

## Recommendations on Journal Finder

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>LINK RESOLVERS IN GENERAL .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>JOURNAL FINDER SPECIFICS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>4</b>

## INTRODUCTION

There has been discussion as to whether Journal Finder would be a useful supplement to our print and electronic journal collections, including the ones available through the NC LIVE consortium. This is an attempt to define Journal Finder's potential role within our system. First and foremost, it is important to understand that Journal Finder is not another full-text database, but a link resolver, or an additional layer that facilitates access to the full-text databases we already have.

## LINK RESOLVERS IN GENERAL

Link resolvers exist to provide context-sensitive access to (generally) full-text electronic resources.

Users who perform searches within a specific full-text database, such as JSTOR or Project Muse or many of the databases on NC LIVE, can access content from within that same database with almost no effort since the search and the search results are all self-contained. Complications occur when a user needs to cross over from one database to another—say, from a citation database like LISTA, Google Scholar, etc. to a full-text database—or when the user only has a citation or a journal title to begin with.

While a citation database may provide metadata that will allow a link to the specific article referenced, it does not know which sources and materials the individual using the database has access to. The citation database might, for example, return an article in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, but the user's library may or may not have a subscription to that journal nor to any content aggregator or full-text database that includes it. And if all the user has is the title of the journal, he may not even know where to begin looking at all.

This is where the link resolver comes in; it involves a database (or "knowledge base") that contains information about the library's holdings and licensed content, including the syntax or format needed to link to specific articles. When presented with a request for a specific journal title or article, the link resolver compares the information in that request (title, volume, number, page information, ISSN, etc.) with what content the library has available, and then provides a URL that allows a web browser to access that content, or at least to get close to it. Depending on what the content provider allows, this "landing page" may be a PDF version of the article, an abstract with links to the article in various formats, or possibly even just a link to the journal itself or to a specific issue. Generally, the link resolver will also determine whether the user needs to authenticate himself with a username and password before proceeding to the content.

Again, it's important to remember that link resolvers themselves do not do full-text searches. The actual searches must be done within one of the databases. A link

resolver merely provides the means of locating content that results from a database search within the library's electronic holdings, or perhaps on the open web.

The primary difference among link resolvers is based on where they look for that content and what sorts of options they return when presented with a request. In addition to Journal Finder, some popular link resolvers include SFX, ArticleLinker, Link Finder Plus, and others. Link resolvers use a protocol called OpenURL that permits metadata from an electronic bibliographic reference to be used to interact with other library services.

## **JOURNAL FINDER SPECIFICS**

Journal Finder was originally developed at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro starting in 2001. It differs from the first generation of link resolvers in that it is not concerned just with electronic resources nor with titles held at the home institution, but with print materials and items available from other institutions via interlibrary loan (ILL). In short, Journal Finder attempts to provide access to any item requested, whether or not the home institution holds it in a digital format.

The user can access Journal Finder either directly, as a way of browsing to specific content within a specific journal, or via a link passed through from a database. He is then presented with options for finding the article online (with links to all electronic options the library has available), in print (via an OPAC link to print copies of the journal), through document delivery (with a link to the order forms for unmediated delivery and ILL), and at other institutions (with links directly to their catalog search forms).

Using OpenURL, Journal Finder can also in some cases provide a direct link (with no intermediate steps) from entries in a citation database to full-text content in a different one. This is dependent on the output from the citing database providing the necessary data to allow the program to query a full-text database and retrieve the entire article. It also requires that the full-text database allow "deep linking" to content.

Journal Finder also includes links to material that is freely available online, including open access journals. In addition, it is possible to "rank" full-text sources, and there is also relatively seamless integration of pay-per-view titles (with charges billed to the institution rather than the end user).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

One major benefit is that Journal Finder is remotely hosted and a large part of the data entry would not be our responsibility. The NC LIVE and JSTOR information are presumably already taken care of, and we would only need to provide limited information, such as which JSTOR packages we have licensed and whether or not we

have licensed them for off-campus access. Our only responsibility—albeit a fairly big one—would be to enter the data on our print resources.

There are some external cost concerns to consider as well, however. It is possible (or likely) that making ILL, unmediated document delivery, and pay-per-view items more accessible will increase utilization and result in increased costs that will have to be covered through the budget or user fees.

Journal Finder seems in some ways more designed for a research-based university library than for a community college, even a large one. But given our investment in print journals and JSTOR, it may very well be worth the cost.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Brandsma, T.W., Bernhardt, E.R., and Dally, D.M. (2002). Journal Finder: A solution for comprehensive and unmediated access to journal articles. *Serials Review* 28(1), 13-20.

Brandsma, T.W., Bernhardt, E.R., and Dally, D.M. (2002). Journal Finder, a second look: Implications for serials access in today's library. *Serials Review* 29(4), 13-20.

Mc Donald, J. and Van de Velde, E.F. (2004). *The lure of linking*. *Library Journal* 129(6), 32-34. Accessed 28 September 2009 from <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/ca405398.html>

