Homegrown Search Results and Platforms

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With all of the proprietary systems available in the library market place to manage and make available a library's resources they all have limitations on what they can do, when the library is trying to promote a particular resource or program on a library's campus. Because of these limitations, and the ingenuity of the library's programming specialists, the library creates local databases and search platforms to serve a particular need they might have, whether it be to promote a particular type of resource or promote a program in the library.

Promoting Specialized or Under Utilized Resources

Although all the library's resources can be located in the OPAC or discovery system, they are not always well marketed or stand out for use by students and faculty. Marketing for electronic resources has continually been an issue for libraries trying to promote their resources. Because of this, libraries have come up with ways to market resources by creating local search platforms.

Bento Box Search Results — One example of this is how libraries leverage the information in the OPAC or a discovery system to create a Bento Box type search results page to help separate resources and highlight different types of resources the library has to offer, especially audio visual material that is often overlooked as legitimate source for research. One of the first libraries to execute the Bento Box search results page was **NC State University Libraries** (Figure 1). The purpose of this interface was an "attempt to guide searchers to appropriate resources." When **NC State** first reported on this feature several other libraries were also using a similar format including **Villanova**, **University of California, San Francisco**, **University of Michigan**, and **University of Virginia**.[1] Over time, several other universities have employed this type of in-house developed search method.

Figure 1: NC State Bento Box Results

According to a blog post written on the Usable Libraries by **Emily Singely**, one of the main reasons to use the Bento Box style of search results is because the search result style "eliminates the 'default search' problem, where users tend to favor the most prominent search option and end up missing important resources."[2] This gets to the point of trying to leverage the search functionality you have in your OPAC and displaying it in a way that is more digestible by users and helps highlight resources students may have otherwise ignored if not displayed in this way. How this is achieved at each institution is different but the overall concept is the same. For some libraries, this kind of programming is not possible because of a lack of staff or interest, but many larger libraries have utilized and perfected this method of bringing users search results.

Locally Created Search Interfaces as Usage Booster – Streaming Video Search — At **UNC Charlotte**, the usage of the streaming media that the library either purchased or subscribed to was lower than expected. The library was seeking funding for additional streaming video and felt that the videos were not being discovered in our discovery system amongst all of the other content within our catalog of resources.

At that time the library had purchased streaming video packages from **Alexander Street Press** and **Ambrose**, as well as subscribing to larger packages of films from **Films on Demand** and a small package from **Kanopy Streaming**. Overall, the library had access to over 20,000 streaming videos and had spent close to $100K on these resources. In order to increase the overall usage the library decided to create its own search interface for streaming video content to provide another place for discovery of this content.

Since the database was created to serve as a marketing tool, the designers did not implement deep indexing or extensive faceting. With the simplified search, titles can be searched by keyword (based on the title), browsed by subject (based on how the vendor had categorized the video) and can be limited by date. The records include a brief description, run-time, year and a thumbnail. The vendors provide all of the indexed information through spreadsheets the library acquires from the administration portals. Once a user clicks on a title result, they are sent directly to the video on the vendor website, in a new window, so they do not lose their search results.

Users can get to the **UNC Charlotte** Streaming video page (Figure 2)[3] in two ways: on the library homepage, there is a tab in the search box for streaming video, or they can go directly to the streaming video search page, which is advertised on various sections of the library's webpages. If they go directly to the website they will also see highlighted films that are automatically pulled from the title lists each week, as well as direct links to each of our collections.

Upkeep is relatively minimal for this database except for adding new films that we lease or buy. Our subscription databases only remove titles twice a year, so we remove titles infrequently.

