

ABSTRACT

Digitizing historic newspaper runs and releasing the images on the web has a long history at many public and private institutions. With ever-increasing digitized content hosted by institutions striving for open access, the need for metasearch tools that locate, organize and connect researchers to specific digitized materials has arrived. In its most basic distillation, this project will aim to create a searchable database of MARC format generated records capable of connecting users to the freely-available, online content of historic newspapers. However, its true objective is to serve as a model for how librarians and scholars can readily use their subject expertise combined with library MARC record content to begin to develop similar database projects, enabling specific open access resources to be better organized and accessible for research. Keywords : library-created databases, database-backed Web pages, Refworks, digital collections.

BACKGROUND

UF has worked for many years to provide better access to online newspaper content via proprietary databases, internal digitization projects and organized reference resources for both Florida and national news titles. In November 2009 a small group applied for a library grant to further develop a new concept of in-house digital discovery tools.



Examples of Catalog Databases of Full-Text Content



UF Plan of Action and Timeline

1. Chose a Specific Theme of Digitized Content [Nov 2009]

- The theme of digitized newspapers was supported by existing content and importance of digital facsimiles to academic researchers.
- The theme appealed to both regional and national collections and left the door open for collaboration.

2. Sought Consensus and Institutional Support [Nov 2009]

- We contacted campus faculty for input and letters of support for our proposed project.
- We applied for and were awarded an internal grant of \$5000 to begin work on our database.

3. Tested Bibliographic Reference Software [Nov 2009]

- Tested RefWorks, Zotero and Citeline.
- Selected RefWorks for interim data repository based on comparisons with other software.

4. Began Creating Initial Database in RefWorks [Nov 2009 - Jun 2010]

- Exporting pertinent records from institutional catalogs and OCLC to form a database of newspapers titles.
- Groomed database records to reflect dates of available digital content and added hyperlinks to full-text content.

5. Migrating Database to Content Management Software (CMS) [Jun-Aug 2010]

- Investigating CMS options such as Drupal, Joomla, WordPress, Islandora, etc.
- Analyzing data transfer quality and experimenting with export methodology.
- Development of resource interface and design of front page.

6. Planning for October 2010 Launch of Online Database [Aug-Oct 2010]

- Data clean up and testing of online interface.
- Preparing official launch with local and global marketing campaign.
- Demonstration of database on campus.

Importance of the Project

The University of Florida's (UF) Catalog of Digital Historic Newspapers is a project to create an online resource that facilitates discovery of digitized historical newspaper content. The project was begun in November 2009 and starting October 2010 will facilitate online access to over 700 newspaper titles from the southern United States. The project is using RefWorks reference management software to organize and build an initial database of MARC format generated records that are capable of connecting users to the freely-available full-text of online facsimiles of historic U.S. newspapers. The resulting database will then be exported and further developed into an online database using a supplemental content management software. The final product will be an independent online database of digital resources.

One of the aims of UF's Catalog of Digital Historical Newspapers project is to provide an example a digital platform that librarians and information professionals can use to become more involved in organizing an ever growing amount of free and openly-accessible digital content that remains for many reasons hidden (or hard to find) from online researchers.

Further Reading on Catalog Databases of Digital Content

Find us on Facebook:

“UF Catalog of Digital Historical Newspapers”

Selected References:

- Hewitt, J.A. and Horowitz, S.A. (2007). The American South and the Public Library User: A Proposal to Improve Access for the General Public to a Database of Southern and North Carolina Materials. *North Carolina Libraries*, 65 (3/4), 70-75.
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