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Written Assignment #1: Library Catalogs

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Searching through various in-line public access catalogs (OPACs) could be quite a learning experience. The OPAC system/interface vendors as well as individual library systems have their own ideas about what is the more user-friendly way to conduct a search or to display results. In addition to that, different types of libraries – school, public, academic – adjust their interfaces to particular need of their users. This text explores OPACS of the Riverside County Public Library System and Riverside Community College District LAMP (Library Access to Monographs and Periodicals) and compares their pros and cons.

Riverside County Public Library System

Home page: http://www.riverside.lib.ca.us/riverside/
Catalog page: http://63.237.164.71/web2/tramp2.exe/log_in?setting_key=english

The Riverside County Public Library System was established in 1909 after passage of California tax legislation intended to encourage development of county libraries. The City of Riverside, the county seat, established it own tax-supported public library in the 1888, and from the beginning, the county library system was managed by the Riverside City Library head librarian. The systems were integrated and worked as could be expected for county of the size and economic unbalanced development as the Riverside County. However, the long simmering tensions between poor desert communities and prosperous cities resulted in 1997 with dissolution of unified library system. The City of Riverside and a number of incorporated areas decided that they would manage their own, independent public libraries.

The County administration decided that the Riverside County Public Library would be managed by Library Systems and Services (http://www.lssi.com/), a private company with headquarter in Maryland. For a while, all Riverside public libraries used the same unified catalog and freely circulated books between themselves. Two years ago, the Riverside City and County systems broke off almost all cooperation, separating their catalogs and collections. Although they still recognize each other's membership cards, they exchange books only as ILL. More information about history of Riverside library systems and outsourcing of management of the county system could be read in Ronald J. Baker article published in Library Journal (Baker, 1988).

Today, Riverside County Public Library System, together with San Bernardino and Inyo counties, forms Inland Library Network (http://www.inlandlib.org/ILS%20Info/ILS%20Info/ilslibs.htm). The Network is a subgroup of The San Bernardino Inyo Riverside Counties United Library Services (SIRCULS, http://www.inlandlib.org/SIRCULS/sirculs.htm), a multi-type library cooperative of public and various university libraries with campuses in participating counties. Conspicuously, Riverside City Public Library is not on the list of participating libraries.

As far as I could determine, the Inland Library Network, uses a union catalog of Riverside and San Bernardino County Public Library systems, while the Inyo county library does not have an Internet accessible OPAC (http://www.countyofinyo.org/library/). It is interesting that number of smaller independent libraries, listed as members of the Network (Ontario Public Library, Upland Public Library, and Palms Spring Public Library) do not have an option of searching the Network catalogs. Searches in their OPACs bring only local holdings.

Riverside County Public Library OPAC

The Riverside County Public Library System uses SIRSI software for their OPAC interface. The Library web page and catalog could be viewed (and searched) in English

as well as Spanish. The Library home page offers quick search of catalog by keyword in author/title/subject category. According the information on the catalog page, the SIRSI software is two year old (from 2004).

The catalog home page prominently display option for the basic search by word or phrase (keyword), title, author, subject, series and periodical title. The advanced search is named "Power Search" and is written in small letters under the spell checker button:

The head of the catalog page haves a links for "Kid's Library" and "Knowledge Portal." The Kid's Library feature offers browsing through the catalog by subject with visual clues (small photographs). It is a layman-friendly way to build quite complicated query search by subject. Beside children, this feature is probably very helpful to people with limited literacy or language proficiency. The Knowledge Portal is a link to subscription databases and catalogs of other libraries belonging to the Inland Library Network. However, any catalog search on the Riverside County OPAC is a search trough the Inland Library Network so, it is unclear what is real purpose of the link on the Knowledge Portal.

Catalog home page have also a links to Recommended reading list, various web sites of wide public interest (tax forms), links to various bestseller lists as well as the usual navigation links to the library website pages and access to a patron's personal account.

Except for prominent "Search," "Spell Checker" buttons, and forms for entering the personal account; all other links are just hyperlinked words without any additional decorations.

The advanced search offers four lines for Boolean search with the same categories as the basic search (word or phrase, title, author, subject, series and periodical title). The keyword is the default option for all catalog searches in the County OPAC. Search could be also limited by the language, format, age group, and year of publishing. One can also choose how to sort the results.

The hit list displays a short record with a call number, title, author and publishing date, image of book covers, the names of all libraries that have the book, and if available and links to summary, table of content or chapter excerpts.

The full record contains tabs with information about the item and catalog (bibliographic record). If applicable, there is an additional tab with information associated with the book like full text summary, reviews, and/or table of context. This information are usually linked or copied from outside sources (Library Journal, for example). The items are described on the level one of bibliographic description with access points of title, author, and subject entry. The call number, book location and its circulation status is displayed on the separate page (an Item information tab). On a sidebar are links to items that have the same author, subject, as well as to the books shelved together with one displayed in record.