Unfortunately, usage of the library's streaming video has not significantly changed since the new search interface was implemented, so more testing and possibly formulating focus groups to assess what is needed to boost this usage will be required. On the other hand, we have received a significant increase in requests by faculty for more streaming video, so their awareness of this type of content in general has increased. With a little more promotion, there is still a possibility for the streaming video database to be useful toward showing the breadth of our collection or assisting faculty with steering students towards films assigned for classes. This experience has helped the library determine how we will spend our money on streaming video in the future.
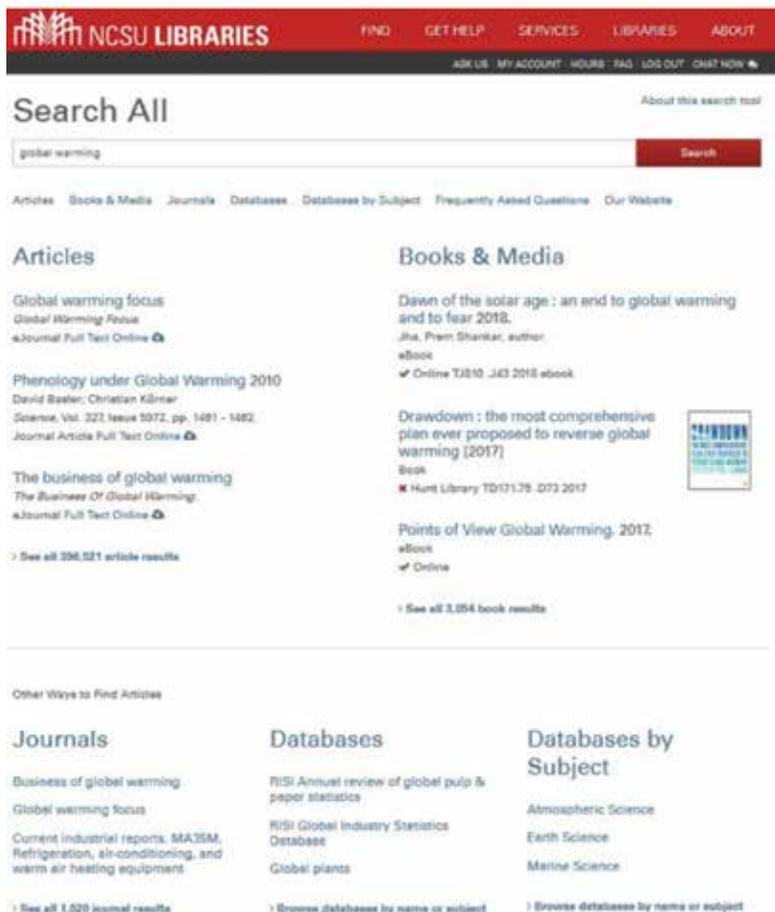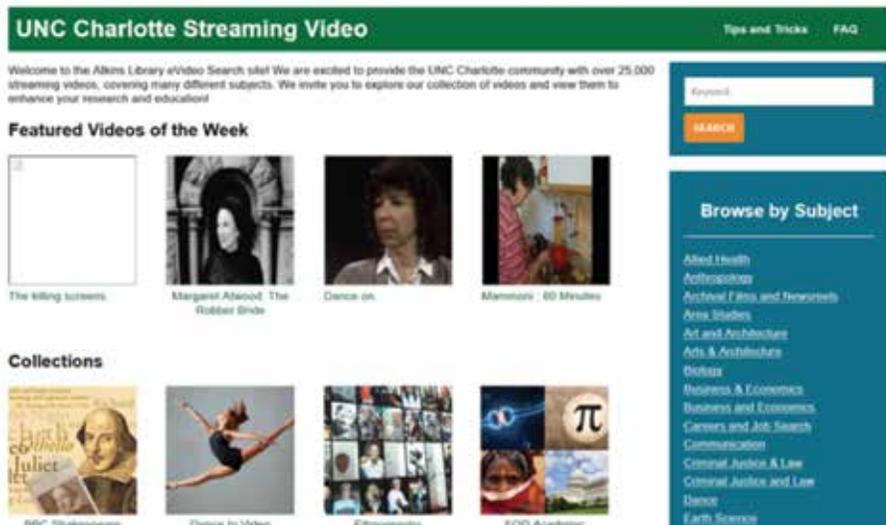
Figure 2: UNC Charlotte Streaming Video Website

Locally Created Search Interfaces
to Promote a Library Program

In addition to the important day to day work the library does for its students, faculty, and staff, it also provides unique services and programs to the campus to enhance teaching and learning. These programs often support a larger issue the campus is dealing with that needs additional promotion and outreach.

