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Innovations Affecting Us -- Browser Add-Ons, Extensions, and Plug-Ins: How they Can Help Leverage the Use of Library Resources

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RESPONSE:

Submitted by **Beth M. Johns** (Electronic Resources & Reference Librarian, **Melvin J. Zahnow Library**, **Saginaw Valley State University**, MI)

The **Zahnow Library** manages Open Access journals through its A-Z list (title list) provided by its link resolver, **SFX** by **ExLibris Group**. Due to staff and time constraints, the library is remotely hosted, meaning that the **SFX** knowledge base server is maintained by **ExLibris** off site. The backbone of link resolver software is the knowledge base. It is through this component of the software that the **Zahnow Library** manages its electronic journal titles, including those freely available, in its A-Z list. In the past year, links to online journals were removed from the library's catalog and therefore, the A-Z list has served as a replacement for this change (note: the A-Z list is not a catalog—it does not provide all of the information normally found in a catalog record for a periodical).

Staff at the **Zahnow Library** has activated the full text service of several databases and Websites (targets) designated as Open Access, such as **DOAJ**, **Highwire Press Free**, **PubMed Central Open Access**, and others. Very little day to day management takes place in regard to the Open Access titles. **ExLibris** updates its server monthly. The library's A-Z list is updated daily (at midnight) to apply any changes made locally. Staff has applied "auto activate" settings within the target service so that new items are activated automatically during **ExLibris**' monthly update. Periodic checks by staff ensure that all of the object portfolios are activated.

The Open Access titles are fully searchable by title (if known) through the library's A-Z list and can also be located by target if a user is familiar with Open Access providers. One potential concern is that by activating all of the Open Access titles, many obscure or foreign titles are included in the A-Z list that receive little, if any use; this can be rectified by selectively activating object portfolios, but with time and staff issues this could be very burdensome when dealing with hundreds or possibly thousands of titles. Therefore it is easier for staff to activate all portfolios. There are occasional issues such as elimination of free access for any number of reasons and inaccurate or misrepresented thresholds. Overall, however, the Open Access titles require little management compared to subscription titles.

The **Zahnow Library** does not consciously direct users to the Open Access materials at this time; it is simply a part of the library's entire online journal offerings. It is unlikely that students at the university realize they are accessing a freely available resource when they obtain journal articles from an Open Access resource. As long as they can access what they need relatively easily, they seem to be satisfied.

Innovations Affecting Us — Browser Add-Ons, Extensions, and Plug-Ins: How they Can Help Leverage the Use of Library Resources

Column Editor: **Kristen DeVoe** (Electronic Resources Librarian, College of Charleston) <devoek@cofc.edu>

If you use the Web browser **Firefox**, or even if you don't use it but are familiar with its existence, you've probably heard (or maybe even said) the words "**Firefox extension**" or "browser-add-on." These are interesting and useful tools that can extend the Web browsers capabilities and offer a highly individual and

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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 as 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.*

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Laura Dawson

BORN & LIVED: Glen Ridge, NJ; Seaford, DE; Brooklyn, NY.

EARLY LIFE, FAMILY, EDUCATION, FIRST JOB: Parents were Presbyterian ministers. Grew up in a small town in Southern DE, near the beaches. Went to **Mount Holyoke College**, entered publishing in NY, stayed in the book industry ever since.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: **Active in Book Industry Study Group/BISAC** – chair of the **Identifiers Committee**, and member of many other committees (**Digital Standards, Metadata**, etc.).

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Cook, read, cook, ski, cook, work out, cook, do crosswords and jigsaws. Cook.

FAVORITE BOOKS: I have a wide-ranging palate — love immense novels with lots of plot like *Anna Karenina* and *The Little Friend*; I love light, fun books like **Armistead Maupin**'s; I am reading **Janet Evanovich** now, at my mother's urging; I also love small beautiful novels like *Diary of a Country Priest* and *Benito Cereno* and *Heart of Darkness*. I just love a good story, well-told.

