

Recommendations on the UNCG Library Website

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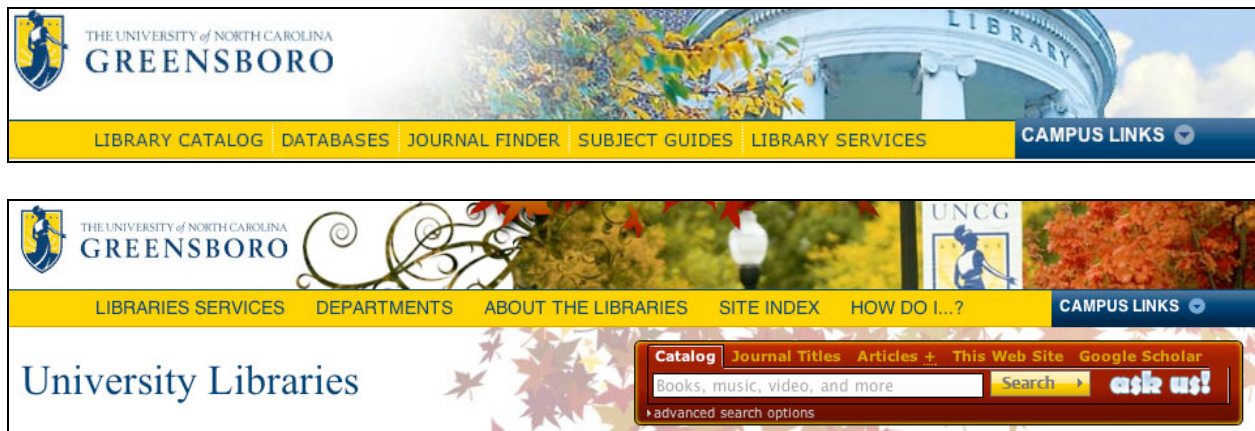
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INTRODUCTION

The website of Jackson Library at UNCG is generally well-designed and user-friendly, and is likely becoming more so as it is being redesigned and migrated into a new content management system (CMS). Along with this migration comes the opportunity to implement appropriate Web 2.0 technologies and interactive features, or to integrate existing ones more fully.

In general the Jackson Library site has a generally pleasing and intuitive design, the only issue being the current presence of what seems to be two very different page templates, each with somewhat different navigation options. This makes moving through the site a bit confusing right now, as links “move around” or disappear between templates, but will probably be corrected with the CMS migration.



RSS FEEDS AND BLOGGING

RSS feeds are a very effective and low maintenance way of “pushing” new content and of allowing users to selectively decide which content they want to receive updates about via a “reader” or a widget on their Google or Yahoo home pages. They allow more flexibility than posting on Facebook (since there’s no need to be a member or to visit the Facebook site, which has few layout options) and also allow more verbiage than Twitter.

Blogs and Blog Feeds

Blogs and RSS feeds are closely related, since blogs are a major generator of “live” content for RSS feeds. And departmental blogs spread around the actual creation of content, so that it doesn’t fall to one “communications” or “web” person.

Jackson Library already has many departmental blogs (Friends of the Library, Dataland, Special Collection, etc.), most of them generated using Blogspot. The front page features a brief sample of some of this content and a link to a [landing page](#) that displays the most recent post from each individual blog. I would suggest placing more

emphasis on this content resource, both by redesigning the blog landing page to feature more content (maybe either teaser text for the most recent post from each blog and a link to the previous two posts as well or just a chronological listing of all recent posts from all blogs together) and by adding RSS subscription options to the this page.

While not specific to library users, internal blogs and wikis are a great resource as well, as they can provide a more permanent repository for best practices than an email trail or messaging and chat.

Another option, although a considerably more labor intensive one, would be to include aggregated subject-specific pages of blog posts from external sources based on academic disciplines (history, geography, etc.) Much like the research guides on [this page](#), setting these up would be the responsibility of the departments and their departmental liaisons. Again, this would require considerable labor for the initial set-up but a much smaller amount for ongoing monitoring and updating. The beauty of RSS feeds is that when they stop having new content, they're largely harmless and don't really require weeding to save space.

