Great News That Will Help With Your 2018 Library Budget Plan!

Accessible Archives understands the financial constraints occurring across America, particularly within the Library Community. So, in the spirit of the New Year we are holding the line on pricing for 2018. That means no increase in cost for permanent access to our databases, for our subscriptions, and even for our maintenance fee. So now you can lock in one small part of your 2018 budget.
The Role of Research Guides in Supporting Interdisciplinary Research

By Jill O’Neill

The increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary research in higher education is likely to drive change in the information community. In order for our understanding of complex problems to progress (and in order to identify a viable solution of such problems), research must frequently focus on the fringes of established knowledge within a particular discipline. By definition, interdisciplinary research requires study of two or more distinct fields of knowledge by domain experts seeking to identify connections or patterns across the distinct fields. At the same time, the highly specialized information products that serve scholars in one field (such as economics) may not be suited to the needs of the non-specialist – whether that non-specialist be an advanced practitioner in another field or a college student with a major in biology trying to complete a requirement in art history.

Non-specialists will be unfamiliar with specific vocabulary common to a particular field of study. They may need guidance in navigating information resources, even if the resource includes a well-honed taxonomy or thesaurus as an aid. An individual studying the pros and cons surrounding nuclear energy may need guidance in identifying the relevant specialized publications in health care or law before he or she will be able to successfully integrate the available knowledge and develop meaningful insights. Information professionals are already providing support for this type of work.

Jill O’Neill is the Educational Programs Manager for the National Information Standards Organization (NISO). She has been an active member of the information community for thirty years, most recently managing the professional development programs for NFAIS (National Federation of Advanced Information Services). Her publishing expertise was gained working for such prominent content providers as Elsevier, the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI, now Clarivate Analytics), and John Wiley & Sons. Jill writes for a diverse set of publications, including Information Today and the Scholarly Kitchen blog.

Interdisciplinary Support in the Library

As a preliminary example, one might look at an interdisciplinary research guide developed by librarians at Pennsylvania State University on the topic of Three Mile Island. At first glance, the guide might seem somewhat ordinary; its top-level menu directs the user to the usual books, scholarly articles and reports, news sources and additional archives that might be useful. However, the guide serves non-specialist needs when one drills down into those menus by recommending specific terms applicable in searching various resources. When searching for business information, recommended terms and phrases include “nuclear accidents” and “radiation” whereas directions for searching specialized engineering resources recommend using more specific concepts such as “core meltdown” and “fission reactor”. In searching databases more oriented towards the social sciences, the information seeker concerned with community or societal impact might include such phrases as “industrial accidents” or “antinuclear movement”. (See http://guides.libraries.psu.edu/tmi/articles)
While some research guides may simply break out the types of available resources assembled by the institutional library -- encyclopedias, primary sources, articles, or websites -- the more indications provided by a subject specialist on appropriate terminology and concepts well-suited to the particular resource, the likelier it is that a non-specialist user will be appropriately directed.

A more useful approach might be one such as can be seen in a guide developed by the libraries of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. A guide for work in American Studies characterizes available resources not just in general terms but in terms of long-standing areas of friction that require a broad array of perspectives -- Current/Social Issues, Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Native American Resources.

For graduate students, appropriate guidance may be directed at ensuring awareness of available special collections and digital archives. For students of fashion law, Harvard’s Law School Library offers pointers to such world-class resources as the Vintage Fashion collection from British Pathé on YouTube and the University of Wisconsin’s digital collection on millinery, dressmaking, clothing and costume. Another link directs the user to the Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in American and specifically to their Fashion Research Guide.

Non-specialists may readily come across some content through initial searches of Google, usually a first point of investigation. Such a search might immediately turn up library research guides that link to major collections of primary source materials.

In a Schlesinger Library research guide on Women’s Suffrage (see https://guides.library.harvard.edu/schlesinger/suffrage), the approach adopted was to spotlight specific suffragists whose papers are held at Harvard -- such names as Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The online guide’s menu also points the user to individuals and organizations that were part of the anti-suffrage movement -- Ernest Bernbaum or the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women. This organizational approach makes sense if the key objective is to spotlight primary documents sought by specialists working with the library’s own set of collections. But there is no support -- even under the subheading Research Tips -- for guiding the non-specialist. The user is referred to the library’s catalog with no recommendations (beyond the word “suffrage”) as to terms or phrases that might be used for searching any of that library’s remarkable collections. Nor is there any indication of how a user might leverage those collections in examining larger issues to which the suffrage movement lent its weight.
Complicating the Issue
As noted in the 2017 Oxford University Press research report, *Navigating Research*, the nature of reference work in the library is changing. (See https://global.oup.com/academic/librarians/navigatingresearch/?cc=us&lang=en&)

Rather than holding physical print product in a separate library setting, research collections have moved into the digital environment. Items that might have been held on reserve now circulate; other information resources are exclusively online, making it more difficult for users to browse or experience serendipitous discovery. Since the advent of the Web, librarians have worked to develop easily accessible research guides to point patrons working outside of the library to available and relevant materials. Such research guides improve user navigation in accessing resources, clarify the nature of the resource and showcase materials and collections held by the library.

