RBMS Web Team Report & Minutes (Post-ALA Annual | July 2010)

Authors: James P. Ascher and Shannon K. Supple
Based on Web Team Report written for ALA Annual (June 2010) and updated post-Annual (16 July 2010)

Work is done under the auspices of the Publications Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL.

Editors (*Ex-officio* to Publications):
- James P. Ascher (2007 - 2010), Outgoing Web Editor, now Emeritus
- Christopher Thomas Smith (2006 - 2011), Senior Editor
- Shannon K. Supple (2009 - 2012), Assistant Editor, now Web Editor

Liaisons:
- Randal Brandt (2009 -), Liaison to Bibliographic Standards Committee
- Katie Carr (2009 -), Liaison to Security Committee
- Deborah E. Cribbs (2009 -), Co-Liaison to Membership and Professional Development Committee
- Eva Rose Guggemos (2009 -), Co-Liaison to Membership and Professional Development Committee
- Jason Kovari (2009 -), Liaison to Exhibition Awards Committee and Seminars Committee; incoming Assistant Web Editor
- Kate Moriarty (2010 -), Executive Committee Liaison
- Lynne M. Thomas (2010 -), Social Media Liaison

Web Editors Emeriti:
- Christian Yves Dupont
- John Pull

REPORT

I. Overall Statistics:

Since the end of ALA Midwinter 2010 (January 20, 2010) until now (June 11, 2010), rbms.info has had 55,652 visits, and 109,009 pageviews with an average of 1.96 pages per visit. As in previous years, a large chunk of the views were for "Your Old Books," (YOB) 34,138 (31.32%), followed in popularity by the main page (12,326 views, 11.31%), the Controlled Vocabularies (5,225 views, 4.79%), the 2010 Preconference Schedule (4,122 views, 3.78%) and the 2010 Preconference Registration page (3,101 views, 2.84%). Most of the traffic still comes from search engines (63.46% of visits), and the top five keywords are "rbms," (6.88% of visits) "old books," (3.20%) "value of old books," (1.81%) "rbms preconference 2010," (1.31%) and "old books value." (1.09%) The typical visitors have IP addresses located in the United States (45,968 visits) and report their language as English (53,610 visits).

II. Old Business:

A. Process to fix links:

In response to a request from the Executive Committee, Shannon Supple lead the development for Committee Chairs to check their broken links. The process uses Firefox, a free standard browser, and can be delegated to members of Committees. The Team encourages Chairs to begin to investigate the pages within their purview. The procedure lives here:
http://rbms.info/committees/website/

B. Experiments with Drupal:

One request of several Committees was to develop a structure more amenable to collaborative editing on the web site. Christopher Thomas Smith designed a look and feel on the rbms.info experimental Drupal server. The server was installed as a way for the Team to begin to experiment with new mechanisms for content development and delivery. Currently, the M&PD document "Careers in Rare Books and Manuscripts: Frequently Asked Questions" is hosted as a test case. The document lives at a new experimental subdomain called new.rbms.info .
Based on a positive assessment by the members of the Web Team and Publications Committee, this experiment will be continued and other documents will be explored as possible additions.

C. Thesaurus XSLT:

Attempting to create a streamlined user experience, the Web Team has begun developing a new approach to delivery of the RBMS thesaurus. Under the leadership of Jason Kovari, an alpha version of the thesaurus has been developed. His enhanced user experience eradicates the segmentation of the current alphabetical browse by including one section's terms in one XHTML file, which expands and contracts to show desired notes and eliminates extraneous clicking and page-loads; this approach allows simplified file management as well, by condensing hundreds of

XHTML files into a single file. To accomplish this ongoing development, the genre terms were exported from the MultiTes thesaurus editor into an XML file. Next, the data underwent XSLT (Extensible Stylesheet Language Transformation) to create an XHTML file, which works in conjunction with new JavaScript & CSS files.

The Controlled Vocabularies Subcommittee was enthusiastic to have a beta test and Jason's work has continued and a full beta version is available here: http://rbms.info/committees/website/thesaurus/ . The work has been submitted to the Controlled Vocabularies Sub-committee for review which has referred it to the Bibliographic Standards Committee.