Other RSS Sources

Jackson's website already features a [landing page](#) for RSS feeds covering new online databases and e-journals, grouped by subject, which is a great feature and is, I assume, automatically generated either through cataloging software or Journal Finder.

A great addition would be a similar RSS feed for *all* new catalog items (books, video, etc.), also grouped by subject. UCLA has a [service like this](#) in beta right now, and also includes a [feed customization widget](#) that lets users set up their feed by LC call letters and numbers. The latter option may be a little advanced for most users, but it's great for those who might want it, and is a good example of staying focused on all users, not just those who are less experienced.

UCLA LIBRARY | RSS Feeds Beta Questions
Live Chat Email Phone

Search and Find ▾ Services ▾ Libraries and Collections ▾ About ▾ News, Events, Exhibits ▾

RSS Feeds Beta

FAQ Feedback RSS Blog

[Area and Cultural Studies](#)

[Arts](#)

[Business, Law, Management](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Health Sciences](#)

[Humanities](#)

[Life Sciences](#)

[Physical Sciences](#)







[Social Sciences](#)

[General and Multidisciplinary](#)

[Customized Feed Wizard](#)

RSS Links

If the standard RSS feeds listed here do not meet your needs, you can create your own feed by using the [Customized Feeds Wizard](#). The wizard will help you create customized feeds by filtering through call number, language, library, and publication year.

-  [African Studies](#)
-  [African-American Studies](#)
-  [American Indian Studies](#)
-  [Asian American Studies](#)
-  [Asian Studies](#)
-  [Chicano/a Studies](#)

One-stop RSS

Currently, when a user clicks the RSS icon on the front page of Jackson's site, he is taken to the [landing page](#) mentioned above, which includes only databases and e-journals. I would propose instead that this become a link to a "one-stop" RSS page that would also include links to the feeds for new catalog items as well as to the feeds for all the library department blogs. I'd also suggest that there should be a link to this RSS section on every page, like most news and magazine sites have.

post-gazette.COM
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

NOW | NEWS | LOCAL | SPORTS | LIVING | A & E | BUSINESS | OPINION | MULTIMEDIA

Breaking News Weather Traffic Event Guide Dining Guide PG Store Lottery Posted Chats Wireless **RSS** Community

The University Libraries

Libraries Home Page UNCG Home > The University Libraries > Databases

Ask Us!

Renew Items/My Account

Research Tutorial: Finding It!

Virtual Reference Shelf

About the Library

Library Depts. & Staff

Contact the Library

RSS - Online Databases RSS - EJournals **RSS - Books, Etc.** RSS - Jackson Library Blogs

Index of Online Databases RSS Feeds

- [Accounting and Finance](#)
- [African-American Studies](#)
- [Agriculture](#)
- [Anthropology](#)
- [Art](#)
- [Human Development and Family Studies](#)
- [Information Systems and Operations Management](#)
- [Interior Architecture](#)
- [International Studies](#)
- [Kinship \(Europe and East Africa\)](#)

FLICKR AND OTHER MEDIA

Currently, Jackson Library's front page has a link to the [library's flickr page](#). Unfortunately, most of the content on this page is internal and staff-related, dealing with luncheons, tenure, etc. While this is important and the link should absolutely be retained somewhere in the site, it's perhaps not the most appropriate or useful content for library users accessing it via the front page of the website. I just don't think most library users care that much.

What I would propose instead is that the library's primary flickr page be used to spotlight specific collections (archival photo collections, etc.), new spaces in the library (construction, plans, etc.), and other content that is relevant and important to users rather than to staff. The more internally-focused flickr content could then be linked maybe from the staff section. flickr is a great way of attracting attention to the library and its collections; even the [Library of Congress](#) uses it to present previews that generate interest in its collections and entice users to explore its own site.

On the other hand, I would suggest moving carefully with audiovisual media other than in special collections applications where there is a specific and compelling reason for it. Audio, video, podcasts, and the like are flashy and trendy, but they are also labor-intensive to create and often present material that might be just as easily (and much more efficiently) displayed in text format. There's no need to use a specific technology "because we can." On the other hand, if the situation merits it, audio-video content could be either hosted locally or possibly on sites like YouTube, if it's appropriate general public content that might generate interest that way.

