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People Profile: Laura Dawson

Editor

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customized browsing experience for the user. The use of browser add-ons, extensions, or plug-ins is not limited to the Firefox browser, other browsers can have them as well, but Firefox has an enormous amount of already existing plug-ins and it isn’t too difficult to make your own.

Plug-ins, extensions, and add-ons can be helpful to Web users, but how do they fit into the library’s purpose? What do they have to offer library users and librarians? In recent years there has been a proliferation of browser extensions that can be used to increase access to a library’s resources. Today a user with certain extensions installed can store and share citations, access full-text scholarly articles, and search the library catalog. Google Scholar, Yahoo! without ever leaving the Webpage that they started from (even if it isn’t a library or school related page).

What follows in this column is a short discussion of some Web browser extensions that can be used to bring the library resources to where the users are (the Web) and possibly bring them in to where they often aren’t (the library). Most of the tools discussed here are for Firefox. Firefox is available to download for free at www.mozilla.com/firefox. A much more complete list of plug-ins, extensions, and add-ons for Firefox is available at https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/

Zotero (http://www.zotero.org/)

This free downloadable Firefox extension allows users to gather, organize, and analyze sources that they find while searching online. Zotero is a good combination of features from citation management programs such as EndNote and modern Web applications such as Del.icio.us and other social Websites. With Zotero, users can store author, title, and publication information and then export the information in a formatted reference. They can also tag things, interact with other users, and perform advanced searching. Zotero isn’t compatible with older versions (less than 2.0) of Firefox so individuals who want to use this tool will have to update their browser if they haven’t already done so. Zotero detects when a book, article, or other resource is being viewed and with a mouse click finds and saves the full reference information to a local file. If the source is an online article or Webpage, Zotero can optionally store a local copy of the source. Users can then add notes, tags, and their own metadata through the in-browser interface. Selections of the local reference library data can later be exported as formatted bibliographies.

ConQuery (http://conquery.mozdev.org/)

ConQuery (Context sensitive web Query extension) is an extension for Firefox users that allows them to highlight any text that they see on a Webpage, right-click, and automatically query that text in any one of a number of search engines such as Yahoo!, Google, and others (including the library catalog if a plug-in for this search is created). Instead of having to copy and paste the text into a search engine or library catalog or having to type the information in a search form, searches are queried easily which makes the user’s browsing experience go more smoothly. Duke University’s Ford Library makes ConQuery available to its users on a Webpage (http://library.fuqua.duke.edu/firelib.htm), provides detailed instructions on installing and configuring the extension, and has created several plug-ins for the extension that customize the extension to local needs and interests. If you’re interested in learning how to make a Firefox plug-in visit the Mozilla Developer Center’s page for creating plug-ins (http://developer.mozilla.org/en/docs/Creating_OpenSearch_plugins_for_Firefox).

OpenURL Referrer (http://www.openly.com/openurlref/)

Created by Openly Informatics, now OCLC Openly Informatics (http://www. continued on page 79