2014

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Biz of Acq — Increasing Access to eBooks at Central Connecticut State University

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Whether they're downloaded through **OverDrive** or batch loaded into the catalog, eBooks are an increasingly dominant presence in our libraries. Although present digitally in the catalog, their lack of physical presence creates a barrier for patrons who are browsing the book shelves. Over the past couple years, the **Elihu Burritt Library** at **Central Connecticut State University** has significantly increased its eBook holdings. In an effort to bring attention to and attract usage for our eBook titles, I endeavored to create a way to make the eBooks physically visible and add them to the New Books display shelves in our library's lobby and in a second floor reading area. By using a cover image from an eBook and a QR code to link to the corresponding bibliographic record in the catalog, I hoped to engage our tech-savvy patrons and promote our eBook collections.

As the main and only library supporting the community of learners at **Central Connecticut State University**, the **Elihu Burritt Library** strives to facilitate knowledge creation and inspire intellectual curiosity and lifelong learning (**Central Connecticut State University**, 2012). The library serves a population of approximately 12,000 students at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels (**Central Connecticut State University**, 2014). Over the past several years, the library has subscribed to various small, subject specific eBook packages in support of the curriculum. Starting in 2013, the library (in conjunction with our sister, consortial libraries: **Eastern Connecticut State University**, **Southern Connecticut State University**, and **Western Connecticut State University**) significantly increased its access to eBooks with two large eBook subscriptions. The **EBSCO** E-book Academic Collection, supplying titles to support a broad range of academic disciplines, provides our patrons with access to over 132,000 eBooks for browsing or downloading. The other eBook subscription is a patron-driven acquisitions program offered through our vendor, **Ingram**. This program provides access to, as well as the possible purchase of, over 2,000 eBooks with new titles added on a weekly basis.

Selecting the eBook

eBooks for the display shelves are selected either by myself, other members of the department, or by our student workers. There are no set selection criteria; however we look for titles that would be of general, popular interest. Also, it is helpful if the eBook cover has a colorful, eye-catching image.

Creating the Cover Image

After selecting an eBook title to promote on the New Books display shelves, we access the eBook and, using the computer's print screen function, create a screenshot capturing an image of the eBook cover. This image is then pasted into Microsoft Paint for editing. In the Paint program, we are able to isolate the cover image and then copy and paste it onto a blank document in Microsoft Word. Each eBook cover image will have its own page.

Generating the QR code

Inspired by the **University of Exeter's** use of eBook placeholder markers in the book stacks containing QR codes, I also sought to use QR codes to create a link to the eBook record in the catalog (Green, 2013). All records in our catalog, named Consuls (Connecticut State University Library System), have a persistent link available to the patron for use as a reference URL. Placing a QR code beneath the eBook cover image would permit a patron to scan the code using their mobile device. The scanned QR code would then access the bibliographic record in Consuls. Ideally, it would be best to be able to link the QR code directly to the eBook. However, on account of authentication issues with the eBooks, the QR code needed to be linked to the bibliographic record. A patron scanning the QR code with their mobile device would access the bibliographic record in Consuls and then be able to determine if they wanted to click on the link to access the eBook.

Several freely available QR code generating programs were tested before I selected **Free QR Code Tracker** (*www.freeqrcodetracker.com*) by **TMB**. The main reason for this was, in addition to creating a QR code, this tool has the ability to create campaigns and track scans. I was interested in viewing and collecting usage statistics in order to document this project.

Once a QR code is generated for a specific eBook title, it is then copy and pasted in Microsoft Paint to further isolate the code image and then the image is pasted into Microsoft Word beneath the corresponding eBook title image.

Displaying the eBook

After the QR code is pasted onto the document beneath the image of the eBook cover, a color printout of the document page is made and inserted into an acrylic frame. The frame is then ready for display on the Library's New Books display shelves.

Tracking the Results

Beginning on April 1, 2014 when the eBook frames were placed on the shelves, through June 30, 2014, 32 eBook titles were displayed. This timeframe and eBook selection would serve as a pilot project and would provide a launch point on which to base further action. On account of the limited shelf space available, it was decided that 32 display frames would fit comfortably along the shelves. From this selection, 13 titles received 59 scans during the pilot project. Unfortunately, it is not possible at this time to determine if the patron then clicked on the link in the bibliographic record to access and download the eBook.

Conclusion

Although this project is still new to the library, preliminary results show that patrons are interacting with the eBook displays. Based on the positive usage data collected during the pilot project, we decided to continue displaying select eBook covers with QR codes. In fact, we have decided to extend our display by adding 10 frames to occupy space usually reserved for new books or DVDs. Either by scanning the QR code or by just viewing the display, the library is pleased to be bringing attention to these valuable resources.

References

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