The BSC and CV Subcommittee expressed their delight in the progress that Jason had made and requested that he continue development.

D. Omeka:

Several committees have expressed interest in hosting digital files in the format of an exhibit, or simple digital library. Katie Carr led a enterprising project to investigate the various tools available and settled on Omeka as the best option for testing. As an initial project, she developed an online exhibit of the 2009 Exhibition Award Winners by reusing metadata, converting images provided by the EAC Chair, and designing a look-and-feel from scratch. Her project is enormously successful and housed at http://www.rbms.info/exhibits/omeka-1.0/exhibits/ . Additionally, a crosswalk was developed to facilitate the reuse of cataloging data.

To continue her work, she has now begun testing the procedure to add items from 2008, 2007, and earlier years. She has various questions that will be presented to the Exhibition Awards Committee.

The EAC was pleased with progress and while the project has become much larger than either Katie or the Section anticipated, the Committee desired her to continue her work, at the pace that it was going. Various logistical questions were addressed and answered below in the New Business section.

E. digress.it for Collaborative Editing:

On the request of the editors of the DCRM(B) Examples, the Team explored the creation of a paragraph-by-paragraph commenting system for their forthcoming revisions. It was successfully installed and a process was developed with Nina Schneider and Eduardo Tenenbaum, working closely with Team member James P. Ascher. The complete version is located at http://rbms.info/digress/ and editing is scheduled to begin early in July.

Institutionalizing digress.it as a Tool: digress.it has been used to edit the DCRM(B) Examples and Jane Gillis expressed interest from the DCRM(S) Examples group at using the same system. James agreed to develop a procedure for creating and maintaining the digress.it blogs and document this in the wiki. James will continue with this project as the Web Team liaison to the DCRM(_) Examples groups.

F. Seminars

The Web Team, in their concern for the Section's use of information technology, has sponsored two seminars at the 2010 preconference. One covers the issue of meeting remotely while the other discusses the technology behind the Digress.it system for collaboratively editing documents. These seminars address an increasing sense that the Section should have additional ways of collaborating both remotely and moving towards virtual attendance.

The seminars were met with wide approval within the section and had a significant attendance [James is emailing Doug to get the numbers]

G. Social Media/Web 2.0 (Tagging, Twitter, Facebook, etc):

Individuals and Committees within RBMS have expressed a strong desire to explore various social media and web 2.0 tools. Lynne Thomas and Shannon Supple lead an exploratory effort into using these tools to determine the best course of action. As part of the project, a Twitter account was created (@RBMSinfo), a hash-tag was selected (#rbms) for Section information, and various pages have incorporated the data (http://rbms.info/conferences/conf-docs/2010/index.shtml).

Twitter is a tool for transmitting short snippets of text such as news and discussions as well as links to useful or interesting information. The official RBMS stream was started January 21, 2010 at @RBMSinfo (http://twitter.com/RBMSinfo). As of 16 July 2010, it has 120 followers and is following 105 Twitter users. (Our policy is to follow anyone who follows us as long as they are at least vaguely related to libraries, archives, book trade, rare books etc.). We are included in 19 lists. (Lists are made by Twitter users and those in which we are included are library-related.) We have posted 237 tweets (including "retweets," tweets by others that we have passed along).

Bit.ly is a link shortening service, useful for posting links to Twitter, where there is a 140-character limit to each tweet. When a message includes a link to other resources, it passes through bit.ly which maintains statistics. The number of clicks for links shared by @RBMSinfo on Twitter fall in the 8-62 range (essentially RBMS-related links, with 62 clicks for the recent M&PD FAQ); the number of clicks for general library-related links potentially relevant to RBMS members fall in the 1-3576 range (general library-related links of interest -- some of these are bit.ly links shared by us and many others, so we are not the sole source for the links).

The 2009 Preconference maintained a Facebook page with 160 members and four haltingly brief discussions. (This page was created and maintained by the 2009 Preconference Program Planning Committee, not the Web Team.)

