

Title of Session: Targeting Librarians! Hidden Web and Subscription Databases

Moderator: Lesley Farmer

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Room: Hot Tub Conference Room

BJB2: Welcome to this month's Targeting Librarians discussion....The hidden web discovered.

BJB2: we usually start the discussions with introductions.

BJB2: Can you please tell us where you are located and what you teach/do?

BJB2: then we'll hand the virtual floor over to Lesley Farmer, our discussion leader

JaneGu: Hello Everyone, I am Jane Guittman, in San Bernardino Cty, CA and teach at juvenile hall, as the LMT

LesleyF: Yes, I'm Lesley Farmer. I coordinate the library media teacher program at California St. University Long Beach

StephaniLa: I am in Arkansas and am an elementary LMS (k-6)

RachelPe: My name is Rachel Pena, Teach at South Texas College(STC), teach computer science, currently student at Texas A&M towards a doctoral in Education Leadership

LesleyF: So an interesting mix. I'll ask again -- what do you think of when you hear the term "hidden web"?

StephaniLa: Databases that do not show up as hits in search engines such as Google.

JaneGu: I'm not sure, but can't wait to know!

RachelPe: shortcuts, hidden from databases

RachelPe: hidden documents

RachelPe: non-bias info

LesleyF: OK, basically that term, which is sort of murky itself, refers to the unobvious information that typical search engines don't catch/capture.

StephaniLa: I know there are some state records that can only be accessed through a database. You don't find them on easily. You have to know the URL of that database.

LesleyF: The most obvious documents are those which are linked from a directory or, even more so, a database. Most search engines, even metacrawlers, don't drill down that far.

LesleyF: So you're right on target, Stephani.

BethD joined the room.

StephaniLa: How do you find them?

LesleyF: another big area includes those documents that require a login-password. You can't drill down into them just in the same way that you can't see what's in someone's closet if you can't open the house door.

LesleyF: Hi, Beth, join the hidden web discussion!

BethD waves

RachelPe: If they require a login-password I am sure it's for a good reason, don't want those files

StephaniLa: Such as Ancestry.com?

LesleyF: Well, two main reasons for the login-password is confidential information -- it could be a business, security, a private user group, etc. OR

LesleyF: it can be the result of people needing to pay for the information.

LesleyF: The latter leads to subscription databases, which are much favored in library land.

JaneGu: So the location isn't hidden, just access?

LesleyF: Exactly, Jane.

RachelPe: I'm tired of search engines that are bias like the media-only want us to have access to their selections

LesleyF: and the fact that you can pay to have your site pushed up the ladder to be seen in the first 10 hits or so...

StephaniLa: I didn't know they did that!

LesleyF: BTW, the more that a site is linked TO, the higher up the scale it is in google's search algorithm. The idea is that if other people link to it, it must be good.

RachelPe: The current results are leading to inefficient search engines. Word of mouth is our best bet, back to discussion groups and usenets

LesleyF: AND, a short list of links that includes yours will be more highly notes in Google than a long list of links because the idea is that the list is more selective.

LesleyF: That's right, Rachel. As educators and other librarians create good directories, for instance, they get the word out through conferences, listservs, professional articles, presentations, Tapped In, etc.

LesleyF: I DO want to share a couple of tricks to help dig up searchable databases, then I'll share with you some high-quality databases, and then end with a good discussion on subscription databases. OK?

JaneGu: Sure~

RachelPe: Great!

StephaniLa: Great!

BethD: yes!

JaneGu: Yes, thank you ...

LesleyF: So, first, a couple of neat sources.

StephaniLa: That's great.

LesleyF: Beaucoup (<http://www.beaucoup.com>) and Complete Planet (<http://completeplanet.com>) provide an index of searchable databases, which you can then search.

LesleyF: You can play with these later or check them out now.

JaneGu: Do you want us to take a look now or ?

JaneGu: Sorry, I see!

LesleyF: well, it's more leisurely to explore later, I think...

CathiP joined the room.