The OPAC is quite easy to use, brings plenty of information about the book, and enables easy browsing. The interface is not overcrowded, however, the lack of visual hierarchy make visual recognition of links quite difficult. Also, the program is quite slow to churn through the database and return results. Overall, the Riverside County Library System OPAC was quite serviceable; however, today are available much better (faster) search engines with interfaces that are visually more appealing. But, in the county where practically every city has its own, independent and unique library cum library system it is not surprising that nobody have quite enough money for anything cutting edge.

Searching Riverside County Public Library catalog

> **Query: What videos do you have on the Navajo Tribe?**
> **Basic search: Navajo tribe, subject, all locations**

This search brought up 0 hits. Changing option to "keyword" brought 11 hits – 10 books and 1 sound recording of the book. At the bottom of each page, displaying hit list, system offers additional search limit by language, format, publication type, and age group. Categories inside the format limit were rather odd. The categories are "computer related materials," "selection records" and "bibliographic materials," to mention just some of more confusing ones. Selecting "visual materials" returned me a hit list of subject heading, but 0 matches for the query.

Limiting the search on "Navajo, subject, visual materials" returned hit list of 21 videos containing subject entries with word "Navajo" in the string. Some hits were very loosely "Navajo" as, for example, Peter Getzels' "The search for Kennedy's PT 109" [DVD videorecording]. Apparently, documentary has something to do with searching the old shipwreck and Navajo code talkers in WWII.

Query: Where can I find a book on magic?

Power search: SU magic not SU religion, English only, adult age group.

That query brought me 565 titles including all Harry Potter books, books in Spanish, sound recordings and video recording. I could not exclude AV formats (there are no printed material or book option in format limit), and language and age group limits are obviously iffy. At the head of the hit list, there is query string for the search. The "item category 2: unknown" should be "adult" but obviously this category is not recognized by the engine. Why was then offered as a search limit?

Some help in narrowing down the list could be find on the sidebar, which offers various cross-reference links to the different "magic" related categories and subjects. There is also "x-ref" option on the menu, which brings list of subjects and headings related to search query.

Riverside Community College District Library (LAMP)

LAMP (library) home page: http://library.rcc.edu/
Catalog page: http://library.rcc.edu/catalog.htm

The Riverside Community College was founded in 1916 as a "junior college" with an enhanced high school curriculum. With years, the junior college grew into the College District (RCCD), which serves Western Riverside County. The RCCD operates from three interrelated campuses in the cities of Riverside, Norco, and Moreno Valley. It offers more than one hundred programs leading to an associate's degree, career certificate, or transfer to a four-year college or university. Each semester, more that 30,000 students take classes online or at one of RCCD's campuses or education centers (from RCC web site http://www.rcc.edu/). A brief history of RCC could be found on the web site http://www.rccdfaculty.net/pages/rcchistory.htm. Unfortunately, it is not noted who is the author of the article.

LAMP OPAC

From LAMP web site: "LAMP provides access through a single location to a wide range of resources (both print & electronic), helpful guides to assist in research, and links to a variety of selected Internet resources. The LAMP Online Catalog contains records for the items available in the Library and Learning Resource Center (LLRC) of the Riverside Community College District. This includes all materials in the Libraries and Instructional Media Centers for all three campuses (Riverside City, Moreno Valley, and Norco campuses). In addition, there are records for all items in the Reserve collection, including photocopies of journal articles." (http://library.rcc.edu/lamp.htm#limiting)

The LAMP uses INNOPAC software for their OPAC. Innovative Interface Inc., the software developer, describes INNOPAC as "a UNIX-based system for public access to catalogues and modules to support cataloging, circulation, serials, and acquisitions."

(http://www.iii.com/about/25.shtml). According the company, the program was created in 1985. The LAMP site does not provide any information about the vendor or version (vintage) of the OPAC software.

LAMP OPAC provides access to the union catalog of library collections in all three campuses of RCCD. The LAMP home pages provide wide range of the options beside link to the OPAC. It is possible to do simple search from the home page in title, author, keyword, call number, and subject category. The subject is a default option.

Opening the catalog home page offers the list of categories which than open basic search catalog box. There are no advanced (Boolean) search options for this catalog. The search brings summary hit list of subject headings (subject search) or titles (keyword search). Only at this point it is possible to set the search limit. The library collection is described on the second level of bibliographic description:

Title	Seasons of a **Navajo** [videorecording] / a presentation of KAET Phoenix, Arizona ; produced and photographed by John Borden ; produced by Peace River Films.
Imprint	[Alexandria, Va.] : PBS Home Video ; Beverly Hills, CA : Distributed by Pacific Arts Video, c1990.
Note	VHS.
	In English or **Navajo** with English subtitles.
	Will Lyman.
	Film editor, Michel Chalufour ; principle advisor, Gary Witherspoon.
	Originally shown on television, 1984.
Summary	Shows one year in the life of an extended **Navajo** family on a southwestern reservation. Contrasts the traditional life with modern changes.
Note	"PBS 275."
Subject	**Navajo** Indians -- Social life and customs.
	Indians of North America -- Southwest, New -- Social life and customs.
	Navajo calendar.
	Navajo Indian Reservation.