AddThis is a linking service that allows users to transmit web pages on various services. The Team added it site-wide March 13, 2010. Since being added we have had 42 total shares, 29 of Your Old Books, 2 of Publications, 2 of the main page. While these numbers are relatively small, the character of the media that they have been shared in is telling- 33% print, 31% email, 7% facebook, and others at less than 7%.

These results suggest that the Section's approach to social media, etc. should be to establish a small, carefully-curated presence using official indicators to the resources, promote the resource through the web site, and encourage other people to use the same tags.

Shannon Supple and Lynne Thomas have done a fantastic job leading the experiment. See above for a discussion of what they have found, but in general the results have been positive and a sensible amount of work. Should we continue? Should we add additional services? Should we transmit the web team model for social media to other parts of the Section?

The Team and the Committee agreed that continuing to experiment was appropriate and that the News Editor would be included in future efforts as that role is clarified. Lynne has volunteered to take a leadership role in creating and maintaining an official RBMS Facebook page.

H. Posting Minutes to RBMS.info:

In response to the Exec Committee's request for the Web team to come up with a mechanism for getting each Committee's agendas and minutes on the RBMS website, the team experimented with converting and posting committee minutes. Kate Moriarty and Christopher Thomas Smith are collaborating on developing the procedure to post the RBMS minutes to the website. Kate is currently working on developing a thorough understanding of the website so that work can proceed. The results of the experiment are located at <http://www.rbms.info/committees/minutes/minutes.html>.

It was agreed by Exec to include official, finalized minutes only. Neither agendas nor draft minutes, or the pre-official minutes, will be included. This approach is seen as an ex post facto access tool, not a collaborative minutes-writing tool. Exec. saw ALAConnect as a good location in which to share agendas and draft minutes, should a committee so desire.

Kate expressed her dismay that she had not gotten to the project, but, to misquote Beckett, "surely she will tomorrow."

I. The 2010 Preconference content:

The Team was asked by Nicole Scalessa <nscalessa@librarycompany.org> to provide hosting for the 2010 Preconference. We have created a directory and provided her, and her team, with a login. The site has been designed successfully and the team has continued to provide infrastructure and support for Nicole's work.

A long discussion was had via email about the challenges of web based preconference content-

> **From:** esmyth@lsu.edu
> **Subject:** FW: preconference website post mortem
> **Date:** July 1, 2010 11:43:14 AM MDT
> **To:** james.ascher@gmail.com
> **Cc:** DJLeslie@FOLGER.edu, HRaine@nyhistory.org, ssmith@lib-gw.tamu.edu, tondrla@ala.org, hughes@librarycompany.org, overholt@fas.harvard.eduand 2 more...

James,

Thanks for this, which I think may be something that needs to be noted in the preconference manual/wiki/ or whatever form it is to take – so I'm including Elizabeth Johnson in on this message. It's certainly something for future Local Arrangements and Preconference Program chairs to think about in advance and negotiate a solution to. Fortunately, I've now got a team of three people whom I've worked closely with in the past in place here at LSU to handle the technical side, and I'll do my best to provide the section expertise/historical knowledge, in consultation with Tory, Henry, and Steve.
Perhaps we'll even be able to provide some consistent coding for future preconference website creators to use, thus simplifying the situation? Hope so.

Elaine

From: James P. Ascher [mailto:james.ascher@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, July 01, 2010 12:28 PM
To: Elaine B Smyth
Cc: Deborah J. Leslie; Henry Raine/NYHS; ssmith@lib-gw.tamu.edu; Victoria Ondrla; hughes@librarycompany.org; overholt@fas.harvard.edu; webteam@rbms.info
Subject: Re: preconference website post mortem

Hello all,

Just to chime in briefly, it cannot be underestimated how much individual work is involved in maintaining websites for our very active Section. One of the key components we created in the Web Team is that there are usually at least three people who know how to work on the entire site, several who know how to do specific tasks, and all of us have ongoing responsibilities. We can do this because the look-and-feel of rbms.info is rather consistent so much of the training to be on the Web Team consists of learning that consistent coding. With a Preconference site, you don't have the advantage of having a pre-existing consistent coding, nor do you historically have a team. In my opinion, this means that the best choice to work on such a thing is someone who already has a clear understanding of from-scratch web design and practices it as part of their day-to-day activities. If they must also be active in the Section, this makes for a very small pool indeed. I expect this might be an ongoing problem.

