

CONNECTING READERS WITH OPEN ACCESS RESOURCES: *THE CUFTS FREE!* OPEN ACCESS COLLECTIONS GROUP

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Abstract

Libraries play an important role in disseminating knowledge. This paper presents an overview of the work of one library group, focused on collection of quality free and open access journals, and illustrates how libraries can be more effective in disseminating knowledge and connecting patrons with needed material by working collaboratively on open access and free collections. Also discussed are the few simple steps that publishers can take to facilitate dissemination of journal content through libraries – following standards such as OpenURL and/or DOI to provide for article-level linking, and providing title lists for download with the key metadata libraries need to include content in library collections, such as title, ISSN, full-text start date, and journal URL. The *CUFTS Free! Open Access Collections Group* works collaboratively to connect library patrons with quality open access and free resources, ranging from the international *Directory of Open Access Journals* to locally developed lists such as *Open Access Journals*, *Open Access Magazines*, and *Canadian Historic Newspapers*. CUFTS is the knowledgebase (journal title lists) of reSearcher, a locally developed open source suite of resources. Through CUFTS, the open access and free journals collections are made available through a link resolving service (GODOT), A to Z journal lists, library catalogues and union databases. A file of MARC records for all of the titles is freely available to download, and downloadable spreadsheets are freely available for local collections as well, from <http://www.eln.bc.ca/view.php?id=1129>.

Keywords: open access; free journals; link resolving; reSearcher.

1. About reSearcher, the CUFTS Free! Open Access Group, and its Collections

The CUFTS Free! Open Access Collections Group emerged from a *desire* to collect information about the quality open access and free journals identified by librarians and faculty at many post-secondary libraries, and an *opportunity* for collaboration made possible by libraries sharing an open source suite of services, reSearcher. The reSearcher [1] suite of services, described in detail by Stranack [2] is developed by Simon Fraser University (SFU) Library, and includes a link resolving service (GODOT), knowledgebase (CUFTS), and an A to Z journal title list based on the knowledgebase (CUFTS Journal Database or CJDB), among other services. GODOT links readers from citations in one database to fulltext in other databases or library print holdings, and also integrates interlibrary loans requesting. The CUFTS knowledgebase contains title lists that are activated for all the databases that the library's patrons have access to (both subscription and open access or free resources). While the reSearcher products are free and open source, available for anyone, anywhere to download and customize; a number of libraries, particularly in Western Canada, share an instance of reSearcher services hosted by SFU Library.

Historically, GODOT is an early innovation in link resolving. GODOT was first developed at SFU Library in the mid-1990's on behalf of the BC Electronic Library (BC ELN) [3], a consortium of post-secondary libraries in British Columbia, Canada. GODOT was originally called OJAC, or Online Journals Acquisition Centre. Interest in this new service soon grew beyond BC ELN, and quickly became a core service of the Council of Prairie and Pacific Post-Secondary University Libraries (COPPUL), a consortium of university libraries across Western Canada. In recent years, increasing interest in open source solutions has contributed to expanded participation in reSearcher, now in use by a variety of libraries distributed across the globe.

Because the core group shares a hosted version of reSearcher, the CUFTS knowledgebase is also shared. So when SFU Library uploaded the *Directory of Open Access Journals* (DOAJ) <http://www.doaj.org> a few years ago, the list immediately became available through reSearcher to all of the libraries sharing this service. Similarly, when SFU Library developed its own in-house *Open Access Journals* list, to facilitate access to peer-reviewed titles not included in DOAJ recommended by librarians and faculty members, this list became available for all other libraries sharing the hosted service through a few simple clicks to activate the journals list. These open access collections have been well used and much appreciated by reSearcher libraries.

In addition to freely sharing this title list, SFU Library welcomed suggestions for new titles to include from reSearcher libraries. This was popular: there were many suggestions for titles to add to SFU's *Open Access Journals*. It was soon ap-

parent that not all of the title suggestions really fit the original list, intended primarily for peer-reviewed journals. That is, library staff was also very interested in tracking high-quality free magazines such as *Wired* and *Adbusters*. A new list was created, *Open Access Magazines*, and an informal listserv set up for avid collectors of free and open access journals and magazines.

