I Hear a Train A Comin' -- Hairspray

Editor

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meta search engines or clearinghouses of geospatial databases, one of the most well-known examples being the Geography Network by ESRI. In addition to clearinghouses, maps and datasets from federal, state, and local governments are also often freely available online. For example, in the state of South Carolina GIS data is available from both the Department of Natural Resources and the Office of Research and Statistics on the state level and from the Geographic Information Systems Division of Greenville County on a local level.

While most GIS services rely heavily on datasets that can be loaded directly into the software, almost anything can be a data source for a GIS. In addition to the freely available datasets, many of a library’s subscription resources are valuable data sources for GIS services. For example, ReferenceUSA provides the longitude and latitude of many businesses, which could be entered into a GIS to plot business locations on an interactive map. In the History course project described above, students were looking at primary sources to obtain data to enter into their class GIS. Historic maps from the library’s collection may be geo-referenced to current maps and overlaid for comparative study.

Challenges

It is clear that there are benefits to coordinating some level of GIS services in the library. “Libraries at smaller colleges and universities tend to be a focal point for students, faculty, and the community, making them an appropriate place to conduct GIS research.”5

It is also clear that the success or failure of GIS services in libraries is contingent upon a variety of factors, including funding, training, and promotion. While it does not take much to get involved in providing GIS services (a dedicated computer, a GIS software package, and data sources), providing a higher level of service can get expensive. Weber State University has had to seek grants and other outside sources of funding to be able to consistently fund and improve its GIS lab. Training also proves to be a challenge. GIS services are not self-explanatory, and few librarians at a given institution are typically able to use or teach others how to use GIS software. An investment of time and resources will have to be made to get librarians trained to provide effective GIS services. Lastly, no matter how extensive the GIS services you provide, if no one comes into the library to use them, they are not worth the investment. Whether the impetus for setting up a GIS service comes from academic departments outside the library or if you are setting up a GIS service in the library with the express intention of promoting GIS services to your user community, it is necessary to actively advertise whatever services you do offer and get other people involved in that promotion.

For further information on Geographic Information Systems and to see examples of GIS, please take a look at the Web resources below, most of which have been referenced in this column. In addition, the Fall 2006 issue of Library Trends is devoted to the topic of GIS and libraries, covering the topic from a variety of angles.

Tune in next issue when this column will highlight some of the ways libraries are using GIS to enhance their own services.

GIS Web Resources

ESRI — http://www.esri.com/
Geography Network — http://www.geographynetwork.com/
GIS.com — http://www.gis.com/
GRASS — http://grass.itc.it/
Greenville County Geographic Information Systems Division — http://www.gcgis.org/
IDRISI — http://www.clarklabs.org/
MapInfo — http://www.mapinfo.com/
MapPoint — http://www.microsoft.com/mappoint/default.mspx
National Park Service’s Interactive Map Center — http://maps2.itc.nps.gov/nps_par-taxis/jsp/atlas.jsp
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources — http://www.dnr.sc.gov/gis.html
Southern History Database — http://www.vedh.virginia.edu/SHD/

References


Endnotes
9. Ibid., 110.

I Hear the Train A Comin’ — Hairspray

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Hairspray was a rollicking, insightful movie back in 1988. In 2002, enterprising minds reinvigorated the property by staging a live version on Broadway. It proved a roaring success, leading to ... a movie version of the stage show, currently in production. Why is this pertinent to a column covering emerging trends in scholarly communication? This past November, I had an experience John Waters might envy. In the overflowing Carolina ballroom at this year’s Charleston Conference, I was able to convene the first annual “I Hear the Train A Comin’ — Live” session. The plenary brought together four of the industry’s leading minds with a simple goal — to tell continued on page 83
the hundreds of gathered participants what the single biggest Next Big Thing will be. In 10 minutes or less. The panelists — Andrew Pace, the Head of Information Technology at North Carolina State University Library, Peter Banks, the founder of Banks Publishing (a publications consulting and services firm), Ann Okerson, Associate University Librarian for collections & international programs at Yale University Library, and Isabella Hinds, Senior Director of Business Development for Content Partnerships at Blackboard — proved remarkably up to the challenge. So up to it, in fact, that I have Hairspray’d the session, taking a live show based on a written column and, in turn, using it as a basis for this month’s written column. If this analogy seems strained and convoluted, be thankful that I dropped the Victor/Victoria theme I tried in the rough draft.