LesleyF: Hi, Cathi!

CathiP: Hi!

LesleyF: We're talking about ways to uncover the hidden web.

CathiP: Okay

JaneGu: Yes, later will work best.

StephaniLa: I agree.

BJB2 . o O (all the urls will be in your script)

LesleyF: Lycos, which has been around a while, has an Invisible Web catalog that provides links to more than 7000 specialty search resources. You can browse listings or Lycos will suggest databases to search within its own search results.

LesleyF: The URL is http://dir.lycos.com/Reference/Searchable_Databases

JaneGu: Lesley, this is strange...yesterday I was trying to check out the road closures up here and landed on a site that said something to the effect: GET OUT! So I did.. it was a government site...

JaneGu: So my question is, how come it had access if no one was supposed to be there???????

RachelPe: Is there a site with search engine rankings like which has the best search results in terms of the algorithm they use?

LesleyF: Jane, Someone has to be on the site to work on it -- sort of like a road being under construction. Only you weren't supposed to be on it. Don't you have some back roads that are the same way? I've gotten on them accidentally...

LesleyF: Good question, Rachel. There is no best algorithm because our info needs vary so much and the kind of info you need and the purpose vary...

LesleyF: Just as there is not perfect encyclopedia.

LesleyF: Which is a nice segue, just for a minute, into online encyclopedias. Wikipedia is a searchable encyclopedia that is accessible from more search engines. Now the question is, do you know how the information is placed in that encyclopedia?

RachelPe: no idea

StephaniLa: no

RachelPe: possibly selected information

LesleyF: anybody -- it's open so if someone wants to submit an article, they can. If the information is OK and no one objects, it stays. If others say it's wrong, they correct it. The idea is a self-correcting phenomenon, but aren't you a bit nervous about the great unwashed who read or write?

StephaniLa: Accurate information goes out the window.

RachelPe: yes, worried about how reliable is the info

JaneGu: That doesn't seem secure enough, reliable enough. is there an expert review?

LesleyF: So you might be the expert in the universe about a topic, but if you don't know about Wikipedia or care about it, your brain won't be reflected there...

LesleyF: the review is the peer review committee of cyberspace. You can be a peer reviewer... or a contributor. How democratic can you get? It's the idea of the cream rising to the top. Very idealistic, I think.

JaneGu: Or someone who is an expert to be could be there!

LesleyF: yup

RachelPe: idealistic!

LesleyF: so here's one case where it might be nice to have some stuff hidden...?

BJB2: Lesley, did you see EPIC? It was posted on one of the lists

BJB2: <http://oak.psych.gatech.edu/~epic/>

LesleyF: On the other hand, subscription encyclopedias would not be searchable via typical search engines.

LesleyF: an interesting feature of google, though, is that it can search within some sites so if you went to the National Library of Canada web site, <http://www.nlc.bnc.ca>, and once inside there you could use google to find articles on biography reading, for instance.

LesleyF: Just as you can use Google as a means to search your own hard drive. All those files you wrote that now feel hidden to you (like telling yourself a secret and then forgetting it...)

LesleyF: But enough of that. Let me note some good databases that aren't obvious hits with most search engines but give very good information/links that will be particularly useful for K12. OK?

RachelPe: ? Don't understand literally ?'

StephaniLa: How do you do that?

RachelPe: yes how?

JaneGu: So would we just type in keyword for our own hard drive and then do the search?

LesleyF: you type in the Google box (for instance): biography reading site:www.nlc-bnc.ca to follow the earlier example

LesleyF: no space between site:and the URL

LesleyF: like moon launch site:www.nasa.gov

CarolN joined the room.

LesleyF: if you want some clever search strategies to uncover interesting sites, try <http://netsquirrel.com>

LesleyF: Hi, Carol -- we're talking about the hidden web.

JaneGu: .Great, thank you~

LesleyF: OK on to good databases, which don't cost money.

JaneGu: Will be great for our current budget!

