

Péter's picks & pans



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This month the picks include two digital facilitators that provide services to publishers by bringing their journals to the Web for subscribers and pay-per-view customers. At the same time, they offer large collections of abstracts of predominantly scholarly journals for free to everyone. The pan is the reorganized Web site of ALA that was not ready for prime time when launched in early April. Only the top ALA sites had automatic redirects from the old URLs to the new ones, leaving tens of thousands of URLs dead (at least clinically). Its touted search engine and site map grossly underperformed, often showing signs of acute amnesia—not finding documents even when they did make it to the new site.



the picks

AIP OJPS

MetaPress

American Library
Association Web Site

AIP OJPS

It is a mouthful of acronym, but you will easily learn it once you realize how useful this Online Journal Publishing Service (OJPS) [<http://ojps.aip.org/>] from the American Institute of Physics (AIP) is—even for those who are neither OJPS clients nor AIP members or journal subscribers. Why? Because at the beginning of this year, AIP released its excellent archive of open access abstracts for anyone to search.

The abstracts archive has been available for free for some time, but only in browsing mode for non-members. This is not a complaint—even the browsing-only mode was a gift for known-item searching, or for just surfing the table of contents, bibliographic descriptions, and substantial abstracts. Why are there are more than 100 journals in this archive? Because AIP is not merely a respected publisher of a good dozen scholarly journals and proceedings, but also the digital facilitator for bringing to the Web other publishers' journals (more about that in my second pick).

The archive includes the digital editions of journals for subscribers (and free abstracts for anyone) from about a dozen other publishers, such as the Society for Imaging Science & Technology, the Acoustical Society of America, the American Society of Civil Engineers (which I applauded many years ago in this column for posting the entire ASCE database on the Web for free), the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the American Physical Society, and the American Association of Physics Teachers. These latter two represent the spectrum of OJPS very well, from the highest impact factor Physical Reviews series for the experts, to the very popular *The Physics Teacher* (*TPT*) for the ones who educate the experts of tomorrow through fascinating and engaging experiments, quizzes, and discussions documented in *TPT*. The online version is available in full-text format for all of its 40+ volumes as I write this in mid-April. This is a very fine example of real educational support and hopefully will recruit subscribers to the other journal of the teachers' association, the *American Journal of Physics*.



There are 375,000 articles, commentaries, and book reviews in the archive, which can now be searched by anyone through the powerful and intuitive Verity search engine. The full text is not searched, but I should remind you that these are not even available, let alone searchable, in the expensive commercial indexing and abstracting physics databases. Non-subscribers can order articles on a pay-per-view basis, which is not only more convenient than using a document delivery service after a commercial I/A database search but also less expensive.

Verity offers the usual good search features (proximity and field-specific searching), along with excellent options for sorting the results by relevance, date, and journal. You can also filter the result set by three levels of relevance. This combination of sorting and ranking comes in handy when you want to rank the top subset of the hits (as determined by relevance score above 70 percent) by chronological order, a form of having your cake and eating it too.

AIP/OJPS unseated an incumbent database in the group of 15 databases that I use in my Energy Polysearch Engine [www2.hawaii.edu/~jacso/extra], something I developed in frustration over PubSCIENCE, because it is also a very useful archive of energy science and technology-related documents.

My only nags are that the system unceremoniously kicks you out after a few minutes of inactivity, and in spite of using cookie-enabled browsers, it always requires me to enter my user-id and password.

METAPRESS

MetaPress [www.metapress.org] is a service of the Publisher Promotion & Fulfillment division of EBSCO. The name may sound odd (I did not know about this division until earlier this year), but it fulfills its promises, promoting publishers not through corny testimonials placed as ads in library journals, but in a way that is much more beneficial for librarians, researchers, faculty, and students. (EBSCO promotes MetaPress through a slew of testimonials, but if you go to the URL given above, you will be spared looking at them.)

MetaPress is what I call a digital facilitator (but don't look for it in the upcoming 11th edition of the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*), enabling publishers to create and maintain digital archives of their publications, provide authorization of and access to qualifying subscribers, and free access for anyone to the bibliographic record with abstract subset of the archive.

MetaPress is the newest player among digital facilitators which include HighWire Press, Allen Press Technology, Ingenta, and Catchword, which was—for me—unnecessarily, unreasonably, and confusingly renamed as Ingenta Select after its acquisition. Although the publicity blurbs from MetaPress emphasize its service focuses on small publishers new to digitization, its clients include large publishers that already had their in-house system (like the National Research Council of Canada, which badly needed a partnership like this to not only search but also find its

valuable research articles without an excessively high ratio of irrelevant items) or had a deal with another digital facilitator (like Taylor & Francis that used the excellent services of Catchword).

