On-line catalog receives face lift

The PSU library's on-line catalog is now easier to use

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Vanguard Staff

The PSU library unveiled its new on-line catalog interface last Monday, hoping to make catalog use easier for students.

The new face, called Vikat (short for Viking Catalog), is really just a new face for Sirsi, the current on-line catalog, said Sharon Elteto, bibliographic instruction librarian.

The change to a web interface was chosen for two reasons, said Art Hendricks, assistant systems librarian who revised the web catalog program for PSU's use. One, the library will have more control over a hypermedia catalog and two, people are used to web pages and are "intuitive" about how they work.

The new interface works like a web page, providing links to authors, subjects and other books. The old catalog face relied solely on key commands to conduct searches, but Vikat relies on a mouse and the keyboard so users don't have to understand as many terms said Elteto.

To access Vikat in the library, use any of the on-line computers situated around the library. First, click on the Netscape Navigator symbol, which will take you to the library home page; then, click on catalog and then on the Vikat symbol. From there, the search procedure is self-explanatory.

Home computers can access Vikat as well, but AOL users might have some problems, said Hendricks.

The library also purchased 45 new computers to accommodate Vikat as part of an overall upgrade in the library's networking capability. The library used funds from the Certificates of Participation money, which operates similarly to bonds, said Tom Pfingston, library director. The money is financed up-front and paid back over a period of time. Financing for the web catalog program came out of the library's operating budget.

So far, the library is pleased with the way Vikat has turned out, said Hendricks. The library will review Vikat next month after students have a chance to use the catalog. Library staff, a focus group of freshmen and a questionnaire will help the library review the system and make any changes. The library will also collect informal student responses through Vikat's e-mail and by talking to students.

Vikat is a revised version of a web catalog made by the company who developed the current catalog, Sirsi Corp. Many universities have web interfaces for their catalogs and in general they are much easier to use, said Elteto, who was on the Vikat design committee. The revisions took about six months to complete.

"We just hope everyone will use it," Hendricks said.

From rcc001@alpha.morningside.edu Wed Oct 20 18:54:23 1999
Date: Tue, 13 Jul 1999 09:18:11 -0500
From: Rachel Crowley <rcc001@alpha.morningside.edu>
To: bvah@odin.cc.pdx.edu
Cc: dlb001@alpha.morningside.edu
Subject: Web Pages

Our library really likes the look of your SIRSI pages. We based our policies on the design of your pages because we felt it was the easiest to naviage and use. You have done a great job. I was wondering how you learned to make the changes. Did you learn this at the system admin training or did you just do it on your own? I have found the documentation
on customizing web pages, but feel like it is a little over my head? I know basic HTML, but do not know enough about SIRSI to make it connect. Can you give me some suggestions and is the design style yours or SIRSI's?
If it is yours can we adapt the style to fit our library? We are planning
to go live in November, and I will be going to training in Sept. I appreciate any information you can give me. Thanks

Rachel Crowley
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From jbrut@wilmcoll.edu Thu Oct 21 11:28:31 1999
Date: Wed, 19 May 1999 22:01:42 -0400
From: Jane Bruton <jbrut@wilmcoll.edu>
To: bvah@odin.cc.pdx.edu
Subject: WEBCAT Design

Our library is migrating to SIRSI's Unicorn system this summer, and I am looking at various sites to see how they are designed. I really like the design of your site, especially having the call number, copy, material, & location near the top of the record. Very user friendly.

Was the design process a long one? Was there a lot of customizing and "tweaking" of the basic SIRSI WebCat design? We do not have a systems person or a webmaster right now so I'm not sure how complex your process would be for us. If we decide to something similar, would it be okay to contact you for advice, assistance, questions, etc?

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