E-Textbook Database — At **UNC Charlotte**, like with many other schools, we are grappling with textbook affordability. One of the ways we have tried to help faculty and students address the high cost of textbooks is encouraging the faculty to use eBooks that are freely available to our students. These eBooks are not restricted by DRM and allow unlimited user access through the library as alternatives to traditional textbooks.

Figure 3: UNC Charlotte Faculty eTextbook Database

As a way to promote this program, the library created a simple SQL database, the Faculty eTextbook Database (Figure 3),[4] with all the eBook titles the library owned as well as titles the library could purchase for faculty to use in their classes. Much like the streaming video database the searchable information in the database is limited compared to the catalog. The user can search by author, ISBN, or keyword, which is taken from either the title or the subject assigned by the publishers.

The information that drives the database comes directly from the publisher as an excel file either emailed directly to the library or acquired through the publisher's administration portal and is reformatted in the system. We also provide detailed information to the faculty member using **ProQuest** Syndetics, which provides a description and/or the table of contents for the book. Titles the library owns have a green dot next to them to show they are available and titles with a yellow dot indicate that the library would need to order the book for the faculty member.

The library tries to keep the database as up to date as possible by adding new titles monthly, quarterly or yearly, depending on what can be obtained from the vendor. In the event a faculty member does not see a book they are looking for in the database they can contact a dedicated email address to inquire regarding its availability and provide alternative options. The program overall has been successful in terms of increasing eBook usage and helping faculty save students on the cost of textbooks. A full account of the program can be found in the monograph *Affordable Course Materials: Electronic Textbooks and Open Educational Resources*, published by the **Association for Collections and Technical Services**.[5]

Since creating the database in 2015, **Atkins Library** has encouraged other libraries who are working on textbook affordability to consider implementing a similar program. As part of this encouragement, the library is happy to share the code created by their programmers with other schools to set up their own database. We were happy to hear that the library at the **University of South Florida** took us up on our offer and has implemented a similar database. Links to these databases can be found in the references for this article.

Open Educational Resources Databases — Another trend that we have been seeing in relation to supporting textbook affordability is the creation of databases that pull all of the Open Educational Resources that are available to faculty from across the internet. Recently **George Mason University** created their Mason OER Metafinder (Figure 4).[6] According to the database website, this metafinder will "simultaneously search OER Repositories." Some of the OER Repositories included in the metasearch are Merlot, OER Commons, Open Textbook Library, and MIT OpenCourseware. This kind of database helps to promote the use of Open Education resources and also helps faculty members navigate content that has been curated as opposed to just using Google.

Conclusion

One of the academic library's ultimate goals is to connect reliable research and educational content with their students and faculty. Although we have some of the most powerful search engines in the world in OPACs, Discovery Services, and leveraging the all-powerful Google, these resources do not always direct users to the unique or specialized content provided by the library. To

help promote these resources, libraries have come up with some unique ways to display and market this content by creating local search results and databases. This article lists just a list a few examples, but there are many more out there including local database lists, research guides, and search interfaces. It will be exciting to see what libraries come up with next! 🐎

Figure 4: George Mason — Mason Metafinder

Endnotes

1. **Lynema, Emily**, **Cory Lown**, and **David Woodbury**. 2012. "Virtual Browse: Designing User-Oriented Services for Discovery of Related Resources." *Library Trends* 61, no. 1: 218-233. *Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts with Full Text.*

2. **Emily Singley**, "To Bento or not to Bento — Displaying search results," *Usable Libraries*, January 4, 2016, *http://emilysingley.net/usablelibraries/to-bento-or-not-to-bento-displaying-search-results/.*

3. *http://library.uncc.edu/streamingvideo*

4. *http://library.uncc.edu/et*

5. **Elizabeth Siler**, "Thinking Outside the Pages," in *Affordable Course Materials: Electronic Textbooks and Open Educational Resources*, (Chicago, 2017): 25-43.

6. *https://mason.deepwebaccess.com/mason__MasonLibrariesOpenEducationResources_5f4/desktop/en/search.html*