As this article’s earlier examples might suggest, the presentation of research guides differs dramatically from institution to institution. Some institutions have focused on tying the material to course content; others (like Princeton at https://libguides.princeton.edu/) offer guides not tied to specific disciplines (see the guide for Data Analysis or Citation Management) or guides specifically characterized as being interdisciplinary. Elsewhere, some basic research guides present materials according to type -- books, articles, databases. While students find such break-outs familiar, such approaches don’t readily accommodate the interdisciplinary researcher’s requirements. Faculty may visit Google Scholar as their initial point of departure while students tend to glance at Wikipedia for identifying general search terms. But there is little support for recognizing the differences in how distinct domains of knowledge are presented via terminology, umbrella concepts or philosophy.

Discovery systems, currently in place at institutional libraries, adequately recognize the differences encountered between disciplinary communities. Where subject specific resources may have highly refined taxonomies and extensive thesauri for purpose of search, discovery services are brute tools of retrieval. Ambiguous terms and phrases may mislead or confuse the novice investigator.

In the context of interdisciplinary research, such guides may need to be revisited with an eye to highlighting specific topics that may be touched on in such primary collections. Having a wealth of available information resources to offer to patrons, how might a librarian best spotlight content with broad applicability and usefulness? Rather than reliance on scope notes describing an available database, an innate interest in a topic as well as a spark of creativity may be called for as librarians think about the next generation of research guides.

Enhancing the Research Guide
Take a look at a recent entry that appeared on the Accessible Archives blog. Entitled “The Right of Boycott” (http://www.accessible-archives.com/2017/10/right-boycott-1913/#more-12817), the content of the post was directly taken from a news story appearing in the January 1913 issue of *The Western Woman Voter*. That particular extract is contained in Accessible Archives’ Women’s Suffrage Series, but the applicability of the content is broader than women’s suffrage. Scanning it, there are references to liquor licensing in Canada, to the Steel Trust in the United States and to a variety of worker strikes in Europe. But would a non-specialist working in the realm of economic inequality think to search material from a newspaper devoted to women’s suffrage?

By drawing attention to the specific availability of unique content contained in a digital collection rather than generic descriptions of content, users may be drawn to explore resources that otherwise would have been dismissed as irrelevant. While information professionals are always cautious about exerting undue influence over the user’s selection of materials in pursuing a research question, a serendipitous glimpse of interesting and potentially relevant content may be precisely the spark needed to invite the non-specialist’s interest.

Revisiting the American Studies research guide at Dickinson, a similar kind of blog content surfaces if the user looks under the Gender tab (http://libguides.dickinson.edu/americanstudies/gender). The Women’s Experiences at Dickinson College blog (http://coeducation.dickinson.edu/) listed under “Other Relevant Databases” refers the reader to the availability of commentary from a 1911 news correspondent for the female residence on campus, Lloyd Hall, having to do with women’s suffrage. Because the metadata associated with the entry is limited and because the content is (apparently) not yet digitized, such available primary documentation would be unlikely to appear in a Google search.

In order to justify continued library investment in subject specific and potentially niche information resources, librarians need to showcase the kind of unique materials that may be held there. Interdisciplinary
research broadens the audience for any given collection of content. Frequent updates to interdisciplinary research guides directing attention to relevant but otherwise obscure material may drive much needed user engagement with otherwise static content.

**Take-aways**

- The current emphasis on interdisciplinary research continues as systems (social, technological, etc.) become increasingly complex and interdependent. While information resources in the sciences may be ahead in awareness of and accommodating the need to support non-specialist exploration, those working in the humanities and the social sciences may increasingly seek aids to discovery and navigation of unfamiliar terrain.

- Organizational structure of research guides and discovery services may provide insufficient guidance for non-specialists in a given field. Offer tabbed navigation to larger conceptual areas.

- Support for interdisciplinary investigations can be readily provided and integrated into existing research guides through suggestions for appropriate terminology and phrases for use in constructing search queries.

- Spotlighting not just unique collections but also specific instances of content may be a means of engaging users’ interests in exploring materials that might otherwise be viewed as irrelevant by a non-specialist. Frequent updating of guides, including where feasible unique portions of vendor-supplied content, as seen in the example from the Accessible Archives blog entry, may be used to attract interest.

Stay Tuned for Jill’s Next Article in the Spring 2018 Edition of the Accessible Archives Newsletter

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**Great News About American County Histories!**

*Texas County Histories* Is Now A Major Collection in the University of Texas Digital Library!