When it became clear that this interest in collecting free and open access journals and magazines was substantial, widespread, and sustained, a Terms of Reference were set up for the *CUFTS Free! Open Access Collections Group* [4] and a call for volunteers was sent out to reSearcher libraries. There are now 14 members. The group has no budget; meetings are held virtually, using collaborative software contributed by group members, and the group is investigating options for free, open source collaborative meeting software.

One of the first tasks of the group was to begin an environmental scan to explore other open access and free journal collection efforts, to avoid duplication of efforts. The *Directory of Open Access Journals* (DOAJ), a librarian-vetted list of close to 4,000 fully open access, peer-reviewed scholarly journals, managed by Lund University Library, is the world's best-known collection of open access journals, but there are many others. DOAJ does not include journals that provide free access to back issues while restricting access to current issues, journals that have ceased, or quality periodicals that are not peer-reviewed journals. DOAJ provides a title list in .csv format for anyone to download (see the DOAJ FAQ). *PubMedCentral* (PMC) [5] similarly provides a title list for over 500 journals providing free content through PMC in downloadable spreadsheet format. These downloadable spreadsheets make it very easy to download the DOAJ and PMC title lists and upload to the CUFTS knowledgebase. As a result, it is very easy to include these lists in the knowledgebase and associated services (A to Z lists and MARC records sets).

However, there are many collections of freely available journals that do not at present provide such title lists. The *Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB* (Electronic Journals Library) [6] maintains a list of journals collaboratively maintained by over 400 libraries. The EZB includes more than 43,000 titles, of which more than 21,000 can be read free-of-charge. The EZB provides an open search service so that anyone can search for the free titles, however, there is no title list available for groups like CUFTS Free! to download for inclusion in another link resolving service. As reported on *Open Access News* on March 10, 2009 [7], The E-Journal database at Nottingham Trent University lists 23,971 free e-journals; however, there does not appear to be a downloadable list of these titles at the Nottingham site.

Other large collections of open access journals include *Open J-Gate* [8], with 4,793 English-language Open Access Journals (2,607 Peer-Reviewed) as of March 2009, and *SciELO - Scientific Electronic Library Online* [9], a substantial collection of journals from Latin America and Caribbean countries. Neither *Open J-Gate* nor

Scielo provide title lists in spreadsheet format. *Highwire Free* [10] is a list of journals participating in Highwire that provide free access, whether immediately or after an embargo period. Highwire provides a title list in spreadsheet format for all Highwire titles, but not a separate list for free titles. Arguably the largest title list of them all is that of Jan Szczepanski [11], University Librarian at Göteborgs Universitet in Sweden.

When journal collections do not come with lists in the format that is needed for link resolving purposes, it takes time and effort to either hand create a list, or manipulate an existing list. Creating the *Highwire Free* list for CUFTS was not that difficult, as it is a subset of the larger Highwire collection for which a spreadsheet list is available. Szczepanski's lists include most of the metadata needed for the spreadsheets needed to include collections in CUFTS, and so the group has been working through some of Jan's lists. One title that illustrates the value for local collections is the discovery of *Ha-Shilth-Sa Newspaper*, through Jan Szczepanski's list. *Ha-Shilth-Sa* is a freely available newspaper published by the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council for all Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

With so many open access and free journal collection efforts underway around the world, the *CUFTS Free! Open Access Collections Group* has been considering priorities for local selection. It quickly became obvious that collecting locally produced journals should be a priority - if we do not collect these, who will? Also, because we share the results of our work with Jan Szczepanski who then shares with his extensive network of contacts around the world, our collection efforts enhance the visibility and impact of our own local open access and free journals around the world.

