

THE STORY OF THE "PERIODICALS BUTTON" ON THE INFORMATION CENTER WEB SITE



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This article explains the purpose the "Periodicals Button" on the web site of the Information Center at a newly established university, Sabanci University was planned and launched for, and the details of its infrastructure. This work also attempts to take a new perspective on the current topic of the administration of e-journals on a worldwide scale in general, and in our country, Turkey, in particular.

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A New University

Establishment: The Start of the University

Sabanci University is a private, independent "young" university, whose campus is situated on the outskirts of Istanbul. The University aims at setting a model in higher education in particular in Turkey, and in the world, that is, to create a "world university". The University opened its gates in 1999, and the Vision of the University was defined as "Creating and Developing Together".

The Mission of the University is defined as "Developing competent and confident individuals, enriched with the ability to think critically and independently, infused with a strong sense of social responsibility, and contributing to the development of science and technology, as well as disseminating knowledge created for the benefit of the community".

As an immediate result of the strong planning in activities and facilities, the University has been accepted for membership by EFQM (European Foundation of Quality Management).

The Significance of "Information" in the University

Unlike traditional approaches to "Library and Information", Sabanci University appointed the Director who is in charge of the information facilities, which shows the importance given to this issue. This person was the fifth of all people appointed by the university administration at the beginning of 1997.

Why "Information Center (IC)" rather than "Library"?

The title given to the administrative body which handles information activities and facilities in the university was one of

the main changes in the profession in Turkey: "Information Center" rather than "Library". The Center does not attempt to collect everything published but aims at having access to every piece of information available in all formats at local, national and international levels. In other words "access" versus "possession". Because of the rising prices of information resources, the advantages of available technology, the changing face of publishing, and the possibility of using alerting services, we chose being an "Information Center" in order to bring together the user and the information immediately.

About the Information Center

The Center occupies a total space of 9,432 square meters, has a shelving capacity of 300,000 volumes and seating capacity for 600 patrons. There are 480 Internet access points within the Center, including 56 electronically equipped study carrels and 13 multifunctional multimedia rooms.

At the end of February 2002, the Information Center had 54,992 resources: 38,711 volumes of books, 9,292 multimedia resources, 6,946 print and electronic journals and 43 CD-ROM and online databases.

About the Periodicals Collection at the IC

The undeniable importance of current information has led the university in general, and the Information Centre in particular, to attach a special value to the periodicals collection. This project is the outcome of the efforts based on this value attached. The periodical collection consists of two main elements. The first one is e-journal and print subscriptions which are either subscribed to directly by IC or come from the consortia joined by Sabanci University, and the second category is comprised of those accessed through aggregators.

The project undertaken has not taken the methods of provision into consideration, as this does not involve the user. The publications accessed by direct subscription, the ones provided by the consortium and the prints have also been catalogued and presented for use through OPAC.

The number of issues of these publications and the distribution over the years are as shown in the following tables:

| 1999 | | |
|----------------------|------------|------------|
| Format | Title | % |
| Print | 345 | 69 |
| Print + E-Journal | 70 | 14 |
| Full text | 13 | 2.6 |
| Print + Full text | 61 | 12.2 |
| E-Journal (Web Only) | 11 | 2.6 |
| Total | 500 | 100 |

| 2000 | | |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Format | Title | % |
| Print | 498 | 14.0 |
| Print + E-Journal | 159 | 4.5 |
| E-Journal (Web Only) | 14 | 0.4 |
| Aggregators (FT/FI) | 2883 | 81.1 |
| Total | 3554 | 100.0 |

| 2001 | | |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Format | Title | % |
| Print | 449 | 6.5 |
| Print + E-Journal | 215 | 3.1 |
| E-Journal (Web Only) | 2483 | 35.7 |
| Aggregators (FT/FI) | 3803 | 54.7 |
| Total | 6950 | 100.0 |

The project

During the five-year planning stage, it has been considered that the electronic versions of the periodicals will develop much more quickly than the print versions, and consequently, a periodicals administration project has been devised.

