Database-driven web sites
Price: US$48
(Published simultaneously as Internet Reference Services Quarterly, Vol. 7, Nos.1/2, 2002)

The content of this book covers mainly organising the information in your library to make it available to Internet users. It includes the range of software solutions that has emerged, and examines the challenges of using this software to develop web sites that make information access user-friendly. These web sites are all database-driven rather than HTML-dependent.

There are 9 chapters, all focusing on solving related technical problems, and promoting a library’s own web site in order to expand the library’s outreach. A variety of library situations are included – academic and governmental – ranging from complex, redesigned, team-driven web sites, to the “do-it-yourself” solutions requiring minimal equipment and staff.

Of the complex web sites, Karen Hein and Marc Davis, at the University of Nebraska’s library, share the ups and downs of developing their web site using Research Wizard, a database web application that runs on an open source PHP/MySQL framework known as iDriver. The Research Wizard delivers customised content through the use of keywords. Despite initial user problems during development, the authors state that the Wizard has eased the frustrations of library web site maintenance, and that service to users is now more dynamic and responsive. The reactions from users and staff during the development process are useful for others thinking of planning similar tasks. The authors leave us with this thought, based on their experience: The challenge was to “think differently” and to get “inside the minds” of the users.

Karen Underhill and Bruce Palmer in “Archival content anywhere@anytime” decribe their huge task of making a pilot web-based imaging database project (750 000 historical photos) a content-driven database that provides Internet access to all archival material at Northern Arizona University.

The principles and objectives of completely redesigning a state portal in the California State Library are examined by Kristine Ogilvie and John Jewell. The reader is taken through the evolving role of the library in the project, the questions a library should ask and answer before embarking on such a project, and then the benefits that such a project can bring. One can almost feel the enormous stress to be ready on time that everyone involved in the project endured as the deadline for completion drew near.

Laura Galván-Estrada, at the University of California, San Diego, undertook a web redesign project. This entailed developing a database of resources (known as SAGE), and the creation of various in-house tools to enter and edit the database. The benefits to the users and the library staff are emphasised, with numerous illustrations showing the step-by-step developments.

The HealthLinks web site at the University of Washington’s Health Science Libraries took commercially available software, ColdFusion, to redevelop their web site. Brian Westra looks at the basic concepts of a web application, and goes on to describe some of the main features of the HealthLinks web application and site. This was to move their web application from being Java-based to the more flexible environment offered by ColdFusion (a relational database). The author stresses the importance of providing formal documentation for the web site. One of the most valuable capabilities of ColdFusion is its search facilities.

Mary Platt writes on extending information on periodical holdings and electronic resources at Kennesaw State University’s Sturgis Library using the skills, technologies and hardware that already existed in the library with Allaire’s ColdFusion Express. This is a free, feature-limited version of the ColdFusion Web application server. It did involve relevant staff having to attend a ColdFusion course on SQL (Structured Query Language) to allow them to create the necessary ColdFusion scripting. However, the creation of dynamic database-driven web pages made it all worthwhile for this library.

Just when you start to think that this is all too complicated and unrealistic for your small library, Ann Koopman at the Scott Memorial Library, Jefferson University, shows how bibliographic citation management software, such as Reference Manager, EndNote, ProCite (all ISIResearchSoft products), can be used for web applications. Using a combination of
Reference Manager and its companion, Reference Web Poster, the library is able to publish indexes to bibliographic literature, searchable lists of electronic journals, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on its web site. She states that this approach is most suitable for materials of a bibliographic nature and/or for low budgets, and that the software is easy to install and use. Library users can download searches from, for example, Web of Science or PubMed and forward these to the library for possible inclusion in the database. However, she does also mention the limitations of these products.

So if you are searching for an alternative to HTML-based web sites for your library, this book will certainly give you food for thought. There are numerous illustrations provided, and the language is not too technical. Indirectly, you will be provided with helpful advice on what to do and what not to do through the practical experiences of those who have tackled database-driven web site development projects of varying complexities.

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*Licensing in libraries: Practical and ethical aspects*
Price: US$23.96

Although written for American university libraries, this compilation of articles does deliver on being a practical introduction for an academic librarian to licensing for consortia. The book would be a valuable asset in a library school collection as it compiles the point of view from different aspects: the users, the academic library consortia and commercial content producers.

I have decided to quote from the Editor’s Preface, which was a wonderful summary of the entire contents of the book and goes far in describing the content of each paper succinctly.

Quoting directly from the Editor’s Preface:
‘While libraries have been immersed in licensing for a number of years, permutations on the subject continue. The need to share information about licensing experiences, learn from the parties involved, and understand the impact of licensing throughout libraries remains. Thus these articles address a variety of issues and viewpoints in the licensing process as it currently stands.

Stephen Bosch shares a step-by-step analysis of the use of model licenses. Kristin Gerhard explores producer pricing models, discussing their positive and negative aspects. Anna Wyatt summarizes current legal aspects of licensing for libraries. David Fowler offers a history of licensing to ground the discussion.

Stepping back from the library community, several authors provide a different perspective on licensing. Tracey Armstrong explains the expanding role of the Copyright Clearance Center in providing materials for the electronic environment. Andrea Ramsden-Cooke and Priscilla McIntosh describe “how the other half lives,” giving a glimpse of the factors that must be balanced by a vendor in the provision of licensed products. Anne McKee serves up a view of the complexity of consortial licensing, offering practical tips for fair and equitable license negotiation.

Several contributors shed light on the impact of licensing for various library services. Janet Croft discusses the influence of licensing on interlibrary loan processes, arguing for a proactive approach. Jill Emery reminds us of the obligation to educate our users about the licensing terms of products we provide for their use. Richard Fyffe and Beth Forrest Warner urge us to consider carefully how we undertake the provision of unique materials to the public. Yem Fong and Heather Wicht review the numerous products available to libraries for managing licenses and compliance, speaking to the needs of libraries in that regard. Emilie Algenio and Alexia Thompson-Young address permutations on e-book licensing.’

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SA Jnl Libs & Info Sci 2006, 72(2)