*From Library News -- UT Southwestern Medical Center, Health Sciences Digital Library and Learning Center: “ALCEP Funding Highlights—Texas County Histories”*

*Posted on November 29, 2017 by Library News Editor*

A wide group of online resources was recently purchased by the University of Texas Digital Library with Academic Library Collection Enhancement Program (ALCEP) funds. The UT Board of Regents allocates ALCEP funds for one-time collection purchases to broaden the research and scholarly capabilities of the System’s fourteen institutions. The UT Southwestern Health Sciences Digital Library and Learning Center now offers online access to...history-centric resources through an ALCEP purchase: *Texas County Histories...*

The Library now has perpetual access rights to *Texas County Histories*, a major collection from Accessible Archives. Accessible Archives comprises full-text, searchable databases that include serial publications such as newspapers and magazines, as well as books and county histories.

Some of these *Texas County Histories* provide information on the history of medicine in Texas. The Encyclopedia of Texas, written in the 1920s, has a chapter on the history of the Texas medical profession, written by R. W. Knox, M.D., who had been a president of what is now known as the Texas Medical Association. Another chapter highlights Dallas as the medical center of the Southwest.
Accessible Archives has announced that all images in the American Military Camp Newspapers component of its America and World War I series have been mounted on the website and that the XML-tagged text will be fully available early in 2018.

1917 marked the one-hundredth anniversary of America’s entry into World War I. The arrival of American Expeditionary Forces in Europe helped turn the tide in favor of France and Britain, leading to an Allied victory over Germany and Austria in November, 1918. By the time of the armistice, more than 4 million Americans had served in the armed forces and 116,708 had lost their lives. While in-depth perspectives of actual combat are plentiful, information about the soldiers themselves prior to deployment is not so well known. A vast number of troops received their initial combat training in military camps, and camp newspapers chronicle their experiences.

American Military Camp Newspapers makes important original source material – much of it written by soldiers for soldiers – readily available for research and fresh interpretation of events pertaining to The Great War. These newspapers carried articles on what it was like to leave home by both recruits and draftees, the initial excitement of training, the drudgery of camp life, attitudes toward officers and fellow soldiers and ongoing news about the enemy. Also included were non-war related advertisements, poetry, short stories, memoirs, jokes and cartoons. Photographs and sketches portrayed life in the various camps, on the home front and at the battlefields. Camp personnel, places, and events are described with a richness that brings new credibility and perspective to scholarly research.

There is truly not one part of the nation that was not touched by World War I. American Military Camp Newspapers provides the potential to remind people of the war’s far-reaching significance and perhaps uncover new stories about the American soldier’s experience that we have not yet heard.

As American Military Camp Newspapers enters its final completion stage we are pleased to offer generous pre-publication pricing.

Check Out Our Women’s Suffrage Series!

Read about the impact of Women’s political and social activities throughout the 19th and early 20th Century!

Accessible Archives makes an essential set of Women’s Suffrage newspapers and periodicals available in an easy-to-use online research and teaching tool designed to assist scholars and students on all levels achieve faster and easier access to these essential resources This Series covers more than 50 years of primary sources and includes the mainstream movement newspapers and periodicals as noted below. In addition, our Series includes the most popular anti-Suffrage periodical from the Massachusetts Association Opposed to the Further Extension of Suffrage to Women – The Remonstrance.
Achieving Higher Customer Satisfaction Is Our Goal at Accessible Archives

“When a student needed the exact date for Frederick Douglass’ speech ‘What the Black Man Wants,’ given at the 1865 annual meeting of the Mass. Anti-Slavery Society — was it before or after Lincoln’s assassination? — the only reference with the actual speech and date was Accessible Archives’ The Civil War. Thank you!”

Edward C. Oetting, History/Political Science Bibliographer, Arizona State University

“UNC libraries and their users consider Accessible Archives products to be important e-resources for supporting research in African American studies and on the history of the American South and, as a consequence, consistently have made their acquisition a priority.”

Luke Swindler, Coordinator of General Collections, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries

“...I remain an appreciative customer of Accessible Archives...”

Jack Robertson, Fiske and Marie Kimball Librarian, Jefferson Library at Monticello

American County Histories Webinar Coming!

American County Histories: A Unique Research Resource – 11am, January 23, 2018

American County Histories provide vivid portraits of people, places and events, putting a state’s local history into current context with the examination of demographic, social, economic, and cultural transformations. This webinar explores the question -- Why should researchers, historians, and librarians encourage on-going preservation and use of a publication genre like county histories? It also discusses publication trends, library user cases, the scope of online resources, and more.
Upcoming Conference Events

Will you be in Denver at ALA Mid-Winter, February 9-12, 2018? Visit us at booth #2211! We would love to get together with you! Call to set up a meeting, or just stop by.

Colorado Convention Center – Halls A-C
Booth #2211

Let us know if you will be in Austin at ER&L, March 4-7, 2018! Contact us for an appointment, or stop by for a chat!

Electronic Resources and Libraries
AT&T Conference Center

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