The aims of the project are:

1. An interface that will enable the users to have access to a certain periodical through different publishers or aggregators, as well as information on their holdings, formats and URL addresses, was prepared.
2. Periodicals were subdivided according to their format as:
 - E-journal: subscribed or through consortia
 - Print: subscribed as printed periodicals
 - Full text and full image: provided by aggregators

3. A separate holding was prepared for each format.
4. The locations each format would reach were specified. When the periodical is a print version a location as a Series Shelf was assigned, and the location link was specified on its identification on OPAC. When the periodical is an E-journal, a direct link was established to the home page of the publishers to the periodical. In the case of full text and full image, a link was made to the aggregator's page.

It was considered that, through these means, the user would be able to see all the information about the periodical, and choose to benefit from the most appropriate data and type of format.

Stages of the Project

Stage 1 : How can we start?

The system was based on the assumption that an html page could be established for each of the periodicals that would include the information mentioned above. Thus,

- In 1999 about 500 separate html pages were prepared for about 500 periodicals.
- Each file was designated in a certain order, registered on a certain template page, and put into folders in alphabetical order.
- A periodicals list was prepared in alphabetical order in the html format.
- Links were established from the alphabetical list to each of the html addresses separately designed for each periodical.
- Information about the link was entered on the publisher's or the aggregator's page separately.
- Links were established via the identifications of the periodicals catalogued on OPAC.

All the above mentioned processes were set up manually.

Problems at the end of the first year

When the project was assessed the following problems were observed :

- Preparing a separate page for each publication was both time and labour consuming.

- As each page was set up independently, it was very costly in terms of time and work to solve any problems or in some cases even impossible to solve them at all.
- Although a template was used to set up each page, it was very difficult to change the design or content of a page to update them.
- As there was not a shared database, it required a lot of effort, which was beyond capabilities to be able to manage the large number of files and to reach them through one path.
- It took hours to be able either to add a new publisher to the system such as Elsevier, or to delete an existing connection in the system.
- It was impossible to do an efficient search through the existing periodicals.
- It was even inconceivable to list the publications according to the publisher.

When the rapid increase in the periodical collection is considered, it was apparent that there was a need to change the cumbersome system, which was impossible to upgrade.

Stage 2 : What can we do?

The rapidly increasing number of periodicals required a change in the system. There were two options that could be chosen.

Option I – In co-operation with an existing company, it could have been possible to purchase their database management and presentation system, and replace the old one with it. However:

- Our research showed that there was not a system available that would meet out requirements and needs.
- As the diversity of the information sources we had posed a lot of differences and sometimes had intertwined specifications, this made it very hard to put an existing system into practice, even when it appeared to be suitable. Soon, the demands, the work style, general system and the philosophy of IC would have proved incompatible with that system.
- Existing library management software did not have the specifications necessary to manage periodicals in the way we wanted to.

Option II – The second option was that we would create the appropriate system ourselves.

What could have been done and how it would work?

Within three months' time, the blueprint of our system was set up and put into practice, and offered services.

The things done within the framework of this project so far can be summarised as follows:

- Creating a database and a system that would hold all the periodicals,
- Listing the claimed periodicals alphabetically,
- Displaying the claimed periodicals,
- The capacity to search with key word and title,
- Listing according to publishers (still at the testing stage).

Technical Infrastructure

General properties – The most outstanding specifications of the new system are:

- The periodicals are kept in one file and this is an Excel file.
- The main and most important file of the system containing about 6500 periodicals, which is "periodicals_source_csv" (comma

Periodicals Main Page

separated values file), is converted through an Excel file.

- Anybody who can use the Excel program can easily upgrade the periodicals file with a much shorter process.
- The Excel file which is used as the main source holds two or three columns for each publisher and one line for each publication, and thus it has become much easier to follow whether one periodical is available at more than one publisher.
- In the source file that exists today, there are 40 columns in which the information about the corresponding periodical on that line can be entered. Also the system allows entry in these columns.
- The holding dates of the publication at a

certain publisher, and other links, if any, are displayed.

- The links to the bibliographic log of all the print and catalogued periodicals on OPAC

according to their ISBN number, and more explanatory information if necessary.

How are periodicals listed?

