Digital Review Paper 02

Digital Library of the Commons

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to review the *Digital Library of the Commons* from Indiana University. The goal will be to define the background of the project, the organization of its resources, the service features, and the technologies that power the library. I will then add my own comments.

Project Background

The *Digital Library of the Commons* (DLC), http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc, from Indiana University began in 1999 with an idea of becoming, "a gateway to the international literature on the commons" (Digital Library of the Commons, 2009). What are the commons? The commons is defined as, "shared resources in which each stakeholder has an equal interest" (2009). The commons that this DL is focused on are common-pool resources (CPR) and common property. CPR's are resources, "where one person's use subtracts from another's use and where it is often necessary, but difficult and costly, to exclude other users outside the group from using the resource" (2009). The DLC hosts author submitted papers, dissertations, and images that are open-access to everyone around the world. There are numerous commons subjects covered such as fisheries, forestry, grazing areas, urban commons, water resources, wildlife, and more.

The DLC is a collaborative project with Indiana University Digital Library Program (DLP) and the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis (WPTPA). The WPTPA is

where the idea for this library originated. The WPTPA's founders Elinor and Vincent Ostrom's, "mission of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis is to promote the interdisciplinary study of institutions, incentives, and behavior as they relate to policy-relevant applications" which brings awareness of how these policies affect the lives of people everywhere (Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, 2008). The WPTPA has a library that contains 6,700 books and 25,000 reprint files such as working papers, dissertations, and more. To facilitate the growth of this collection and to offer this collection to colleagues and scholars world-wide, the DLC was created (2008). Funding for the DLC was provided in 2003 by the Andrew R. Mellon Foundation, the International Association for the Study of the Commons, and Indiana University Research and the University Graduate School.

Organization of Resources

The scope of the DLC is to provide free and open access to the thousands of full-text articles, dissertations, conference papers, scanned books, and over 1,200 images about the common-pool resources and common property around the world. There is also access to free online journals and newsletters. Numerous items in the library are author submitted and each author holds the copyright to their work.

Subjects that are covered about the commons include everything from case studies, history, policies, research, theory and literature. All of the images that are provided come from personal experiences from researchers from the WPTPA over the last 30 years. The DLP website goes into great depths to teach visitors about what the commons are and why it is necessary to bring awareness about them. In addition to the searchable library, there are several links to other websites committed to the commons.

The [Indiana University Digital Library Program](#) is responsible for creating and maintaining the contents of the DLC. The staff is committed to providing superior quality and service. Metadata Librarian, Jenn Riley, says:

> "Our metadata philosophy is simple: capture metadata at the most robust level possible, in formats appropriate for the materials, and create *views* of that metadata for specific uses of the materials. We're committed to the creation of high-quality metadata that can be leveraged to provide high-quality services. We believe that this goal can be achieved only through metadata experts working closely with content experts to understand the nature and use of collections" (Metadata Services, 2010).

Furthermore, the staff is dedicated to following metadata structure, content, and authority standards, such as Metadata Object Description Schema, MARCXML, MARC authority and bibliography standards, AACR2, Encoded Archival Context and more (2010).
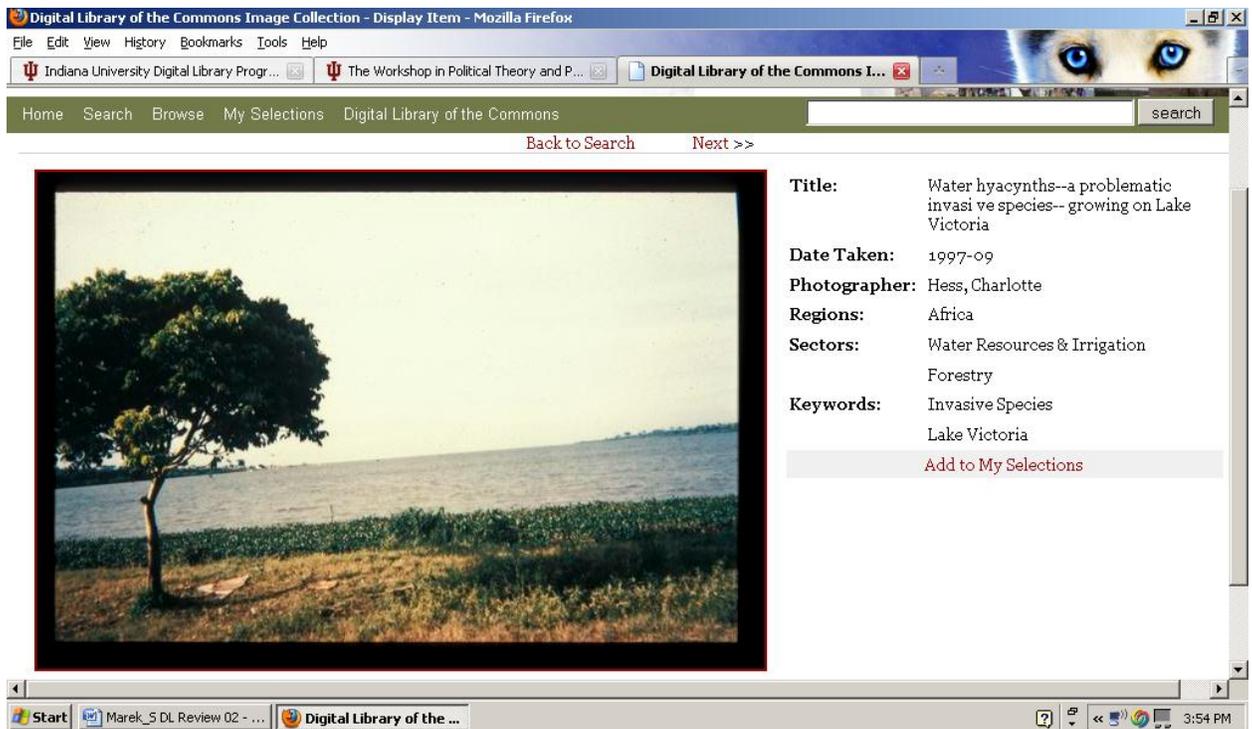
Service Features