SOCIAL NETWORKING, BOOKMARKING, ETC.

Social networking is an important means of outreach and communication, but the level at which it should be supported in an academic library is debatable. I think the library should definitely have a presence on Facebook, Twitter, etc. people expect it to. That said, there are any number of tools that can automatically sync blogs with Facebook and Twitter, so that the content can be viewed on whichever platform the users prefers. This way, it's possible to attract those Facebook users who don't read blogs with a minimum of extra effort.

I think social bookmarking can be an asset and can drive traffic and generate interest. I also think that it's probably really easy to add social bookmarking code to just about any aspect of the library's site, so why not do it, assuming it's on pages with persistent links?

Reviews and comments are trickier, however, as they probably require some level of moderation.

INTERACTIVE ASSESSMENT

One thing I've never seen implemented on a library website is the "Did you find this information useful?" or "Rate this page" feedback forms that are so common on tech support and other sites. This would seem to be a great way to do "on the fly" interactive assessment of the site, assuming that (a) users actually go to the effort of using them, and (b) someone actually looks at the data collected.

In theory, I suppose it could even be added to search results pages from the OPAC or maybe even databases or federated search.

Provide feedback on this information

Did this information solve your problem?

Yes
 No
 I don't know

Was this information relevant?

Yes
 No

What can we do to improve this information?

To protect your privacy, do not include contact information in your feedback.

SEARCH RESULTS

This is maybe only Web 2.0 as far as interactivity is concerned, but another suggestion I would offer is the idea of adding a "Search Other Resources" box to the results page for keyword OPAC searches. The idea would be that if someone did a catalog search on, say, "civil rights movement", the search results page would return—along with the results—a search box pre-populated with the same keyword, offering the user a chance to perform that same keyword search in Journal Finder, Google Scholar, etc. This would seem to be fairly easy to implement but I may be very wrong.

Your search for "kw civil rights movement" found 727 titles in University Libraries.

ns per page) | > | [Refine Search](#)

[gins of citizenship : intellectual disability and civil rights in twentieth-century](#)
Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 2009.

Status	Location	Format
In process	Jackson Library -- In process	Unknown

[very voice : the NAACP and the making of the civil rights movement / Patricia](#)
ss : Distributed by Perseus Distribution, 2009.

Status	Location	Format
In process	Jackson Library -- In process	Unknown

[s\), 1970- The music has gone out of the movement : civil rights and the Johnson](#)
[/ David C. Carter](#). Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press, c2009.

Search Other Resources

Catalog
 Journal Title
 Library Web Pages
 Google Scholar

[View Site Index](#)

Options:

[Download/Email All Records](#)
[Mark All Records](#)
[Show Only Marked Records](#)
[Location Chart](#)

[Search Libraries Worldwide for "civil rights movement"](#)

COLLABORATORIES AND CHAT REFERENCE

One last idea concerns reference and the ability to bring eth concept of the “collaboratory” online, but without the all the infrastructure and skills and processor power required by applications like Second Life. I’m sort of thinking old-fashioned AOL or IRC style chat room with reference librarians available or “on call” as needed. This may be of minimal use since chat reference is apparently being utilized much less than predicted, but I think it’s an interesting idea, if perhaps a step backward technologically from Second Life and its cousins.

CONCLUSION

For IT professionals, there is always a temptation to add new technologies just because they’re available or because they’re “really cool”. It’s a temptation that has to be resisted, particularly when resources (human and financial) are scarce, particularly when new technology results in more work for minimal benefit. Web 2.0 technologies for a library website must be weighted carefully in terms of cost and of benefits to end users.

URLS NOTED IN THE TEXT

Jackson Library Blog Landing Page:

<http://library.uncg.edu/blogs/>

Jackson Library RSS Landing Page:

<http://library.uncg.edu/dbs/vdbsrss-index.asp>

Jackson Library Research Guides:

<http://library.uncg.edu/depts/ref/courseguides.asp>

UCLA RSS Feeds:

<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/6453.cfm>

UCLA Feed Widget:

<http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/11567.cfm>

Jackson Library flickr Page:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/iminerva/>

Library of Congress flickr Page:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/