Best,
-James
Out-gone (now emeritus) Web Editor

On Jun 30, 2010, at 4:31 PM, Elaine B Smyth wrote:

Deborah,

Many thanks for this, which reinforces my feelings about the importance of getting our website "chain of command" firmly set from the outset. If others have additional advice, I will welcome it!

Elaine

From: Deborah J. Leslie [mailto:DJLeslie@FOLGER.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2010 9:01 AM
To: Henry Raine/NYHS; Elaine B Smyth; ssmith@lib-gw.tamu.edu; Victoria Ondrla
Cc: hughes@librarycompany.org; overholt@fas.harvard.edu; webteam@rbms.info
Subject: preconference website post mortem

Ruth mentioned in one of the meetings—conference development, I think—that having a clear line of authority about the website would be helpful. I agree, and have a couple more suggestions.

We re-used old code from the previous year's website. Don't do it. It isn't worth it. It made all updating tasks, even easy ones, unnecessarily difficult.
Make sure that the preconference content web editor is personally involved with RBMS. What didn't work for us in 2010 is that the web editor gave us the basic design, working from 2009's site, but also was expected to keep up with the content. Since the designer wasn't involved in RBMS, and since she was copied on discussions about the content, I think the rest of us figured she'd know when we agreed on something and would amend the site to reflect that. That turned out to be too much to ask. In addition, there seemed to be some technical problem on her end, so that when she edited one page, other pages that had already been edited reverted to a former state. Since I know a thing or two about web editing, I made a lot of substantive changes. But when more routine changes were given to the editor to make, all my changes disappeared. (At that point I became thoroughly discouraged about the whole thing since I'd spent hours and hours on the editing, and sort of threw up my hands.) I expect the web editor was also discouraged and upset by all the various people telling her what to do, sometimes conflicting with each other.

We're just now discovering that the *Vade Mecum* did not include some of the things we promised to certain circles of donorship. Most can be remedied in kind by making the missing acknowledgements with logos and hyperlinks available on the RBMS discussion list and on the 2010 website. But the fulfillment of the promises completely slipt through the cracks.

To sum up, have a designated person responsible for **all** the content on the web site, whether or not that person designs or does the technical work on it; someone fairly experienced with RBMS preconferences and included in all discussions, not just those with apparent website ramifications.

K. Manual:

In order to maintain a high level of consistency, the team is continues the process of developing a Web Team Manual as spearheaded by Christopher Thomas Smith. The manual currently contains our draft statement of services, administrative information, instructions for specific tasks, a list of committee liaisons, and a list of current projects. The manual is currently only available to all Web Team Editors, and can be used for training, general consultation, and as the go-to place for infrequently used information.

III. New Business:

A. Exhibition Award Committee Catalogs:

To discuss with the Exhibition Awards Committee:

The Team proposes to continue work on the "The Katharine Kyes Leab & Daniel J. Leab American Book Prices Current Exhibition Award Winners." Katie Carr has been working with us to develop the next generation of online exhibit, showcasing the winners of the Leab Awards through time. At this point, she has developed a viable prototype (seen here: http://rbms.info/exhibits/omeka-1.0/exhibits/show/leab) which is in the process of being visually tweaked. We are, however, ready to move to the data ingest phase of the project, which is why I write the committee today. The project needs the following-

1.) Someone with access and familiarity with Connexion (or other method of getting full MARC from OCLC) to help with cross-walking the data to Dublin Core in Omeka. We have written a manual for this so it should be relatively straight forward.

2.) Help acquiring digitized copies of all of the covers of the catalogs. I'm guessing that this might be a matter of requesting them from the appropriate institutions.

