in the late '80s. Not entirely liberating though, because people still had to go to the library to use the OPAC.

That started to change in the early 1990s as librarians began to see the possibilities of the Internet. Soon, students were checking the catalog from their homes or dorm rooms. Librarians were learning that by adding large fields of contents notes, their users could find short stories or even songs in large anthologies—benefits that were impractical with the card catalog.

With the advent of the Web came a quantum leap in OPAC functionality. Not only could we control the look of the catalog, but we could now use the OPAC as a jumping-off point to get to other information sources. The term "virtual library" came into vogue in the early '90s, and OPAC technology by the end of the decade was making them a reality as thousands of titles showed up on the Web, enabling OPACs to provide links to them.

The richest link to date has been a site maintained by the University of Pennsylvania that indexes the e-book content of the Web by title or author. Its virtual library OPAC can be found at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books/authors.html>. It brings together e-books from Project Gutenberg, Making of America, Bibliomania.com, and others. Sometimes, a literary classic will have up to three sites with separate edi-

tions. Some of my favorite e-books are from the University of Virginia's virtual library, which includes scans of each illustration in a book.

After a month, we had linked to the major classics, and we now had e-books of Twain, Hardy, and Plato that our students could access 24 hours a day from any location. This linking project went quickly because the mechanics are quite simple. First, we added an 856 field to the MARC record of the book (most of this was done with macros). Then, we copied and pasted the URL (see Figure 1). In the Webpac display (see Figure 2), the patron sees the standard bibliographic data, followed by a link to access the entire work.

