Media Finders: Expert Search Intermediaries for the Online Catalog

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What is a Media Finder?

- **A Web form that serves as a dynamic pathfinder for searching some subset of materials in the OPAC.**

- **Uses cataloging knowledge to present the user with options that are used to construct searches in the OPAC**

- **Provides guided access to materials that have characteristics not adequately served by a generic search box in a standard OPAC**

Why Develop Media Finders?

- **Browsing access**
  - **For unclassed, closed stacks**
  - **For remote users**
  - **For browsing by multiple aspects**

- **"Blank screen" problem**
  - **Users don't know where to start**

- **Fuller use of information in the catalog record**

- **Automates long and/or complex search strings**

- **Improves access to targeted subsets of materials**

How Media Finders Work

Media Finders consist of three elements

1. Web form (HTML)
- **Standard HTML search page that presents the user with a set of predefined options and outputs the user's choices to the CGI script**
- **Easy to design; uses standard input methods such as pull-down menus, checkboxes, radio buttons, and text boxes**

2. **CGI script**

- **Simple program that converts the user's choices into a dynamic URL**

- **HTML form only outputs bits of data such as genre="western" and captioned="yes"**

- **CGI script takes these bits of information and puts them together to form a dynamic URL**

- **Can be written in a variety of languages such as PERL or ASP**

3. **Dynamic URL that searches the OPAC**

- http://liblink.bsu.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi/x/SIRSI/0/5?searchdata1=(feature+OR+short)+films{su}&item_2cat=VIDEO

- **The part before the question mark is static and in our case indicates the location of our OPAC's server and information about the type of search (keyword)**

- **The part after the question mark is dynamic and communicates the search terms**