

TIPS » tech tips for every librarian

by donna f. ekart

Adding an 'E' to Free

In a perfect world, you'd have the funds to buy or subscribe to all the ebooks and ejournals your users want. You'd have a couple dozen Kindles and iPods, loaded with content, on hand to loan out. You'd have a magical library Netflix account that would let all your patrons watch movies from home by entering their library card numbers; ditto for iTunes that would stream music from your collection.

Someday, maybe. But for today, it's possible to build a decent e-collection around free resources. Here are several of my favorite free e-resources for you to check out.

• Google Books

OK, let's just go ahead and get Google Books out of the way. I know you know it's there, so let's concentrate on ways to leverage everything it has for easy use in your library. First, create a search box on your website that limits results to items in "full view" so your users who want to read entire works won't have to wade through pages of results that just show snippets. Here's the code:

```
<form action="http://books.google.com/books" method="get">
  <input name="as_brr" value="1" type="hidden" />
  <input maxLength="255" name="q" type="text" />
</form>
```

It's that "as_brr" value that does the limiting. So if you'd rather create an embedded search some other way, just be sure to incorporate that variable.

Second, make sure you're also linking directly to the magazines part of Google Books. It's amazing how many

general interest magazines have their entire archives digitized in Google Books. *Life* magazine from the 1970s? Got it. *Popular Science* from the 1870s? No problem. Using the "Add to my" feature and a Google account for your library, you could create a curated, annotated list of titles most relevant to your users' needs. One thing that makes this archive even more compelling than many paid databases is that the issues are scanned in their entirety, which is invaluable for anyone studying advertising and other ephemera of an era.



Your users can search or browse a wide variety of popular interest magazines at Google Books.

• Household Products Database

The National Library of Medicine maintains this database on household products such as cleaning supplies, pesticides, and cosmetics. You can look up a specific product to see what's in it, search

for all products containing a particular chemical or ingredient, or search by health effect to see what products might cause certain symptoms. The site is simple to use and incredibly informative.

• Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

Not every publisher believes that research should be locked up behind a pay wall. The DOAJ is a listing of more than 4,500 scholarly journals with open access policies. More than one-third of the journals are searchable at the article level through the DOAJ interface, and all the titles are browsable by subject categories. If you're feeling ambitious, you can get metadata for all the DOAJ journals in OAI or CSV format and work to incorporate the data into your library's website or catalog. One caveat: The DOAJ can be a complete time-suck, so be warned before you go poking around. While doing research for this column, I found a paper on messianic themes in *Donnie Darko* published in the most recent issue of the *Journal of Religion and Film* and lost a couple of hours.

• Macaulay Library Animal Sounds and Video Archive

This is a fun site to play around on, yet it could also be incredibly useful for a school report. It offers audio and video of thousands of birds, fish, mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians, fully searchable or browsable by fascinating categories such as "behavior," in case

Resources Discussed

Google Books

<http://books.google.com>

Magazines in Google Books

http://books.google.com/books?as_pt=MAGAZINES

Household Products Database

<http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov>

Directory of Open Access Journals

www.doaj.org

Macaulay Library

Animal Sounds & Video catalog

<http://macaulaylibrary.org>

Project Gutenberg

www.gutenberg.org

Cities and Buildings Database

<http://content.lib.washington.edu/buildingsweb>

American Memory Project

<http://memory.loc.gov>

America's Story from America's Library

www.americaslibrary.gov

ipl2

www.ipl.org

you have a need to see only video of animals preening or to hear how many different animals make a noise that can be described as a “croak.”

• Project Gutenberg

Basically, this is the granddaddy of all etext projects. Started in 1971 by founder Michael Hart's decision to digitize the Declaration of Independence, it now contains more than 30,000 works in the public domain, digitized by thousands of volunteers. Books, audio books, and other materials from Project Gutenberg are available for download in a variety of formats for ebook readers, audio devices, and computers. The RSS feed of new additions would be

particularly handy to feature on your library's website.

• Cities and Buildings Database

A project of the University of Washington, this database contains more than 11,000 images of buildings and cities from around the world. Images are scanned from original slides or drawn from the public domain, and the database is searchable by fields such as architect, style, and construction date, as well as browsable by location.

• American Memory Project

There are very literally millions of things in the Library of Congress' American Memory Project that might be of interest to your users. Some of my favorites are in the sound recordings

collections. American folk music, dialect recordings, slave narratives—there's a wide variety, and it's all good. There's also a special section for teachers and school librarians offering lesson plans and professional development materials. Oh, and there's a separate site just for kids, America's Story from America's Library, with games and stories and other fun stuff. And, and, and ... you get the idea. It's a great place for e-resources.

• ipl2

Like the American Memory Project, ipl2 has an incredibly wide range of e-resources. It was created by the merging of the Internet Public Library and the Librarians' Internet Index and is maintained by a consortium of institutions with library and information science programs. One really useful e-resource it offers is a listing, sorted by state, of online newspapers. It lists more than 40 for my state, more than 100 for larger states such as California. It's much better than scrolling through dizzying reels of microfilm, in my opinion.

So there you have it—some great free e-resources to incorporate into your library's collection. It may not be a perfect world, but it's not a bad one at all. ■



Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library is the world's largest archive of animal sounds and video.



ipl2 merges two great sites, the Internet Public Library and the Librarians' Internet Index, into one amazing place.

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