LesleyF: as a librarian, I really like Lakewood Public Library, which is a secret treasure in southern California. Their ready reference site is <http://www.lkwdpl.org/readyref/> It is organized by topic and by Dewey Decimal system.

LesleyF: Take a quick look at it now -- just click on the highlighted URL.

JaneGu: I am not able to open the link???

LesleyF: well, then, look at it later.

JaneGu: okay

LesleyF: Another Southern California find is <http://infomine.ucr.edu>

LesleyF: There are about a dozen librarians who maintain webliographies -- and catalog them ...

LesleyF: these are OK for older HS students.

LesleyF: I'm sure you already know about <http://www.KidsClick.org> and <http://www.yahooligans.org> and <http://www.ipl.org>

LesleyF: those work for younger students (ipl has a kids zone and a teen zone)

StephaniLa: I've not used the third you mentioned.

LesleyF: It's the Internet Public Library.

StephaniLa: Ok.

BethD: I noticed in the Lakewood site which states their listings as "authoritative" has wikipedia listed. based on the earlier comments, I was surprised.

LesleyF: Another reference desk type of site is <http://www.vrd.org> -- Virtual Reference Desk

LesleyF: well, Wikipedia is controversial and some librarians say that the cream to top really does happen. I'm just a cynic

CarolN: I haven't used it this year, but Discovery School.com had a nice student site. I would try to find it, but got kicked out of this room a few minutes ago when I tried to find a site.

LesleyF: that's a good site for teachers and for a good beginning list for student topics.

LesleyF: another one is <http://library.sau.edu/bestinfo>

LesleyF: Jane mentioned government information, which can be very hard to find, especially state and local information. For kids, though, there are a couple of nice sites that they probably wouldn't get to via google. Ready?

BJB2 nods

JaneGu: yes!

StephaniLa: sure

RachelPe: YES!

CarolN: pen in hand

LesleyF: <http://www.firstgov.gov> and <http://www.kids.gov> and my favorite...

LesleyF: <http://bensguide.gpo.gov>

LesleyF: take a couple of minutes to explore

JaneGu: Firstgov for kids is so fantastic...our kids at jcs really use that one--

LesleyF: start them young...

JaneGu: And for basic government is Ben's Guide, another great site.

RachelPe: nice

LesleyF: that's the third one that I listed.

JaneGu: We use Ben's guide frequently and is a strong site for our literacy challenged students

LesleyF: I have an end teaser, but I think I will use that as next month's topic: finding sound, visual and video sources -- there are some amazing new engines out..

LesleyF: SO instead

CarolN: My first reaction to ben's guide was that it looked a bit juvenile. I'm in a high school. But it did give a good list of links. I haven't been to the girl's power site in a year. It's very good.

LesleyF: I want to end with subscription databases: these are databases that tend to find articles from magazines, newspapers, and the mass media.

LesleyF: The girls' power site is a bit disappointing to me -- sort of reinforces stereotypes, but that's my bias...

LesleyF: You probably know these subscription databases: Ebsco, ProQuest, Wilson, SIRS, e-library, Gale's suite.

RachelPe: all free access?

StephaniLa: We have Ebsco.

LesleyF: NetTrekker is an interesting bird because it mainly links to websites -- aligned with state content standards.

RachelPe: good one Stephanie

LesleyF: NO.... over \$1000, usually about \$3000 or more

LesleyF: per year

StephaniLa: Our state library and Dept. of Ed. provide the schools with free access.

JaneGu: Our budget says NO! We had a 90% cut this year..

LesleyF: what you're paying for is the indexing and the choice of articles -- and payment of royalties to download the articles

LesleyF: yes, Stephanie, 46 states have statewide subscription databases available to education. California is one of the lucky 4 that doesn't...

CarolN: Michigan provides libraries with several infotrac databases that are very good.

StephaniLa: Gee!

LesleyF: InfoTrac is owned by Gale, which is owned by Thomson, which is owned by Pearson, I think goes the cycle...