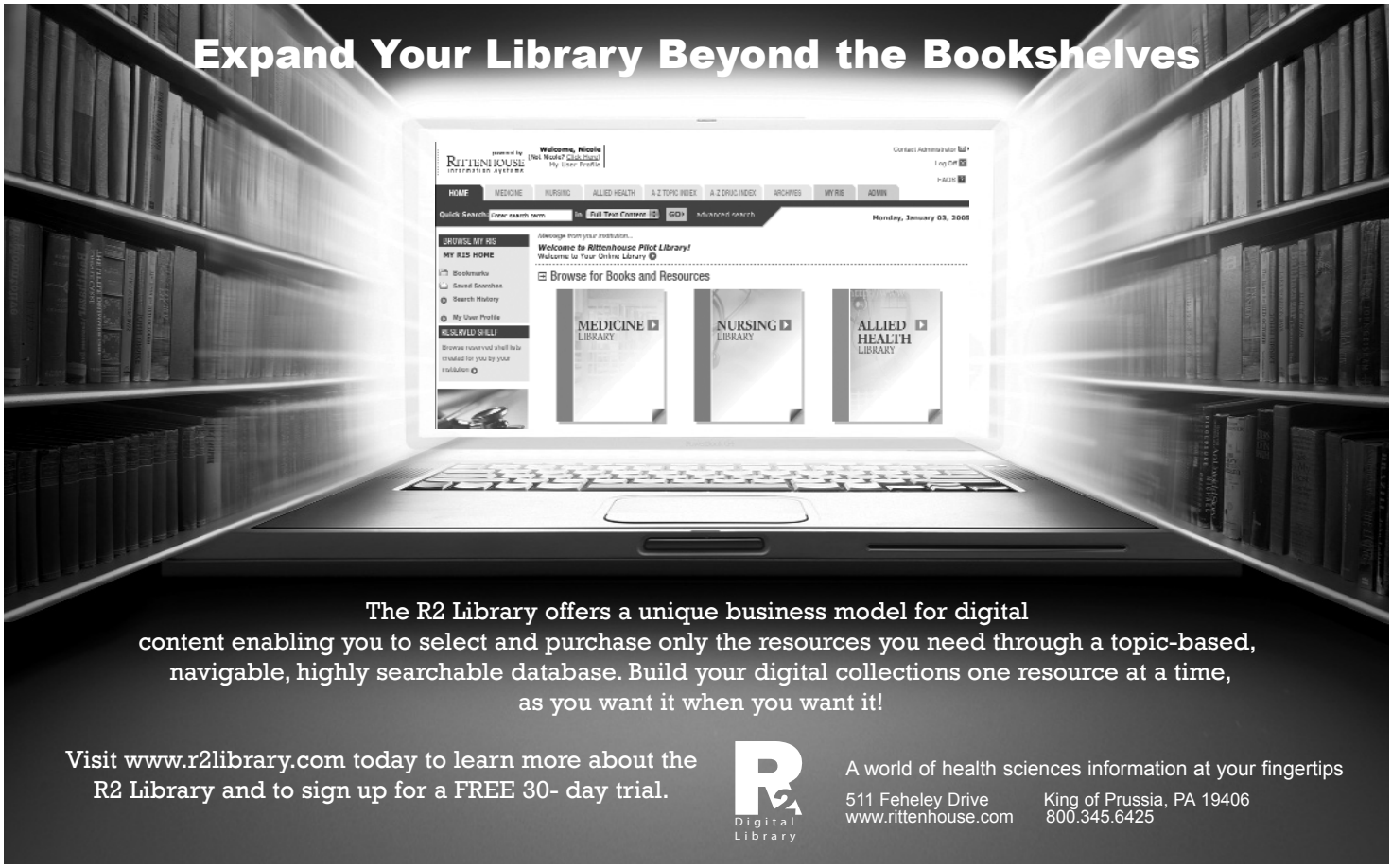
PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Rudeness in public, political obtuseness, and clogged toilets. Also the way my kids keep flipping on the TV when my back is turned.

