

# Article indexes

## Targeted and locally created

by Irene Herold

**H**ave you ever encountered a professor-developed research assignment that could only be answered by students browsing through a few specific journal titles because those titles are not indexed in commercially available databases? Rather than fight the assignment, you can create your own targeted article index on topics you know your students will need to search. Then take advantage of your library Web pages to make it widely and easily available.

More and more reference tools are going online, not just in index form, but also with full text and full image. Expensive subscription databases command a large part of library budgets and therefore require an implicit commitment from the reference and instructional staffs to use them. Librarians find themselves spending time trying to use and find materials from these resources that may not really fit students' information needs.

Many academic libraries have periodical collections, which are specific to a field but not adequately covered in the general-oriented, commercially available database indexes. After all, the commercial entities are trying to sell to as broad a market as possible. They often put strange bedfellows together in a single database index to maximize who might want to purchase access to their database. This leaves the library with a good overview resource for access to periodical literature, but also leaves holes for access to specialized journal collections owned locally.

### Create a locally developed index

Creating targeted article indexes on topics you know your students will need to search is one solution to this problem. Where do you begin in determining what to index? Ask yourself these two questions:

1. Is there an assignment a professor gives that brings students into the library and forces them to browse through periodicals because they are not indexed in a commercial database?
2. Are there perennial topics that students always seem to need but only periodical format is acceptable?

If you can answer yes to either of these questions, you have found the topic for your first locally developed index.

Using software already at your disposal, such as Word or Excel, you can create a simple index in a table format that can be saved in HTML. This table can be searched using the edit/find function of your Web browser's tool bar. If you have more than one page of indexed articles, you may want to add an alphabetical or subject directory at the top of the initial index page with jump links to that section of the index. Also remember to include a "return to top of page" or "back" link after each section to direct searchers back to the directory to facilitate multiple searches. The index is now ready for student use.

If you want something more sophisticated for searching, you can add a search engine such as Google. You can purchase indexing software or you can use the power of your integrated

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library system catalog's 856 fields for links to electronic journals, local records, and holdings' locations. The only limit is on the time that you have to develop your index. Start with something simple and use Web-tracking software, like WebTrends, to examine how the pages are used and to determine if you need to do more.

### Market your product

Once you have created the index and posted it to your Web pages, intermingling it with commercially licensed database resources, you need to market your creation. Contact the faculty member who assigned the topic from question number one above, show him or her the index, and explain what led to its creation. Offer to give a mini-instruction session on the index to students working on the assignment. If the professor declines your offer, at least he or she will be aware that the index is available. The professor might surprise you and suggest other topics for future indexes. He or she will certainly see the library as proactive, responsive to the students' information needs, and as a place that not only houses periodicals, but that creates useful content.

Include the index in library instruction sessions beyond those for the original professor,

as appropriate. Create hotlinks in your online catalog that point to the index or pop the searcher into the index when they enter an appropriate keyword in their catalog search. Make sure that there are many access points from your library's Web pages: subject guides, database lists, newsletters, and "what's new" banners.

Also tell students about the locally created index when they are researching a related topic. Word of mouth among students about the usefulness of a library's resources is the best of all marketing tools.

Taking a library standard, article indexes, and creating an online format for topics in specialized journals housed in your library can be the beginning of a new relationship in information access for you and your patrons, and it will enhance your image with faculty. The use of your specialized journals will increase as you provide access beyond what students' browse on the "new" shelves. Students will find the materials they need to complete their assignments and be impressed that this was created by the librarian(s) they know. Everyone wins with a targeted article citation database of locally held materials. ■

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