CarolN: Now that's a web!

StephaniLa smiles

LesleyF: The sad thing is that lots of students and teachers don't know about these wonderful indexed products, which are also educational and developmentally appropriate products.

LesleyF: and they don't realize that they cost SOMEone (the state, the district, the school) real money.

StephaniLa: You are right, Lesley.

CarolN: Does everyone battle to get the state databases in teacher's minds and behaviors?

LesleyF: If you have ever selected just the right articles, indexed, and catalogued items, and tried to get copyright permission (I've done it all), you can see why it costs...

LesleyF: yes, they do, Carol.

StephaniLa: What a job! I have never done that, but am sure glad someone does. I can see why.

BethD: I know it's a constant struggle for me, carol

LesleyF: a major reason is because most teachers did not grow up with these databases. Some of them remember Dialog or BRS, which were precursors, and that you might pay up to \$360 per hour to search those databases. talk about intimidating!

LesleyF: Remember, we're talking about tech foreigners, not tech natives.

LesleyF: And kids sure don't think in terms of buying information...

CarolN: I made colorful bookmarks with the databases web address. I urged (nagged) one particular teacher to require at least one article be from the database for a research assignment. The student reaction was "oh no, not mel again."

CarolN: mel = Michigan electronic library

StephaniLa: We also have Grolier.

LesleyF: I think the easiest sell is that the articles are hand-picked and indexed for use in schools/educational institutions. No Janet Jackson bare breasts, no fifth-grade report suddenly on the web or dissertation that a K-12 student wouldn't understand. No worry about filters, etc.

LesleyF: Georgia has Galileo, which is very cool.

JaneGu: We have a ways to go with all this at our site...in the library, meaning me, and even the instructional leaders at our site ...what would be a good first step re subscription services ?

LesleyF: and the subscription databases do the selection work that teachers don't have time to do ==--

CarolN: What is Grolier?

LesleyF: Jane, you have a difficult problem because many public libraries provide free access to their subscription databases for their users, including students. BUT the kids are supposed to access those databases from home, not from another institution such as a school

StephaniLa: Grolier...Online Encyclopedia

CarolN: Thank you Stephanie

LesleyF: Grolier is an encyclopedia, most known in its electronic form. Other online/digital encyclopedias include Encarta and Britannica. World Book also comes in electronic format.

JaneGu: Too bad we couldn't do it that way, as an auxiliary access of some sort.

JaneGu: Very nice sharing class time with you all--please excuse me and see you next time~

LesleyF: Maybe because you have a residential status, you might be able to work out an angle. Wouldn't hurt to ask.

LesleyF: see you, Jane!

CarolN: Jane, I wonder if a talk with the public library could develop a workable solution?

LesleyF: Other last questions or thoughts?

BJB2 waves goodnight to Jane

JaneGu: Thank you, I will ask!

StephaniLa: This has been great Lesley!

JaneGu: Thanks, Carol, I will check it out. Bye BJB

BethD: thank you, lesley.

RachelPe: Thank you for all the information , very informative and useful info Thanks a lot

StephaniLa: Thanks!

LesleyF: keep networking

BJB2: Thanks, Lesley.

StephaniLa: Looking forward to next month.

CarolN: I'm new to this profession, but it's apparent that networking is key

LesleyF: that's right, Carol.

StephaniLa: So true!

LesleyF: a vast community of practice

StephaniLa: This was my first chat at Tapped in. Awesome!

LesleyF: come again

CarolN: Thank you all. I'll try to join the group on a more regular basis. Ciao

StephaniLa: I will.

LesleyF: it's fun to return and talk about a variety of topics.

StephaniLa: It sure is! Talk to you next time. I have a lot of new things to explore.

LesleyF: ways to while away the hours...

LesleyF: hope it was worth the wait, Rachel

RachelPe: Yes it was thank you very very much

LesleyF: keep pluggin...

LesleyF: thanks, again, for your safety net, BJ

BJB2 smiles and hugs Lesley. Take care.