PHILOSOPHY: A good tomato is worth its weight in gold. A Yemeni cab driver told me that once, and he is totally right. A good tomato can make a great meal, which can make a great evening, which can affect your whole week, etc.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: There are a few: Conceiving of the **Bloggapedia** idea and realizing it was a really good one; consulting to an audiobook company and helping it strip down its database and rebuild it according to industry standards (that was very gratifying); being made chair of the **Identifiers Committee** for **BISAC**; starting *The Big Picture*, a newsletter that covers the areas in which I consult.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: The same as my goal is now — helping an industry in transition from print to digital get a little more comfortable with new and interesting ways of doing things. My father's favorite book was *The Two Cultures* by **C.P. Snow** (Dad was an engineer before he was a minister), and I see a lot of my life as bringing together the technological and the intellectual. It'd be nice to see some real synthesis of the two that is meaningful and useful.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I'm really pleased to see the increasing relevancy of libraries — the other day I was in a meeting and a kid in publishing who's also in grad school was talking about how surprised he was at all the resources available at his college library, and it just warmed my heart. I think with the services that libraries can offer now — online reserves and renewals, database searches from home, viewing rare books and manuscripts online — things are going to explode for this industry and I'm really thrilled to be a part of that.



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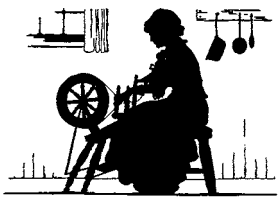
openly.com/), and released in 2005, the **OpenURL Referrer** is a **Firefox extension** that can take certain kinds of citations on the Web and convert them to direct links to a local library's online databases. **OpenURL Referrer** works with your local link resolver to get the user from the citation in **Google Scholar**, **Google News**, and Websites that utilize **Web COins (context objects in spans** *http://ocoins.info/*) to the full-text of the article through their library's subscription. Because the individual who has the **OpenURL Referrer** installed can directly access the full text of a resource directly from **Google Scholar** and other sites, the effectiveness of those sites as research tools is increased. Libraries that make the **OpenURL Referrer** available and teaching patrons how to use it are taking an extra step to meet the users where they are rather waiting for individuals to come to the library.

LibX (http://www.libx.org/)

LibX is a plug-in that can work with both **Firefox** and **Internet Explorer**, thus it has the ability to reach a wider audience. This tool provides direct access to a library's resources regardless of whether the user is on the library Webpage or not. Unlike some of the extensions already mentioned, **LibX** offers access to multiple types of library resources such as the catalog, link resolver, Webpage, and outside Web sources. **LibX** offers users direct access to the catalog via a toolbar as well as the automatic construction of simple or advanced searches using the right-click button. Using this tool patrons can avoid having to navigate away from the page they are searching in order to see if the library has the resource.

In addition to access to the catalog, **LibX** can offer direct access to the **OpenURL link resolver**. In a similar fashion to **OpenURL Referrer**, users with their library's version of **LibX** installed can access the full-text of articles directly from sources such as **Google Scholar**. Another interesting feature of the **LibX plug-in** is the use of embedded cues to show users resources that the library has that are related to what the user is viewing. A user can click on an embedded cue (usually a small icon of the school logo) to view the resources available at the library.



The resources listed above are only a few of the many useful plug-ins and extensions that libraries can use to integrate the library's resources with **Firefox** and sometimes other browsers. While extensions can be useful, they only serve their purpose if users know about them and know how to use them. If you decide to educate patrons about the browser extensions and plug-ins that they can use to access library resources, consider developing a Webpage where these resources are explained and can be downloaded.

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from **Iberoamerican University** (Mexico). *www.swets.com*

Last but not least — Got an email from the incredible **Richard Charkin** <Richard_Charkin@bloomsbury.com> with this announcement — **Blooomsbury** has announced the surprise appointment of **Macmillan** CEO **Richard Charkin** to the position of Executive Director. The move, in CEO **Nigel Newton**'s words, is "to help the Board put in place plans for the post-**Harry Potter** era." He joins the company on October 1st with "responsibilities for our operations worldwide, including **Bloomsbury UK**, **A&C Black**, **Berlin Verlag** and **Bloomsbury USA**, and he will have particular focus on spearheading growth through acquisitions, new publishing areas and international expansion." The address is **Bloomsbury Publishing Plc**, 38 Soho Square, London W1D 3QY.
www.bloomsbury.com/
www.publishingnews.co.uk/pn/

See y'all soon! Cheers! **Yr.Ed.**