

● Presenting the Virtual Library

Links to Related References

I. What is a Virtual Library?

- Has a Web presence
- Has information about the library
- Has an online library catalog
- Has services for remote users
- BUT...

Content is King



- A Virtual Library has content
- Content can be databases, indexes, full-text, local information, digital projects
- The Library Web can be a more accessible portal to content than the library catalog

Mooer's Law

“An information retrieval system will tend not to be used whenever it is more painful and troublesome for a customer to have information than for him to not have it.”

-Calvin Mooer, 1960

Virtual Library webs should be:

- Easy to find
- Easy to use
- Accessible to all
- Attractive

II: The Virtual Library Entrance

- The URL is the “key” to your portal
- The URL should as simple as possible
- Human beings will use Google instead of typing the URL or using bookmarks!
- It's important to help search engines find you!

What makes your site easy to find?

- Every page has a TITLE
- META TAGS (keywords, description)
- METADATA will be useful in the future
- NAVIGATION links on every page
- CONTACT information on every page
- Update DATE on every page

Marketing helps!

- Logo items that people keep: book marks, magnets, post-it notes
- Links from other sites, or reciprocal links with local organizations and schools
- Advertising in local media
- Friends group to help with projects
- Outreach projects

What makes your site hard to find?

- Frames
 - Users land in unexpected places
 - Frames written on the fly by scripts may cause search engines to pick the “wrong” page as your default
- Pages without a title and meta tags

III: Designing the Virtual Library

Good design is invisible

- Dare to be simple
- Dare to use clichés
- Dare to use common sense
- Dare to be consistent
- Dare to insist on standards

Good design includes online services

- E-mail reference
- Virtual reference
- Online registration for library cards
- Ask users what they want!

Make your web searchable

- Offer a way to Search your site
- Users expect a search box!
- Users are poor searchers!
They don't know what they are searching or how to search
- Offer a Site Map and a Site Index

Play to your Audience

- Public libraries have diverse audiences
- Some people are novices, some experts
- Keep it simple but not insulting
- Subject guides are helpful
- Provide technical support

Provide Learning Tools

- For students
 - Homework help and help for citing resources
 - Instructions for internet use & searching
- For adult life-long learners
 - Free and fee indexes and databases, government information, links to professional organizations
 - Subject guides for popular topics
- For seniors
 - Tips on how to make browser fonts bigger, printing
 - Focused pathfinders to information: Health, investments, travel, volunteerism, hobbies

Add New Media

- eResources
 - Electronic journals, magazines, news
 - Electronic books: reference books, handbooks, collections such as netLibrary
- Digital Collections
 - Local history in maps and photographs
- Blogs for news or book discussions?

Portals

- Portals are changing
 - Then: The Library Catalog
 - Now: Library Web site and "My Library"
 - Soon: Resource Integration Tools
- Customization vs Personalization
 - User controls Customization
 - Computer controls personalization

Resource Integration

- Open-URL standard enables cross database linking
 - Search results in one database can include links to full-text source in another database
 - SFX by ExLibris is widely used
- Cross-database searching Products
 - Metalib, WebFeat, Zportal, MuseSearch, OCLC Web Express, InfoTrac Total Access
 - Innovative Interfaces Metafind (in beta)

Usability Testing

- Feedback tells you what users think
- Focus groups are a pre-design tool
- During development, test and retest design with a few users
- Use free utilities: Bobby, W3 Validator
- Get feedback from forms, polls, surveys

Good Design Evolves

- The bad news
 - You're never finished!
 - There's always room for improvement
- The good news
 - You're never finished!
 - You always get another chance to do things better!