3.) Help tracking down the Exhibition Awards Committee chair's comments prior to 2007. We are using the chair's comments about the catalogs to provide the interpretive component of the online exhibit. On the committee's page we have 2009 and 2008 (see: http://rbms.info/committees/exhibition_awards/index.shtml) but nothing earlier. Did the chair make comments in the earlier years? Would they be in the archives somewhere?

Committee Input:

The EAC agreed that the now large scope of the project remained appropriate, but there was little enthusiasm from the members in volunteering for the tasks. In the end, Molly Schwartzburg (incoming chair) agreed that the Harry Ransom Center could digitize images given appropriate standards. The chair's comments--or something similar--exist within RBMS Newsletters, ACRL Press Releases, and primarily CR&L News. Richard Noble and James Ascher suggested the idea of cataloging the materials at the Grolier club prior to, or during, Bibliography Week. The Committee agreed that the expectation was for progress to be gradual and encourage further development of the look-and-feel for the site.

B. Thesaurus Display:

At the Controlled Vocabularies meeting:
Discuss the work on the Thesaurus- Jason worked very hard on this and the subcommittee is very pleased. If you have any questions, suggestions, etc., please be prepared to discuss at our meeting.

Discuss future directions for the Thesaurus- There is some interest in looking at other tools for maintaining the Controlled Vocabularies Database, in particular since Jason has developed expertise in manipulating the XML output of MultiTes, TemaTres may be a viable option see: http://www.vocabularyserver.com/ .

C. Leadership Transitions

At Web Team meeting and Publications:

Jason Kovari will be the new Assistant Web Editor and Shannon Supple will become the new Web Editor at the end of Annual. Christopher Thomas Smith will remain on as Senior Web Editor and James will become chair of the Publications Committee and an additional Web Editor Emeritus.

D. Paying for Hosting

At Web Team meeting and Publications:

The web site has historically been paid through the generosity of donations. This year, renewal cost $83.88 and John Pull has fronted the money. James P. Ascher will gladly forward any contributions to John in one mailing, and it would be nice to contribute to the ongoing cost of maintaining the site.

Christian Dupont explained that RBMS had reimbursed John Pull in previous years and encouraged us to contact Budget and Development Committee chair, Elaine Smyth. Elaine that it would simply have to be approved by the incoming Exec Chair, Henry Raine, who approved the paperwork and sent it on to ACRL. The email correspondence is included below-

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From: HRaine@nyhistory.org
Subject: Re: Reimbursing John Pull Fwd: [sc-l] Re: Sections Council mtg @ MW 09 - Additional Concern / non-ALA website hosting
Date: July 1, 2010 12:45:17 PM MDT
To: James.Ascher@Colorado.EDU
Cc: DJLeslie@FOLGER.edu, HRaine@nyhistory.org, sksupple@law.berkeley.edu, john.pull@gmail.com, esmyth@lsu.edu

James,

I sent off the reimbursement request with John's invoice to ACRL yesterday. It had all the information I needed. Please let me know if he doesn't get reimbursed within a reasonable time.

Thanks,
Henry

-----James Phillip Ascher <James.Ascher@Colorado.EDU> wrote: -----
To: "Deborah J. Leslie" <DJLeslie@FOLGER.edu>
From: James Phillip Ascher <James.Ascher@Colorado.EDU>
Date: 07/01/2010 01:13PM
cc: "Henry Raine/NYHS" <HRaine@nyhistory.org>, "Shannon Supple" <sksupple@law.berkeley.edu>, "John Pull" <john.pull@gmail.com>, "Elaine B Smyth" <esmyth@lsu.edu>
Subject: Re: Reimbursing John Pull Fwd: [sc-l] Re: Sections Council mtg @ MW 09 - Additional Concern / non-ALA website hosting

Thanks Deborah,

I've attached the original receipt from John Pull, which seems like it should be sufficient. It has his address as well as the amount to reimburse. Let me know if there is anything else you need to move forward, Henry.

Best,
-James

On Jun 30, 2010, at 7:05 AM, Deborah J. Leslie wrote:

See http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/resources/forms/reimbursement.cfm
ACRL needs the "original receipt" as well as the signature of the section chair. Since original receipts are more often than not printouts, that part doesn't matter so much, but Henry needs to sign and send it in to ACRL. The sooner, the better.

