

# Institution Case Study: Google Books

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## PLACE INFORMATION AND INTRODUCTORY GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

### Location Address-URL:

<http://books.google.com/>

### Introduction and Location Background

Each institution and how they strive to integrate information technology into their user environments is unique in its own way. Patron needs change as institutions endeavor to include new and more efficient user services. The idea of this case study is to analyze its components by the following general sections and detail considerations that are either *good* or *poor* as practiced in the overall functionality of the institution in its user environments. Being a case study, observations are subjective to the observer, and though each section is given a rating for quick reference and

overall grading, no one section or its rating determines the overall effectiveness or inefficiency of the entire institution.

This introduction takes into account the following general points of consideration applicable to the entire institution as a complete user environment. Google Books is in many ways a logical extension of the company's extremely popular Web search engine, Google. The Internet--a diverse and multilingual, geographically dispersed interconnection of area networks and intranets made possible by regulated communication protocols, namely TCP/IP--shares a lot in common with libraries, archives, and museums around the world. Like the diverse private networks that are the building blocks of the Internet, we stake our claim to a physical area and fill it with information and artifacts that we find to be important and applicable to some shared goal, whether it is a public library or its university equivalent. Physical or virtual, they have the same primary problem--namely the ability to search the collection for critical data. 12 billion Websites and

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information portals are absolutely useless if they cannot be narrowed down to some manageable number in the face of a single query--same with books and other information artifacts.

Using their Web search algorithms and digitalization technologies, they are digitalizing entire collections of libraries and vast publications of printed material and making it available on the Internet. Though important questions of copyright are to be worked out, it is a true advancement to the field of information systems and library studies and for the availability of information to the public.

Like all Google sites, the portal is tastefully simple and almost graphic-less. This makes it superfast to load, even on some of the slowest connection such as the new generation of smart phones and their slower WWANs (your cell phone network), which was never built for high-speed throughput. Back in the day, this was a boon to dial-up users, such as myself. Compare this to Yahoo! or AOL, whose strategy of trivial information over-load and pointless video feeds seem to be a cornerstone of their business model and subsequent failures.

## **COLLECTION SPACE OBSERVATIONS**

### **Virtual Collection**

**Section general rating:** 4

**Rating scale:** 1 = bad, 2 = bad-average, 3 = average, 4 = average-good, 5 = good

This section focuses on specifics in collection management of the institution's collection space. Specific considerations worthy of a 1 (poor) rating or 5 (good) rating are detailed below. Considerations rating 2-4 will not be as well documented. The idea is to highly document practices which can either be avoided (in the case of poor) or utilized (in the case of good) in future planning and design in either library renovations or new

establishments. Documenting and re-documenting standard practices and mediocrity here will not lead to the elucidation of superior or inferior methods. As a whole, the institutions of tomorrow can learn from the practices of today.

Google Books has set themselves as the benchmark for any institutions that are interested in mass digitalization of their print collections. Ironically, these guys are information technology professionals and not librarians, for the general stagnation of the library profession, especially in technology, has finally cost it a first in this field which they should have been leaders in, hands down. I guess the rest of the world finally got tired of waiting for our librarians to do something new and creative with the information that they were custodians over. By no means is this an original idea of Google, they just used their massive network infrastructure, marketing, and capital resources to bring it to the world scene. The music industry, mostly through pirate file-sharing and peer-to-peer software and Websites such as Project Gutenberg (see its case study), take the kudos for breaking ground in this important information revolution.

Google uses the same algorithms that it employs in the guts of its Web search engine, called a Web-crawler. Search algorithms are extremely important because as a whole, the information sources are not indexed by any universal taxonomy. If a collection is to be meaningful, it has to be searchable. Though definitely not perfect, with a little patience, Google's search engine is functional, and given the massive volume of information is searches, it is quick. Google also integrates your Web search with a parallel search in Google Books, so you receive both in one query result. If you only want books, though, you can enter your query in the Google Books site.

Copyright and privacy are still important issues though, and it is Google's prominent failure in these critical areas that keep the rating from a perfect 5. According to their Website, they have settled with top actors in the copyright legal war that they have been fighting since the inception

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