The majority of clients, however, are indeed the ones who probably were introduced to the practice of digital distribution of journals by MetaPress, such as the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, American Society for Clinical Pathology, Canadian Academic Accounting Association, The Fairmont Press, Laser Pages Publishing, The National Association of Music Education, Pentronics Publishing, or the Spon Press.

The subject scope is very broad, ranging from Anesthesiology to Zoology, with excellent journals of many disciplines as represented by the nearly 1,200 titles handled by MetaPress.

ONLINE readers will be especially pleased to see a number of relevant journals in information science and technology, including *Information Service & Use*, *Information Infrastructure & Policy*, *Human-Computer Interaction*, *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, *End-User Computing*, *Applied Artificial Intelligence*, and *A/I Communications*, to name a few. Be forewarned, however, that these are not listed under the subcategory of Library and Information Science, which has only one journal, *Education for Information*, but rather under the various subcategories of Computer Science.

Bibliographic descriptions and abstracts are available from all the journals (though not all the articles have abstracts) free of charge. There are nearly 60 journals that, at least temporarily, offer also the full documents free of charge for anyone. The best part of this news for ONLINE readers is that eight to 10 of these are related to information science and technology. The full documents are available in HTML and PDF format.

The software is smart and—there are no better adjectives for it—subtly elegant and accommodating for the typical searches (it allows for All Words, Any Words, Boolean, and Exact Phrase). However, help information

The AIP OJPS search template shows its good sort features.

The screenshot shows the OJPS search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: Online Journals, OJPS Home, My Article Collection, Buy An Article, Announcements, Help, Feedback, and EXIT. The main header reads 'OJPS ONLINE JOURNAL PUBLISHING SERVICE'. Below this, there are search filters: 'SEARCH: For Articles on OJPS | SPIN Abstract Database | SPIN Web Home'. The search area includes a 'Search Query' field with the text 'thermal energy', a 'Search' button, and a dropdown menu for search criteria set to 'Author'. There are also options for 'Hitlist Sorting Options' (set to 'Show Most Recent First'), 'Records Per Page' (set to '25'), and a 'Threshold' dropdown menu (set to 'High'). A 'SEARCH' button is visible at the bottom left.

ActiveSearch

Search

Criteria

Search For:

Using:

Within: Full Text (Includes Abstract and Title)
 Abstract (Includes Title)
 Title

Filter: Viewable Articles Only

Return: Journal Articles
 Newsletter Articles

Results

Order By: Recency
 Relevancy

Display: Hits Per Page

Show Search Results Now

MetaPress search template for storing queries for reuse.

paths. Each item has two linking options: one through MetaPress id, and another following the OpenURL standard. This latter is further divided into options of linking to the print versus the electronic edition at the journal, issue, and item level—very sophisticated and superbly illustrated in the flow as an optional step, rather than in a separate help file. There is an unusual but very useful option, linking to the current issue, whatever that may be. I can

limit your searches. Another personalized option is to store your queries, called Active Searches, that you want to run repeatedly (similar to storing search statements in Dialog). You are alerted when a new issue of a journal is posted. I am sure there will be an option to receive e-mail alerts when articles are posted that match my query. I would like to see search terms highlighted in full-text results.

Results were impressive, both in quantity and quality, for my sample searches for library and information science topics, far more relevant than the oddly low relevance scores may suggest. While the software does not have all the power feature of HighWire Press, it is very well designed and will please the typical end users with its user-friendly interface and navigation style.

would be still needed with good examples to explain that terms are stemmed (factor, factors, factoring retrieve the same records), or what the default interpretation of space between words is.

You can browse the list of publishers, journals, and subjects (this needs a little improvement in classification), and slide down smoothly to the volumes, issues, and articles through any of these

store this URL in a to-do list and invoke the issue that is the most current at the given time [www.metapress.com/openurl.asp?genre=issue&issn=0167-5265&issue=current].

This is somewhat similar conceptually to the UD=9999 search option in Dialog that restricts your search to the items added to the database in the most recent update. In the case of journals with free sample issues, there is a separate link also to that, using currentsample as the last parameter.

The search features are good. There are four search templates (and some have variants) optimized for searching by citation (known item search), publisher, publication, and topics in bibliographic data elements, abstract, and/or full text.