From: James Phillip Ascher [mailto:James.Ascher@Colorado.EDU]
Sent: Tuesday, 29 June, 2010 21:01
To: Henry Raine/NYHS
Cc: Shannon Supple; John Pull; Elaine B Smyth; Deborah J. Leslie
Subject: Reimbursing John Pull Fwd: [sc-l] Re: Sections Council mtg @ MW 09 - Additional Concern / non-ALA website hosting

Dear Henry,

It was nice seeing you at RBMS and welcome to the wonderful world of being Section Chair. As one of the last tasks as Web Editor, I'm striving to finish this project- John Pull kindly paid the invoice for the website some weeks ago and I'd like for us to reimburse him from the Section's money. Elaine Smyth said that you were the person to

> speak to about accomplishing this. I have attached John's invoice. What do you need from me to reimburse him?
>
> Best,
> -James

E. Web to Print Style-Sheet

At Team Lunch and possibly Publications:

You Old Books includes a special style-sheet that enables printing without the banners. This was created in response to a request from the Section to provide an easily printable version of one of our most popular resources. As AddThis suggests that some of our users are sharing (or using) content by printing it, would it be appropriate to use this style-sheet site wide?

The team liked the idea, except Eva raised the concern that perhaps someone would want to print the site as it appears. The question was left unresolved. Publications needs to give us input on this, since it impacts their content.

F. Moving from GoDaddy

At the Web Team meeting:

The website is currently hosted by GoDaddy as part of the domain registration. Dreamhost, which is a favorite of emeritus John Pull, quotes only $8.95 a month which would be less than the yearly cost from GoDaddy. Moving to another hosting service would be potentially time consuming, but might be appropriate as part of a major site over haul.

It was decided that as experimentation with Drupal moved forward, at such time the development efforts on a new site begin in earnest, alternate hosting would be sought. For now, the site remains on GoDaddy.

G. Newsletter Editor and Feed

At the Web Team meeting:

The position of Newsletter Editor has been transformed into the position of News Editor. This role is intended to organize then post the contents to the website and arrange for its archiving. One way to do this would be to replace the "News & Events" section with a blog maintained by the News Editor, who would periodically print the accumulated news contents to send to the ACRL Archive.

The requirements of the News Editor are thus- "The RBMS News Editor, appointed by the Vice-Chair/Chair-elect based on the recommendations of the RBMS Publications Committee, will be responsible for collecting, editing, and forwarding to the RBMS Web Editor for mounting news

items gathered from RBMS officers and committee, task force, and discussion group chairs. The RBMS News Editor will ensure the regular biennial archiving of published news items"
How should we support this new role within the Section?

The Team decided that a blog should be created for the News Editor to curate. Chris volunteered to activate this module in Drupal as an initial experiment. James pointed out that it would also be possible to install another WordPress blog for the content, but that it would have to be styled to match. Chris's solution was chosen. The News Editor will be able to post directly to the news blog, so that the Web Team will not need to mediate and post the news items.

H. Scope of Team, Meetings, and Issues of Transparency

At the Team Lunch:

The RBMS Web Team has accomplished some substantial goals in the current Editor-Liaison structure, but because of the considerable business involved with accomplishing the goals the Team has begun meeting at an informal lunch. Furthermore, as testament to the effectiveness of the Team, the scope of the work continually tends to expand. It has also been noted that we appoint liaisons without Exec oversight and without channels for formal recognition.
What should the scope of the team be? What sort of meetings do we need? How can we achieve transparency within the larger Section?

The team expressed its desire to remain under the auspices of the Publications Committee, as a subcommittee, with the understanding that the Publications Committee will be reviewing its name and charge.

The team is also interested in establishing an actual meeting time at ALA Annual and Midwinter. As Publications chair, James will look into this possibility. The Web Team will also explore virtual meetings, via Dim Dim or Adobe meeting, for which ACRL as accounts and supports. Virtual meetings are allowed by ACRL if they are announced at least two weeks in advance (to ExLibris and/or the RBMS list-serv is fine).