Creating a Virtual Library of Veterinary Medicine and General Parasitology

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The library of the School of Veterinary Medicine at Hannover is at present in the process of applying for funds to set up the virtual library "veterinary science and general parasitology" which has been the library's special collection and has been enjoying funding from the "Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft" (http://www.dfg.de/english/index.html , German Research Council / Foundation, depending on language usage in Britain or the U. S.). The DFG will - hopefully - be the funder of the new project as well. It has initiated the creation of virtual libraries in Germany for the entire spectrum of subjects. The project will be carried out by the author as project co-ordinator, an informatics specialist yet to be recruited, two subject specialists of the library staff and two student workers for routine work. - The two following projects are already in existence respectively. under construction and can be incorporated in the virtual library project.

The library has been scanning tables of contents of journals that are not considered in commercial scanning services. The scannings are part of a table of contents list where commercial scannings of Swetscan and those provided by other libraries of the Gemeinsamer Bibliotheksverbund   (GBV Union Catalogue) of the German states Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Niedersachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein and Thüringen.

(Area covered by GBV)

(Germany)

The resulting collection can be viewed on the network's homepage at:

http://www.gbv.de/cgi-bin/nph-wwwobnmenu?LANG=EN

where several selections (Online Contents (OLC) / Swetscan; Online Contents - Overview of available journals; SSG Online Contents, special collections; Online Contents subject index) are offered.

Likewise electronic journals have been linked and updated automatically employing a search machine named harvest gatherer (harvest products at http://www.tardis.ed.ac.uk/harvest/). This is a device that can be applied to searching selected segments of websites at intervals that can be pre-set. Thus it is possible to monitor the site of an electronic journal and have the findings updated and presented on a homage of one's own design. The journal then is displayed on several levels

- Title
- Volume / issue
- Table of contents
- Abstracts
- Full article

depending what right of access the library has. Journals are collected in a database called ELib. The display in our case has button panels that allow straight jumping to the level and position desired.   Our library has not opened ELib to the public at the time this paper is written. However, similar pages can be found at

http://elib.uni-osnabrueck.de/

for different subjects. The use of a harvest gatherer is not limited to electronic journals. It also can be employed to websites in general, if they have clickable links or tabloids which need selection for libraries purposes. The harvest gatherer can be configured individually to the library's needs. For example the advertising section or the subscription details may not be needed on display for the public, so it can be excluded. Unfortunately some publishers employ technical obstacles to this mode of display and prevent the use of harvest gatherers. In these cases the mere link will have to be set. Another feature is that a so called harvest broker can be used to import configurations for specific journals that another library in the network has already set. Thus work can be reduced.

In order to provide a service as complete as possible to the users of our library, we have planned to consider the co-operation with

- Scientific societies
- Subject specific information centres
- Publishing companies
- Libraries

in order to

- index

- provide records of holdings
- supply
- archive

electronic information and documents as an integrated part complementing to existing conventional or automated services like FTP transmission of documents.

The project will start with increased efforts to search websites that are more then simple exhibiting homepages, but provide genuine information, preferably original, but not necessarily. Original online publications are most welcome and will be linked, if at all possible. Where it seems reasonable, harvest gatherers will be installed. The collection of these sites and will go onto a special archive server and will be presented in a structured manner on a special page, not part of, but linked to our homepage. This will take the combined effort of all persons involved in the project, and the outcrop should be quite voluminous. There is a risk in this, however, namely redundancy and profanity. In order to eliminate these risks it is intended to employ certain standards for the assessment and evaluation of websites as recommended by the WHO and the Health Summit respectively

http://www.who.int/hlt/virtuallibrary/English/evalulat.htm

and

http://hitiweb.mitretek.org/docs/criteria.html

The inclusion of information and documents to be obtained from the aforementioned partners requires extensive negotiation, and not all co-operation may be agreed upon on a simple mutual exchange basis, although it is hoped and in some cases already agreed upon that this will be the case. In other cases it may be necessary to pay for services. These of course cannot be made available free of charge to the general public. From our own sources dissertations will be digitized in full text to an extent yet to decide upon another portion of the dissertations will undergo digitalization only with respect to the German and English abstracts. In addition to this very old books of historic interest will be scanned in and made available on the internet.

A major concern is the co-operation with similar projects. So far two gateways have been contacted: NOVAGate, the Nordic gateway to information in forestry, veterinary and agricultural science

http://novagate.nova-university.org/

and the British Vetgate, at the time of writing this paper not having an internet site of its own but mentioned under BIOME

http://biome.ac.uk/

Besides there are certain libraries which are doing good work in this field on their own. With some of theme agreements have been made for co-operation. The veterinary libraries considered on an international basis are:

Veterinary Medical Library of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at:

http://fbox.vt.edu:10021/vetmed/lib/

the Veterinary Medicine Library of the University of Illinois, at Urban Champaign:

http://www.library.uiuc.edu/vex/default.asp

and the Bibliotheque de Medicine Veterinaire de L'Université de Montreal, at:

http://www.medvet.umontreal.ca/biblio/

It is hoped that more will follow, especially since services will be made available free of charge in the sections where financial constraints will not prove too heavy.

The database or gateway we are planning to set up shall have a search machine designed to our needs and specifications. It may be possible to add up existing subject specific search machines to a meta-search-machine. There is also the possibility that the other libraries in the DFG project will have done some work that the library of the School of Veterinary medicine at Hannover can draw from. In this case existing platforms could be modified to suit the requirements of our library. In the event of no preliminary work existing the search machine would have to be developed.

The MLA/VMLS union catalog of serials would be a welcome addition online. Efforts are being made to accomplish this task. Our library will function as a gateway for Europe in this context. This will need some programming input which could be limited, if a virtual catalogue were created by adding individual catalogues into a meta-catalogue.

Altogether building the virtual library for veterinary medicine and general parasitology will have to be a dynamic process which must not limit itself to rigid planning, but be open to new developments, ideas and situations. In this sense suggestions and partners are welcome.

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