If you register (which is free), you can have personalized services, such as designating your favorite journals and using them to

Excerpt from the result list of a search about impact factor:

3. **Internet: Assessing the Relative Quality of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine Internet Mailing Lists**
Publication: Pain Weekly
Authors: Hernandezborges, A.A., Maciascervi, P., Gasparguardado, M.A., et al.
Publisher: NewsRx
Recency: September 13, 1999
Relevancy: 4.8%
Excerpt: According to the authors' abstract of an article published in Anesthesia and Analgesia, "We studied the relative quality of a subset of anesthesiology and critical care medicine Internet mailing lists regarding the publishing capacity of their members to compare them with the major journals and ..."
4. **SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATIONS: History, electronic journals and impact factors**
Publication: Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine
Authors: Olle Höök
Publisher: Taylor & Francis
Recency: Volume 31, Number 1/February 18, 1999
Relevancy: 4.0%
Excerpt: This paper gives a short history of the development of scientific journals. During the last century there has been an increase of 7% a year in the number of scientific journals published, i.e. a doubling of the total number of new journals every 10-15 years. The only way to survive this information ..."



the pan

NEW ALA WEB SITE

I really could not decide where to start listing, and how to summarize, in this space the problems that crippled the new ALA Web site [www.ala.org], which was launched very prematurely and recklessly to celebrate National Library Week. It's likely to earn my Pan of the Year Award. Therefore, I posted a detailed and extensively illustrated page [www.hawaii.edu/~jacso/extra] with the title "Look, What They Have Done to Our Links, Ma." Look it up for further details; I'll give a succinct summary here.

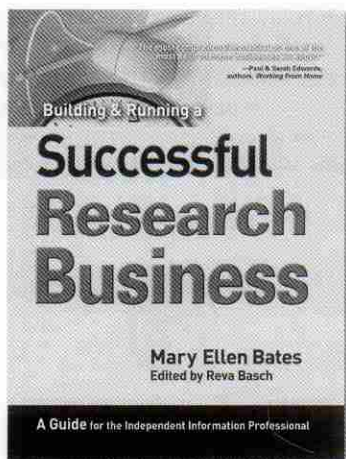
It was no way to celebrate libraries, let alone librarians, who have been frustrated a zillion times by dead links. The massive reorganization of the site did not provide appropriate redirect procedures behind the scenes for the majority of links that were created for the old site.

This affects far more than the 22,900 links that appear from the link:www.ala.org search results run on Google. No search engine can report about the links to the old ALA sites mentioned in articles and conference papers residing in the archives

Building & Running a

Successful Research Business

By Mary Ellen Bates
Edited by Reva Basch



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This is *the* handbook every aspiring independent information professional needs to launch, manage, and build a research business. Organized into four sections, "Getting Started," "Running the Business," "Marketing," and "Researching," the book walks you through every step of the process. Author Mary Ellen Bates covers everything from "Is this right for you?" to closing the sale, managing clients, promoting your business on the Web, and tapping into powerful information sources beyond the Web. Bates, a popular author and speaker and a long-time successful independent info pro, reveals all the tips, tricks, and techniques for setting up, running, and growing your own information business.

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ALA

 American Library Association

The Sorry! page of the new ALA Web site was the one that popped up far most often after the site was launched. It well symbolized the sorry state of the Web site and the digital status of ALA.

of commercial publishers and third-party aggregators, but there are certainly a large number. Neither did the above quick check include those ALA sites that had some other primary level URL than www.ala.org, such as www.lita.org, which hosted among others free full-text articles that were cited both in research and professional journals.

The sorry error page advised users not finding the site specified by the URLs to use the search engines or the site map, none of which were up to the task, even when trying to locate sites that were transported from the old site. Much useful material did not make it even by the end of the week of festivities, such as the free abstracts and full-text articles from 19 volumes of *Information Technology and Libraries* and 14 volumes of the *Journal of Library Automation*, two excellent flagship journals of the Library and Information Technology Association.

If ALA had started to take digitization seriously several years ago, it could have avoided much of this mess by a) creating its own easily searchable database of ALA journal articles that it licenses to commercial online services, offering access to full-text journals

for subscribers and free abstracts for everyone else, as most of the significant scholarly publishers in the LIS arena have been doing with the notable exception of the Haworth Press, and b) assigning digital object identifiers (DOI) to articles in order to reduce the problems of relocated articles.

According to my search in the Cross-Ref database, none of the ALA publications are yet registered for DOI assignment, let alone use digital object identifiers. Hundreds of small publishers, including associations, have done so and reap the benefits of DOI as discussed by many papers presented at ALA conferences and in many articles published in ALA journals. These deserve far better treatment. This whole week of frustration, fury, failures, and fiascoes was a sad reminder of how much ALA is behind the trailblazers of digital libraries. I hope that ALA will seek the assistance of one of the digital facilitators without waiting for the next National Library Week.

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