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Are Google Books and Library Catalogs Enough? Developing an Online Research Advisory Tool in the Humanities

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Kevin Gunn and Jonathan Smith
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Question: How do we bring knowledge and stakeholders together?

Content
Google

Librarian

Client

Location

Problems
- Subject librarian not present
- Information desk staff unfamiliar with specific subject disciplines
- Two separate reference desks in Mullen Library and many reference rooms
- Too much information on the internet / Google
- Anemic library catalog records
- Obtuse catalog records
- Non-existent catalog records
- Reference tools not current
- Multiple locations of reference works (print and online)
- Clientele unsure what he / she is looking for

Solution
Create an annotated bibliography using open source software that can search multiple fields using metadata standards for easier upgrades and transfers.

Procedure
1. Select the titles
2. Write the descriptions
3. Select the proper platform
4. Build the browse feature

Early Problems
- Static HTML pages not searchable
- Unstable platform MS Access
- Display issues
- Design issues with homegrown PHP / MySQL solution

Current Iteration
www.lib.cua.edu/rat/

Examples
- Too much information
- Librarian not present
- Two reference desks in Mullen Library
- Anemic catalog record
- What is that title again?!

Uniqueness of the Research Advisory Tool
- Annotations focused on established needs of CUA clientele
- More extensive citations than LibGuides
- Searchable in multiple ways
- Not static like web pages
- Content from multiple sources centralized in one record
- Searchable across multiple disciplines

Technical Specifications
The RAT uses the Scout Portal Toolkit platform (http://scout.wisc.edu/Projects/SPT/). SPT is open source software that is licensed under the GNU General Public License. The RAT is currently hosted on a server running Mac OS X Server, Apache, MySQL and PHP.

References

Contributors to the Research Advisory Tool
Content: Dustin Booher, Jonathan Krause, Nicholas Denysenko, Magdalen Ross, Charles Chukwu, Taras Zvir, Nathan Mueller, Mollie Crisp
Web Site Designers: Matthew Tan, Steven Stegeman

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