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26 500      (236) This work is the property of the University of North
           Carolina at Chapel Hill: It may be used freely by individuals for
           research, teaching and personal use as long as this statement of
           availability is included in the text.
27 651      0 Mississippi River--Description and travel
28 651      0 Mississippi River--Valley--Social life and customs
29 856      0 |uhttp://netalab.unc.edu/docsouth/twainlife/twainno1.html
30 911      qlah
```

Figure 1


Previous Record	Next Record	Return to Browse	Another Search	Start Over	Marc Display	Export
						
Author: Twain, Mark, 1835-1910 Title: Life on the Mississippi (Electronic Text), by Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) with an introduction by J. W. Rankin Pub./date: Boston, James P. Osgood and Company [c1883]						
Click on the following to: Connect to http://netalab.unc.edu/docsouth/twainlife/twainno1.html						
Descript: 624, [1] p. front. (port.) 19 cm Note: The electronic edition is a part of the UNC-CH digitization project, Documenting the American South.						

Figure 2

For the next phase of the project, we targeted a particular area: a microfiche collection of 19th-century American works called The Library of American Civilization (LAC). This consists of more than 4,000 books of original source material. The problem is that the format is a subminiature microfiche card that requires a special reader. We'd had many students ask about these works because they are in the OPAC, but as soon as they see what they're dealing with, they go on to something else. If we could get digital links to these titles, that would solve a big problem. In the initial phase of our linking project, we ran across major works such as Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* in the Penn list—books that were also in the LAC collection.

I gave a student a printout with the titles of every book in the Library of American Civilization collection, and asked her to check those titles against the Penn list. We found enough matches to keep us busy for a time. We noticed that a high percentage of the matches were e-books provided by the University of Michigan's Making of America. I wrote the University of Michigan and asked if it was deliberately targeting LAC titles. Judy Av-

ery, a librarian representing the Making of America project, responded.

"Making of America is defined as American social history, 1850-1877. Another librarian and I selected the books to be included in this first phase from a printout of all our library's American imprints from that time period. We just used our judgment as to what constituted social history. I suppose it shouldn't be surprising that there is overlap with the LAC collection, but we didn't use their list.

"We've now moved into a new phase in which a larger number of books are being scanned with the only criteria this time around the date range and American imprints.

"This is, by the way, at its core a preservation project that is investigating how digitizing can be an alternative to microfilming for brittle books. The project was funded through a joint grant with Cornell."

We can only hope this is a trend that others will follow. For the real pioneering effort, though, you have to go back to 1971, when Michael Hart came up with the concept that

became Project Gutenberg. He was intrigued by the idea that once a book had been digitized it could be reproduced infinitely. The first document he digitized was the *Declaration of Independence*. Since then, Hart and a band of dedicated volunteers have digitized more than 2,400 titles, and distributed them through a network of mirror sites. New e-books are appearing at the rate of one per day. For the whole story (and links to the works) you can go to Project Gutenberg's main site at <http://www.promo.net/pg>.

NetLibrary

There is a new way for companies to provide copyrighted books through the Web. Barely a year old, NetLibrary (<http://www.netlibrary.com>) is doing some very interesting things with e-books. The company provides a mix of public domain works that can be seen by users who sign up for a free membership, and copyrighted books that can only be used by paid subscribers. NetLibrary can work with libraries that purchase a minimum number of books for their patrons. Using linked records in MARC fields and IP recognition, the library's users can "check out" an electronic title and look at it. While

the book is checked out, nobody else at the site can see it, but librarians can devise different checkout periods for both reference and regular books. Even if they are using an ASCII e-book, their software displays the work as a book (see Figure 3), and users can click to go to the next page, or skip ahead to the next chapter.



Figure 3

According to Brian Bell, netLibrary's director of public relations, the company's first partners were mainly academic presses. Now, with 12,000 copyrighted titles and 3,000 public domain works, the company is expanding into the public library market with books such as the Complete Idiot's Guides. This year, netLibrary formed an important partnership with Innovative Interfaces, Inc. to integrate the use of e-books with Innovative's automated library systems (Innopac and Millennium). Judging by the full-page, full-color ad for netLibrary that I saw in *The New York Times Book Review*, the company is solidly grounded.

The Future

This is a fast-changing field. Between the time I write this and the time you read it, there might be 10 new developments in e-books. To that end, I have added a file to our library's server (<http://invictus.quinnipiac.edu/etexts.html>) that will provide links to all of the sites I have mentioned plus anything new that comes along in the meantime. Our library has already started using e-books in our course reserve module, but that's another story altogether.

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Regents, Johns Hopkins

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Hopkins with valuable experience in delivering electronic collections and services to students participating in the innovative distance-learning degree programs at Regents College," said James G. Neal, dean of university libraries and Sheridan director at Johns Hopkins University. "This collaboration will serve as a model for quality academic support services through technology while preserving personal touch and professional oversight."

Source: Regents College, Albany, NY, 518/464-8500; <http://www.regents.edu>.

3M to Donate Library Detection Systems to Schools

3M has announced the launch of "3M Salute to Schools," a program providing up to \$1 million in 3M Detection Systems to school library media centers in the U.S. The program is being sponsored by 3M, in partnership with the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association. AASL will be responsible for receiving applications and selecting recipients for the donation.

"3M is ecstatic about being able to bring more 3M Detection Systems into school library media centers. Without a security system, libraries lose hundreds of books and other educational resources every year," said Don Leslie, industry marketing manager at

3M Library Systems. "A security system is crucial to protecting the resources that enhance education and help create a stimulating learning environment for students."

"Protecting library resources in schools contributes to the overall improvement of library media services for young people, and that's what AASL is all about," said M. Ellen Jay, president of AASL. "AASL is pleased to partner with 3M to help school libraries preserve these resources for students throughout the country."

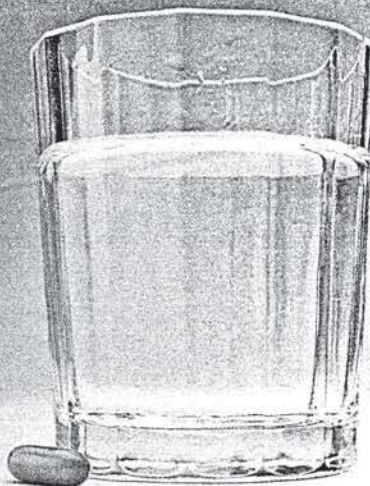
The program is open to middle and high schools in the U.S. Schools selected to receive the donation will be awarded a 3M Detection System for the entrance/exit of their

media center, a supply of 3M Tattle-Tape Security Strips for marking items in their collection, and necessary materials-processing accessories. Individual donations will vary depending upon the needs of the library.

Schools must apply by May 31, 2000. Applications are available online at <http://www.3M.com/library> or by calling the American Library Association's Fax-On-Demand at 800/545-2433, pressing 4, and requesting document number 802. Recipients will be announced at the American Library Association Annual Conference held July 8-11, 2000 in Chicago.

Source: 3M, St. Paul, MN, 800/328-0067; <http://www.3M.com/library>.

That medical journal you ordered on migraines . . .



. . . wasn't supposed to give you one.

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