The group's work is managed through a wiki [12]. There are now several locally developed open access and free journals collections, including *Open Access Journals*, *Open Access Magazines*, *Open Access Government Serials*, *Open Access Multilingual Journals*, and *Canadian Historic Newspapers*. Collaboration on title lists is managed through Google Spreadsheets. Originally, group members entered titles directly into the spreadsheet. This approach was abandoned, as it was too difficult to maintain formatting in Google Spreadsheets with many people sharing the spreadsheet. A Google Form [13] is now used, allowing for the provision of guidance on formatting and inclusion of required fields. Once the form is filled out, the information about the title is automatically entered into the Google Spreadsheet. SFU Library Staff take these title suggestions and manually add them to the spreadsheets maintained by SFU Library, which are then uploaded on a periodic basis to the CUFTS knowledgebase.

Information requested on the Google Form is:

CUFTS_OA Title List Suggestion Form

- Required
- Journal Title * Enter title precisely as it will appear in A to Z lists and library catalogues. Please check carefully!
- Print ISSN 8 characters no hyphens 8 characters. Watch for leading zeros that drop.
- e-ISSN 8 characters no hyphen 8 characters.
- Fulltext start date YYYY-MM-DD * Example: 2006-01-01 If unsure of date, assume first day of month
- Starting Volume Number Digit Only Do Not Use V, Vol, etc. Example: for first volume, enter "1"
- Starting Issue Number Digit Only No Issue, etc. Example: for first volume, enter "1"
- Fulltext End date YYYY-MM-DD (not for continuing periodicals); for fully open access journals, this field is not relevant. Add for ceased titles. If unknown, assume Dec. 31.
- Final Volume number Digit Only
- Final Issue number Digit Only
- Embargo in Months number only (months) Example: 4-month embargo, enter 4. This could be one issue for a quarterly, 4 issues for monthly, 16 issues for a weekly.
- URL of Journal * Select the link to the full archive for the journal. Check to ensure that there are no extra spaces or line breaks.
- Publisher
- Indexing Notes List databases the title is available in can also be placed in this column.
- LC Call Number (optional)
- LC Subject Heading (optional)
- Suggested OA Collection Does this title belong in Journals (peer-reviewed), Magazines, Multi-lingual or Government Serials?
- Title Suggested/Verified by: Enter your name here.

After an initial test period by the local collections group, the Google Form has now been widely advertised, inviting the whole local library community to participate in the building of these collections. The group is giving thought to eventually expanding participation to include anyone who is interested.

One of the tasks of the group is to develop Selection Criteria for the lists. This can be tricky! While the value of a fully open access journal (free immediately and forever) is obvious, the decision is a bit more difficult when only some of the journal is open access. Should embargoed journals be included? If so, does it matter

how long the embargo period is? What about ceased titles? Early on, the group settled on a fairly inclusive approach. The content of a deceased title is still useful, and so titles do not need to be current to be included.

The fact that many libraries are using CUFTS as the basis for their library's A to Z journals list impacts decisions on selection and on title list creation. For example, while the value of multilingual journals may be obvious to the large research library, the value – and even the desirability – of such a list may be less obvious for a college library. A collection of titles in medicine or science, regardless of quality, will be less relevant at a library specializing in fine arts. While the library will not want to prevent faculty and students from accessing quality free materials in any subject, a local A to Z list closely focused on the titles most relevant to the patrons of that particular library may be desired.

The current list of open access and free titles in CUFTS [14], over 6,000 titles altogether, is:

- Bioline International.
- BioMedCentral.
- BioOne Open Access.
- Canadian Historic Newspapers
- Directory of Open Access Journals
- GreenFILE (EBSCO)
- Highwire Free.
- Hindawi Journals.
- ICAAP (International Coalition for the Advancement of Academic Publication - Athabasca University).
- J-Stage.
- Medknow Publications
- Nature Publishing Group (NPG) Open Access Archive.
- Open Access Government Serials.
- Open Access Journals.
- Open Access Magazines.
- Open Access Multilingual Journals.
- Open Access Poetry Journals.
- Project Euclid Journals Free.
- PubMedCentral.
- Public Library of Science.