Andrew Pace kicked the session off with a librarian’s perspective on Web 2.0. The growing drumbeat for Web 2.0 services within the library, he argued, boils down to good search and discovery tools and good customer service. This means providing patrons with what they want when and how they want it, and providing patrons with the means to uncover what they want when they aren’t sure what exactly that may be. In a Google world, this may mean better meta-discovery tools than even the federal technology vendors are currently offering. Patrons increasingly lack the patience to wade through primary publisher sites, aggregators, abstracting and indexing databases, and other content silos. Rich, accessible cross-platform search tools will allow library patrons to tap into a greater range of library-purchased content. Further, these tools should integrate into the larger campus environment. One concrete example is integration with course management systems so that discovered resources can be shared in the classroom environment. Another is integration with the bursar’s office so that discovered resources of the non-licensed variety may be accessed or ordered with an automatic debit to the patron’s account. The library’s role, Pace believes, will be to evaluate, manage, and weave together suites of services and systems.

Peter Banks followed with a provocatively titled talk, “Everything I Know About Scholarly Publishing’s Future I Learned from iTunes.” Peter argued that iTunes matters because it provides a model for the successful online dissemination of information in the online age. Further, it is a sustainable business model for distributing a far greater number and variety of titles at a reasonable price than would be possible through a physical store or online retailer. iTunes succeeds using the long tail principle. It sells very many copies of a relatively small number of songs, and a relatively few copies of a very, very many songs. It has figured out how to cost-efficiently serve not just Green Day’s audience (which Tower Records could do) but also the market for “Russian Folk Dances of the Moiseyev Dance Company.” In this regard, STM publishers can learn from iTunes. Usage patterns are actually strikingly similar. A small number of top-flight publications get huge downloads and citations, while the great majority of journals live in the long, low “tail” of modest content traffic. For that highly visible minority, subscription-based business models will continue to be the rule. The profits are too dramatic to force a philosophical change. Tower Records could have thrived if all the market sought was copies of “American Idiot.”

In both recorded music and STM content, however, there exists relatively low grade interest in thousands and thousands of specialized areas. Subscription-based publication models, like Tower Records, don’t neatly cater to this demand. The fixed costs are simply too high to make widespread distribution of niche content possible. Scholarly publishing, like the music industry, is ripe for new models geared toward the long tail audience. Open access is one such model, but not. Banks argues, a magic bullet. Only through experi-

continued on page 84
Wandering the Web — Laissez Les Bons Souris Roulez

A GUIDE TO LOUISIANA WEBSITES

by Dan Forrest (Coordinator, Access Services, Western Kentucky University)

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Louisiana these days is most familiar to Americans as the site of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, but there is a lot more to the Bayou State. That is why I sought out Dan Forrest, a Louisiana native. Some of you may remember his column about online cookbooks. In this issue of “Wandering the Web,” Dan researched and has found excellent Websites on Louisiana food, art, music, and culture as well as truly unique wildlife and environment that make Louisiana a national treasure. These Websites will help your patrons discover more about this state, from jazz and voodoo in the French Quarter to the marshes and bayous of Cajun country, it’s all here. Allons-y!

If you’re working on a homework assignment, planning a vacation, looking for a good place to retire, setting a new business, or scouting a film location, the place to start is http://www.louisiana.gov. The state’s official Website includes all this plus the standard information on state agencies and statistics.

Readers of the Drudge Report will find the look of The Dead Pelican (http://www.thedeadpelican.com/) familiar, and anyone interested in keeping up with the contact sport that is Louisiana politics will appreciate this collection of the day’s headlines from around the state. Also included are links to print, broadcast, and Internet media from around the state.

Encyclopedia Louisiana (http://www.enlou.com/) has many maps and historic documents about Louisiana, as well as a timeline and biographies of politicians and other notable people.

Louisiana has a rich literary tradition. Explore it at the Louisiana Writers Directory (http://www2.state.lib.la.us/cj/h/), a database containing information on over 300 living Louisiana authors. The Louisiana Authors Index (http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/lau/) is a complementary database featuring over 1,500 deceased Louisiana writers.

The Encyclopedia of Cajun Culture (http://www.cajunculture.com) is an A to Z listing of topics about all things Cajun assembled by a husband and wife team from New Iberia. The Center for Cultural and Eco-Tourism (http://ccnet.louisiana.edu/index.html) at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette maintains an archive of Louisiana folk culture as well as many links to resources for the traveler interested in the land and people of Louisiana.

Jean Lafitte National Park (http://www.nps.gov/jela) stretches from the site of the Battle of New Orleans in Chalmette to the Liberty Theater in Eunice (live Cajun music every Saturday at six). The park’s Website contains a calendar of events, pages for children, and a wealth of information about the history, culture, and wildlife of south Louisiana.

