

Bethany Meyer Wyrick

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LIS 640: Info Organization/Access

System Evaluation

I live in Alexander County, NC, so I thought it would be interesting to evaluate the Alexander County Library Online Card Catalog. Before this assignment, I had never used this particular catalog, and I felt that helped me come in with a fresh perspective. Alexander County is part of the NC Cardinal consortium, so they can share resources with many other libraries in the state. The main page for the catalog was very clean and organized. The eye is directed right towards the search bar, so users would not have to scroll when completing a search. It is also easy to access: I just did a Google search for “Alexander County Library catalog,” and it was the first result listed on the page. Provided that users have a computer and internet access, they should be able to use the catalog from a preferred location, and they do not have to physically travel to the library to use it.



The screenshot shows the top section of the Alexander County Library Online Card Catalog. At the top left is the "NC Cardinal" logo. At the top right is a "My Account" button. Below this is a dark navigation bar with links: Home, Help, Alexander County Library, NC LIVE, E-books, NC Kids Digital, and Kids Search. Under the navigation bar, there are links for "Search the Catalog", "Advanced Search", and "Browse the Catalog". Below these links is a search bar with the text "Search:" followed by an input field. To the right of the input field are dropdown menus for "Type: Keyword", "Format: All Formats", and "Library: Alexander County Lit". To the right of these dropdowns are two buttons: "Search" and "All Libraries".

I like that users have the option of searching specifically within the Alexander County Library collection, or they can choose one of the other libraries in the consortium. They also have the

option to search “All Libraries,” which is great for expanding your search if one is willing to travel to different locations for print resources.

Keyword ▼

Keyword

Title

Journal Title

Author

Subject

Series

Users can sort search results in a variety of ways. I think the presence of relevance ranking is beneficial for patrons since they are most familiar with search engines like Google and Bing that use this type of results ranking. With this OPAC, users can search by title, journal title, author, subject, or series, and can sort results by relevance, title, author, or general popularity.

I do some investigative work for a paranormal team in my area called First in Fright Paranormal. For querying purposes, I started with the general search term “paranormal” within the Alexander County Library only. Results were not instantaneous; it took around 20 seconds for the results to load with the single library parameter, and 30 seconds the search all libraries.



Paranormal my life in pursuit of the afterlife

Moody, Raymond A. Jr



Book

Publisher: New York : HarperLuxe, [2012]
ISBN: 9780062107244
Edition: 1st HarperLuxe ed.
Phys. Desc.: 323 pages(large print) ; 23 cm

Library	Shelving location	Call number	Status
Statesville Main Library	Adult Large Print Nonfiction	L.P. B MOODY MOO	Available

Results listed had the appropriate amount of data. For this result, I was able to tell that the resource was a print book located at the Statesville Main Library and was

currently available at the time. Other useful metadata included shelving location, physical description, call number, etc. The overall search experience was fairly easy and user-friendly. I got a variety of results in different formats, including print books, musical recordings, and DVDs. Since this was such a broad search term, the results were appropriate to the query. My main concern was the amount of time it took to load results; when I edited one parameter at a time, the search process had to begin all over again and took an additional 20-30 seconds. Also,

it may be helpful to have a short description for each resource, if that were possible without there being too much clutter. Descriptions were available when I clicked on the link for each resource.

For the browsing feature, I did a search for materials within the Alexander County Library with the subject “furniture manufacturing.” I work in manufacturing for Williams-Sonoma, and I was curious if they had any relevant resources for this type of work. I had to do a lot of back and forth with this query to find the resources I was looking for, but I believe that goes with many searches. There were several different categories to pick through, and hardly any resources. The first image shows my initial browsing results, and the second image shows the results after clicking “See- Furniture Finishing” from the first set of results.

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|---|---|
| • Furniture industry and trade -- Juvenile literature (1) | • Fur traders -- Fiction (3) |
| • Furniture industry and trade -- United States (1) | • Fur traders -- West (U.S.) -- History -- 19th century (1) |
| • Furniture industry -- United States (1) | • Furniture (2) |
| • Furniture making (3) | ◦ See Furniture making (29) |
| • Furniture making -- Amateurs' manual (1) | • Furniture -- Drawings (1) |
| • Furniture, Mission (1) | • Furniture finishing (2) |
| • Furniture -- North Carolina (1) | • Furniture -- History (1) |
| • Furniture painting (1) | • Furniture industry and trade -- Juvenile literature (1) |
| • Furniture refinishing | • Furniture industry and trade -- United States (1) |
| ◦ See Furniture finishing (23) | • Furniture industry -- United States (1) |
| • Furniture -- United States (1) | • Furniture making (3) |

Coming from someone who does not have a lot of experience with evaluating OPACs, this was an overall positive experience. The system is functional and well-organized, and results are displayed in a pleasing way. They had a neat side box with keyword search tips if users have trouble finding appropriate resources, including information about truncation and adjacency. Since this is a public library catalog, I am under the assumption that most patrons that use it are most familiar with the Google search engine. While this catalog is clean, organized and the library resources are appropriate, it is still difficult to compete with the ease of Google. Overall, I believe it is an effective system, and it appropriately organizes and displays resources for users.