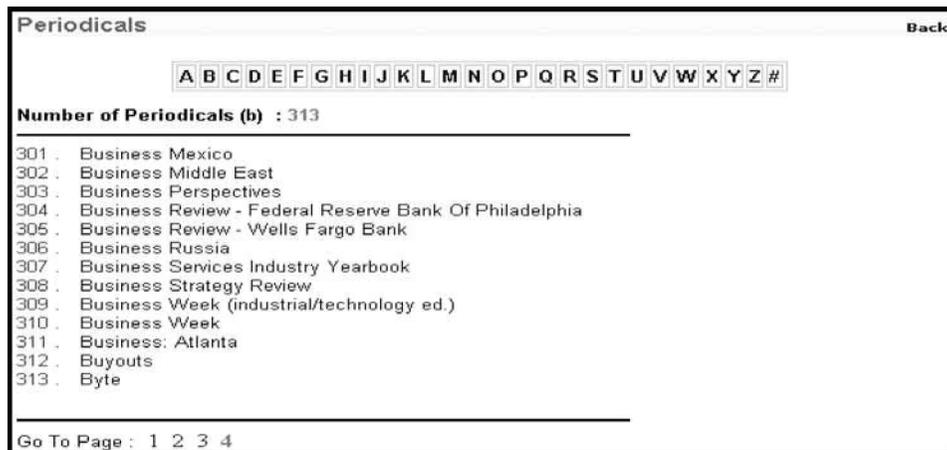
- The listing process is done through a perl (script) program titled "periodicals_list.pl"
- The main function of this program is to group the periodicals that are loaded on to "periodicals_source.csv" according to the initials of their titles.
- The program gets the wanted periodicals in a section listing consisting of 100 titles and puts them in the html format.

The established list

- Contains the titles and the number of the total of periodicals in the list.
- A link has been embedded specific to that certain periodical.

How are the periodicals displayed?

- The display of periodicals is provided by a perl (script) program titled "periodicals_show.pl".
- The "periodicals_show.pl" program gets the information that a certain periodical will be displayed from the "periodicals_list.pl" program.
- Its main function is retrieving the information about the claimed periodical from the "periodicals_source.csv" file, and displaying it in html format.



Listing Periodicals

- The information included consists of the ISSN (if available), holdings information, format and the location.
- As one periodical can be provided by more than one source, there may be more than one hold date and location information, the "periodicals_show.pl" program gets the information from the related column and reflects all the corresponding information, also adding the format information.

The advantages

The new system has many advantages over the old version and offers many conveniences.

- The static html codes can be converted into a dynamic system based on the perl programming language and be updated and formatted more easily.
- The system, which is a combination of Excel

| HOLDING | FORMAT | LOCATION |
|---------------|------------|--|
| 2001 .. | PRINT | SERIALS SHELF |
| 1954 .. | E-JOURNAL | ACM |
| 01.11.1995.. | FULL TEXT | ABI INFORM |
| 01.01.1991.. | FULL IMAGE | ABI INFORM |
| 01/11/1995 .. | FULL TEXT | Social Science Plus [Proquest] |
| 01/01/1991 .. | FULL IMAGE | Social Science Plus [Proquest] |
| 01/11/1995 .. | FULL TEXT | Applied Science & Tech Plus [Proquest] |
| 01/01/1991 .. | FULL IMAGE | Applied Science & Tech Plus [Proquest] |

Showing Periodicals

files, helps save a lot of time and labour.

- The "search" function can be used based on any criterion. Although the most favoured search types are "title" and "keyword" at present, the system is flexible enough to enable search by "publisher" or the "holding date"
- Since Sabanci University is an English medium University, our institution provides all the web pages in two languages, that is in English and Turkish. This process is provided by using the new system in two languages instead of writing all the pages separately for over 6500 items because of its dynamic and adaptable structure that has been established.

The future of the project

As expressed above, the system has not been finalised and will never be finalised, since there will be no end to its development. It will continue growing in accordance with new demands and preferences. At present, there are a few projects in progress that will be launched in the near future.

The prospective possible projects are:

- An adjunct system that will enable all of the update processes to be processed through the web. Thus, authorised personnel who are not very familiar with the system will be able to upgrade the database, add new entries or delete some easily.

View of Simple Search

- Another project involves the "advanced search" facility. While the system can currently do simple but large-scale search with "keyword" or "title", it will be improved to enable searches based on several criteria.
- Periodicals that have been embargoed for some time to the user will be displayed. This project will inform the users about which periodicals that have been under embargo cannot be accessed for which periods of time, in what format and through which publishers, by means of a patch added to the system.