The DLC offers a searchable database of its collection. Users can search by type of document (i.e. book, dissertation), date of a publication, author, titles, subject, sector (i.e. agriculture, wildlife, etc.), region, or conference. There is a subject bibliography and a comprehensive bibliography for users to see the citations of items and there is a Subject Thesaurus that provides users with the preferred keywords to aid in their retrieval success. Because of the collaboration with other institutions such as the IASC and the WPTPA, the DLC can be accessed via links from their respective websites. The image database is a standalone feature of the DLC as is the list of free online journals and newsletters.

One helpful feature for researchers is the ability to register with the site and keep record of searches and citations that have been exported. Additionally, another nice feature of the DL is that under some categories, there is a listing of new submissions. There is a feature for users to

sign up via email and they will be sent alerts when new material is available. This enables users who frequent the DLC can keep up to date with new material and not miss out on something that might be of interest to them.

To test the usability of the DL I did a search in the image database for keyword Africa. There were over 700 images relating to the region. I chose the first image that came up, *Water hyacynths--a problematic invasive species-- growing on Lake Victoria*. The full record that comes up contains the image's title, date it was taken, name of the photographer, and the categories under which it is found in the database. Users can choose to add the image to the My Selections area, go back to a new search or move to the next photo. Below is a screen shot to depict these findings and also show user-friendly the site is -

Technologies

According to the DLC website, the library is running on DSpace, which is free and fully customizable software used to build digital libraries. It is capable of supporting all types of media such as text, video, images, mpegs and data sets. (About DSpace, n.d.) The software is downloadable and is popular around the world in academia. The software is continually improved and in addition to providing updates, the website offers training and a large list of service providers. "DSpace is compliant with the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) Protocol for Metadata Harvesting version 2.0, which provides a framework for the interoperability of repositories of scholarly research literature" (Digital Library of the Commons, 2009). OAI Protocol enables, "access to Web-accessible material through interoperable repositories for metadata sharing, publishing and archiving" (OAI for Beginners, 2003). Material is viewable in Adobe Acrobat PDF, so users will need to have the free utility downloaded on the computer they are using.

The Indiana University Digital Library Program (DLP) has a full staff dedicated to the organization, digitization, and maintenance of the DLC. According to a presentation written by staff members Stacy Kowalczyk and Emily Castle in 2010, the DLC was using IBM's Content Manager in 2000 to manage the original content from the WPTPA and then upgraded to EPrints in 2001, which aided in the self-publication portal. EPrint makes it possible for authors to submit their work from anywhere in the world, even from their Blackberries. (Enterprise Mobie Printing, 2011) And since most of the works contained in the DLC are from field researchers, this is a big help. Kowalczyk and Castle further describe how the original funding from the Andrew R. Mellon Foundation was mostly used to hire expert staff at the DLP, but now they are seeking a new grant to move to new technologies. Currently, there is no way to integrate the export and bibliography features and they are done manually. New funding will add better

functionality, sustainability, better integration with existing infrastructure, easier implementation and allow more attention to preservation (Kowalczyk, 2010).

Comments and Feedback

      To personally comment about the DLC, I understand the importance it holds in the world of research and scholars. The open-access content and the ability for self-submission of material offers a wonderful resource. Costs are kept down because of the use of open-access software and interface and this will help the DLC continue its work and not let funding get in the way. The layout and service features are easy to use for the end-user which will encourage repeat and continued use.

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