Part of what makes Louisiana so special is the combination of cultures that have gone into it. Voodoo is a mixture of the Catholicism of the French and Spanish colonists with the traditional beliefs of the African people who were transported to the New World. The Voodoo Spiritual Temple (http://www.voodoo的精神temple.org) has a site with information on the temple and the history of voodoo in New Orleans. The Times-Picayune’s Haunted New Orleans page (http://nola.com/haunted) also discusses voodoo as well as ghost stories and information on the famous cemeteries of New Orleans.

The Jazz Roots page (http://www.jazz.com) was created by Tom Morgan, who also hosts a jazz radio show in New Orleans. Articles on the history and development of jazz, biographies, links, photos, and reviews are found on this site. The Louisiana Music Archive and Artist Directory (http://www.satchmo.com) contains news about Louisiana music and musicians such as upcoming concerts and releases as well as online radio stations, links, and much more. To satisfy your desire for Louisiana music, the Louisiana Music Factory (http://www.louisianamusickfactory.com) is the source for everything from jazz to swamp pop to zydeco. They also have a broad range of books, videos, and posters.

The only thing more important to Louisiana expatriates than the music is the food. New Orleans became Los Angeles Chuck Taggart’s Gumbo Pages (http://www.gumbopages.com) is full of recipes and talk about the food of Louisiana. The links for ordering Louisiana foodstuffs are especially useful. Taggart is also the compiler of a box set of New Orleans music so there is plenty of info for music lovers on the site as well.

Tom Fitzmorris is the dean of New Orleans food writers, and his site The New Orleans Menu (http://www.nomenus.com) is full of restaurant reviews and recipes. As an essential service for people planning a trip to New Orleans, he also maintains a complete list of restaurants that have reopened since Katrina. Subscribers to the site get even more info, as well as access to the complete NO/Menu archive.

The McIlhenny family of Avery Island has been making Tabasco sauce for over a hundred years. Their Website (http://www.tabasco.com) contains many recipes and a history of the company and Avery Island (a salt dome turned bird sanctuary and garden) as well as the company online store. A gallon jug of Tabasco sauce is the perfect gift for the hard-to-shop-for foods in your life.

No discussion of Louisiana these days would be complete without a mention of Katrina and the other hurricanes that have struck the state and region over the years. The National Weather Service’s National Hurricane Center (http://www.nhc.noaa.gov) has an extensive history section in addition to information on current conditions in the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Ocean. The Center’s site also offers tips on hurricane preparedness and thorough explanations of meteorological terms and methods.

I Hear the Train A Comin’ from page 83

priorities are. In the case of Yale, these engagement efforts have included surveys, focus groups, and user forums. Their feedback has been of the decidedly “1.0” variety. A recent survey of 1,000+ faculty indicated that the highest faculty priorities included (1) easier electronic access to scholarly materials for themselves and their students, and (2) better search tools to locate materials across all of Yale’s holdings and collections, not just electronic and not just in the libraries, but also in museums and other information centers. Of the very least urgency were items such as services to publish faculty preprints and postprints and to understand copyright and rights. The best forms of library innovation, Okerson argued, will come from a deep understanding of what a wide swath of library users want.

Isabella Hinds was the session’s final speaker. She presented a unique perspective on how advances in technology and content delivery are influencing e-learning. By way of background, nine in ten schools now have a course management system (CMS), and continued on page 85

84 Against the Grain / December 2006 - January 2007

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8. Communicate to our users that books are still important to us; that we are still buying them, and make sure that at least part of our libraries are conducive to the reading of books. Otherwise we will alienate a significant portion of our patrons who still do and will continue to love books.

7. Make porting of our content to course management systems a priority. I learned that 90% of US universities have standardized on a course management system and WebCT/Blackboard have signed a deal with Google to make it easy to integrate its content within class modules — this was after WebCT/Blackboard unsuccessfully tried to work with library ILS vendors to do the same.

6. Adopt a WEB accessible rights management database that makes it clear under what copyright related regulations have we digitized what we are presenting to our readers.

5. Get Hong Kong’s eight universities to reduce their overhead and increase the value of their separate institutional repositories by creating one repository with eight separate mega communities. We also need to unite with mainland China’s IR movement to mandate authors to upload their government funded research into our repositories.

4. Brainstorm with everyone on the staff on how to get our resources and services out in the face of our users since it is apparent that about 90% of the time they/we have chosen to Google and automatically discount what we have to offer.

3. Take advantage of Web2.0 at every turn. Interactivity is the name of the game and it makes the information enterprise more personal, more fun.

2. Get back into the hand-held computing device business. Several years ago we had already partnered with a commercial partner in Hong Kong to port our ILS, cross database searching, etc., initially to the Palm and then to other hand-held devices but the day of small screen information services has finally arrived.

1. Redesign our ILS search page to look and act like the world’s most successful search engine.

See you next year in Charleston. 😊

Against the Grain / December 2006 - January 2007

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