LOCATION	CALL #	STATUS
Riverside Media	E99.N3 S427 1990	CHECK SHELVES

Descript	1 videocassette (60 min.) : sd., col. ; 1/2 in.
Alt author	Borden, John.
	Peace River Films.
	PBS Home Video.
	KAET-TV (Television station : Tempe, Ariz.)
	Pacific Arts Video (Firm)
Add title	Title on cassette: Seasons of the **Navajo**
ISBN	1561115282

A record provides for cross-reference access points in title, author, call number and subject headings. There are no images of the book or any links to the sources outside the catalog. Description of the item is extensive but limited to the LAMP catalog. To search an outside database it is necessary to exit the catalog and choose one of the links on the LAMP home page. However, catalog provided the links to the eBooks electronic resources for the users with the password (student ID and pin).

Searching LAMP catalog

> **Query: What videos do you have on the Navajo Tribe?**
> **Basic search: Navajo tribe, subject.**

The search returned 0 hits. System brought out the subject headings and suggested search by keyword.

	No matches found; nearby SUBJECTS are: Result page: Prev Next		
	Save Marked Records Save All On Page		
Mark		Year	Entries
	Navajo Sandpaintings -- See Sandpaintings		1
☐	Navajo Silverwork	c1971	1
☐	Navajo Textile Fabrics		6
	Your entry **navajo tribe** would be here -- Search as Words		
☐	Navajo Weavers	c2003	1
☐	Navajo Women	1967	1
☐	Navajo Women United States Biography	2000	1
	Navaju Language -- See Navajo language		1

That brought only one hit. Only at that point "modify search" come as the option. It is possible to limit search by language, location (campuses in Norco, Moreno Valley or Riverside), material type, date of publication and sorting of the hits.

Modified search of query "keyword=Navajo, language=English, material type=video, slide" sorted by relevance brought 6 hits all video recordings.

Query: Where can I find a book on magic?
Basic search: magic, subject.

This brought 45 subject heading hit list. The subject heading "magic" had 14 items. Because there are no children books in the library collection, the hit list was almost exclusively of non-fiction book debating magic rituals, witchcraft, or "everyday magic." Search limits offered this time additional option to search the records on the hit list by the words in the title, subject or by author. Limiting the search on books with the word "magic" in the title, cut the list of hits to 5 records.

The LAMP search options and record display contain more "professional" cataloging information. The feature to search inside the hit list is very helpful when presented with long list of hits. However, besides wondering around collection using access points there

are not much else one can do with the library catalog. However, one must admit that the search engine was very fast and results were displayed within the seconds.

Summary

Both catalogs – of Riverside County Public Library System and RCCD LAMP were quite intuitive and easy to use. It was interesting that public library catalog had much more advanced searching options than one in academic library (albeit community college). However, this "power search" was of limited use because both (language, age group) limits were not applied to the search for unknown reason (presumably, database entries do not support those options). The County OPAC also displays records enhanced with various information and options, which are not necessary part of bibliographical entry. With sidebars, suggesting various subject or classification categories catalog provides for numerous possible roads to the discovery.

In contrast, LAMP catalog is concentrated on straightforward bibliographic information without bells and whistles. Although lack of advanced (Boolean) search is rather odd, the catalog follows traditional university display of hits, subject headings, and records. The introductory home page explains every function in the catalog, various educative links, and links to the subscription databases and some external links. The OPAC itself is reserved exclusively for searches inside RCCD collections. Maybe the reason for that is that inside the library building, on the computers reserved for catalog search it is not possible to use catalog browser to access Internet. As it may be, LAMP OPAC is much faster searching the database and displaying the results.

None of the interfaces has easy accessible MARC display option. In LAMP, record information could be exported in various formats (MARC and EndNote being some) or sent via e-mail. In County Public Library System it is possible to change display (menu option "Change Display" with options Formatted display Yes/No) of the Catalog record tab to show MARC encoding of the record. Other tabs are not affected by change of display.

Both catalogs are well suited for the informational needs of their patrons and the library environment in which they operate. Although none of the OPAC interfaces were particularly dear to my heart, in my opinion the County catalog was much better integrated into the Internet, while LAMP offered a fast search and familiar (if dry) record display.

Reference:

Baker, R. J. (1998). Outsourcing in Riverside County: Anomaly, Not Prophecy. *Library Journal, 123*(5), 34-37.
http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/hww/results/results_fulltext_main contentframe.jhtml;jsessionid=E3GMYY2WDZ4FZQA3DILCFGGADUNGIIV0?url=results_single_fulltext.jhtml (you need to have student ID and SJ King Library pin number to access the link)