BC ELN maintains an information page about the Open Access and Free Journals Collections available through reSearcher at <<http://www.eln.bc.ca/view.php?id=1129>>, including brief information on each collection, links to the main collection page where possible and an A to Z list of all the titles at BC ELN. Basic MARC re-

cords including the journal title, ISSN, URL, and other readily available information are available for free download from <<http://eln.bc.ca/cuftsoa090318.mrc>>. Downloadable lists of titles in tab-delimited format have been created and posted for the locally created lists.

2. Journals and Publishers: Enhance your visibility by sharing metadata

Many library services are built upon journal title lists. It is amazing how many publishers – even large, highly profitable commercial publishers – do not provide accurate, usable title lists for their journals. One simple step to enhance the visibility of journals is to make a title list readily available in a standard format, such as a spreadsheet, with the key metadata needed by library link resolving services. The most essential pieces of information are journal title, URL, date the first fulltext article is available and ISSN (if available). Accuracy in these details is of the utmost importance. Library link resolving services are designed, once a citation is found, to automatically check to see if fulltext is available. An error in the title of a journal, or an incorrect ISSN, will prevent the service from connecting to the fulltext.

Other helpful elements of metadata are the volume and issue number of the first fulltext article, embargo period (if available) and name of publisher. The language(s) of the journal and subjects is useful, too. For a journal it is important to make sure that this information is readily available on the journal's home page. Publishers and aggregators are well advised to create title lists in spreadsheet form for downloading from the organizational home page.

Careful attention to metadata at the article level is also of importance for journals and publishers. Articles are more likely to be read when users can click directly to the article, rather than having to go through a table of contents or download a whole issue. This is because many library patrons use search services ranging from indexing databases to Google Scholar for research. Long lists of results are common; the article that the reader can easily connect to is more likely to be read. One way to enhance the likelihood that readers will be connected directly to individual articles is the use of standards-based methods such as OpenURL or Digital Object Identifier (DOI) for identifying individual articles.

Open URL involves a standard syntax for describing journals and articles in the URL. Looking at the URL for this article <<http://www.neurologyindia.com/article.asp?issn=0028-3886;year=2009;volume=57;issue=1;spage=13;epage=19;aulast=Jalali>>, it is easy to determine the title of the journal, ISSN, year, volume, issue, page number and author's last name for the article, "Curability of cancer by radiotherapy and

chemotherapy, including in neuraxial neoplasms”, by Rakesh Jalali Anusheel, and MunshiBrijesh Arora, in *Neurology India*, an open access journal published by OA publisher Medknow Publications. When a publisher employs a standard syntax, it is much easier for libraries to seamlessly connect patrons to the journal from citation indexes, increasing the probability that the article will be found, read and cited. Apps and MacIntyre [15] discuss OpenURL in some depth. There is no cost to following the OpenURL standard. Digital Object Identifier (DOI) [16] is a unique number assigned to a discrete item. DOIs are assigned through Registration Agencies, such as Crossref, which may charge fees.

Another way to enhance the visibility of your journal is by conforming to the Open Archives Initiative – Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH Protocol) [17]. For example, the Directory of Open Access Journals provides an article-level search using OAI-PMH. Conforming to this standard will also mean that your journal can be included in services designed for open access archives. Standards-based journal software such as Open Journal Systems facilitates compliance with OAI-PMH.

3. Conclusions

There is much that libraries, journals and publishers can do collaboratively to enhance the success of connecting readers with articles and journals. Publishers can use standards to make article-level linking possible, and provide title lists that will facilitate the discovery of journals and articles through library services. Libraries and librarians are beginning to work collaboratively to develop and share open access and free journal collections. By working together, we can easily make more and more quality resources available to patrons of our, or any, library. Traditional library tools such as catalogues and journal lists continue to have value for searching for material that is freely available on the web; for example, by filtering out some of the noise that can appear in a plain Google search for the kinds of material that are not at the tops in relevance for the vast majority of Google users.

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