

This Month's Issue

In this month's issue, we welcome back the President's Message column, with incoming LITA president Cindi Trainor describing upcoming LITA events, priorities, and opportunities for members. University of Denver MLIS candidate Gina Schlesselman-Tarango contributes a compelling piece describing the background, use, and potential library application of searchable signatures in Web 2.0 applications such as Instagram. Jenny Emanuel from University of Illinois reports on the complex relationship that Millennial academic librarians have with technology. Kristina L. Southwell and Jacquelyn Slater from University of Oklahoma present the findings of a study evaluating the accessibility of special collections finding aids to screen readers for visually impaired users. Ping Fu from Central Washington University and Moira Fitzgerald from Yale University look at the potential effects of cloud-based next-generation library services platforms on staffing models for systems and technical-services departments. Visiting the discovery side of library services, Megan Johnson from Appalachian State University reports on usability testing of Appalachian's "one box" integrated articles and catalog search, using Innovative Interfaces' Encore Discovery Service.

Speaking of usability, I had the chance recently to observe a usability testing session for my library's website, and was reminded of the importance of designing library websites and delivering web-based library services that will actually be of value to our users, delivered with their context in mind rather than ours. My library, like many others, has a website rich in content and complexity and organized around our structure. To the user I was observing, the complexity and library-centric organization clearly were obstacles to the rich content we offer. An undergraduate art history major, she was primarily interested in library resources and services that were directly connected to her coursework and that were accessible from the university's learning management system (LMS). She valued the convenience of direct access from the LMS to library-managed course readings and past exam papers. But, when asked to navigate to the same resources using the library homepage as a starting point, rather than the LMS, she quickly became frustrated and confused by the overload of search options with (to her) confusing labels. She was further stymied by our proclivity to make things more complex than they need to be (or should be). A simple example: a common occurrence at the beginning of semester is that students with outstanding library fines/fees are blocked from registering for classes. Rather than providing a simple, direct "Resolve my library fees" link, with clear instructions on how to fix their problem, as

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quickly as possible, we instead provide pages of information about how and why the fines/fees were calculated, with no link to a solution to the problem at hand.

My takeaways from the session were that (1) our website needs to be radically simplified and (2) we should be focussing on designing and delivering services that can be embedded in the context of the user's natural workflows, not the library's. Easier said than done, of course.

Reviewers Needed

The ITAL Editorial Board has room for a couple of additional members, to help us keep up with incoming article submissions. If you have a passion for library technology, a willingness to undertake a few reviews each year, and are a member of LITA (or willing to join), please send me an e-mail indicating your interest and area(s) of expertise.

As always, suggestions and feedback on ITAL are welcome, at the e-mail address above.