

Electronic Information Resources–II

Subject Gateways

Subject gateways are online sites that provide searchable and browsable catalogues of Internet based resources. Subject gateways typically focus on a related set of academic subject areas. The simplest types of subject gateways are sets of web pages containing lists of links to resources. Some gateways index their lists of links and provide a simple search facility. Some offer enhanced services consisting of a resource database and various indexes searchable through a web-based interface. Most gateways allow the end-user to either search or browse the database of resource description. These are also known as subject based information gateways, clearing houses, subject trees, pathfinders, etc.



To provide quality information to the user community subject gateways are designed. They are valuable sources of information for users since they are subject specific in nature. The biggest benefit of such sites is, they are man-made. The information rendered is tailored manually by a person who knows the subject and its ins and outs. That is why the resource entries generated are usually superior to those available from a conventional search engine. Information gateways are quality controlled information services that have the following characteristics: An online service that provides links to numerous other sites or documents on the Internet Selection of resources in an intellectual process according to published quality and scope criteria Intellectually produced content descriptions, in the spectrum between short

annotation and review. A good but not necessary criterion is the existence of intellectually assigned keywords or controlled terms. Intellectually constructed browsing structure/classification At least partly, manually generated (bibliographic) metadata for the individual resources.

With the advent of Internet many libraries are looking forward to going online with Internet. Often they find that the information available over Internet is enormous and if that alone could be some how managed and made accessible to the user community satisfy its information need. For the same they have devised subject-based portals, which are known as Subject Gateways in the information society. It is not necessary to a library to maintain a subject gateway. People who are information conscious and want to share useful information can manage it. The major idea of Subject gateways came with the inefficiency of search engines as they failed to give pinpointed information and because of information boom it is difficult for the academicians and researchers to sit and browse for information over Internet. Thus subject gateways proved to be a launch pad for the user who wants to get only useful information.

1. Characteristics:

Subject Gateways are characterized by following factors:-

-  They are selective, pointing only to Internet resources that meet with quality selection criteria.
-  They are built by subject and information specialist often by librarians.

- ✚ Generally limited to specific subjects.
- ✚ Scope and policy declaring what subjects they are indexing.
- ✚ Manually created records –rich resource description containing relevant information.
- ✚ Distributed cataloguing– a scattered group of subject specialists contributes to the database.
- ✚ Quality control– there is an official set of quality criteria.
- ✚ Use of open standards to support cooperation with other services.
- ✚ Classification system used as underlying system for browsing possibilities.

2. Features of Subject Gateways:

- ✚ Each resource selected is evaluated explicitly defined quality selection criteria.
- ✚ Resources are classified using a range of schemes, e.g. DDC–MESH
- ✚ Metadata (Standard resource description) are provided based on a particular standard e.g. Dublin Core.
- ✚ Written resources descriptions are provided for each resource often by library subject specialist.
- ✚ Currency of resources is checked by link checking software (e.g. ROADS), database such as OMNI.
- ✚ Institutional commitments are the vital component for continued development of subject gateway.

3. How to use subject gateways?

Information is retrieved from subject gateway by browsing or searching by keyword - in exactly the same way as in a classified directory. Again, it's important to remember that when you search a subject gateway you are not searching the resources themselves, but only the records created for that resource.

4 When to use subject gateways?

General information in a specific subject area

A subject gateway performs best for general queries for the same reason a classified directory does - a very specific term is less likely to be included in a catalogue record.

Access to structured, high quality information

Again, like classified directories, the resources subject gateways have been organised to enable structured browsing through subject hierarchies.

4. Benefits of Subject Gateways

Libraries are the most suitable institutions to undertake this work due to the following reasons:-

The natural metaphor

Browsing reference desk

Expertise in relevant areas

- Classification, acquisition , keywords
- Information seeking behaviour

- Guiding and helping user

- ▣ Leading the way into the information age

- ▣ Access to high quality collection

Thus to connect the users to right information these subject-based portals are very helpful sources. They employ subject experts and information professionals to select, classify and catalogue Internet resources to aid search and retrieval for their users. Users are offered access to a database of Internet resource descriptions which they can search by keyword or browse by subject area. They can do this in the - knowledge that they are looking at a "quality controlled" collection of resources. A description of each resource is provided to help users assess its origin, content and nature, enabling them to decide if it is worth investigating further.

Examples

- ▣ SOSIG- Social Science Information Gateway- freely available internet service which aims to provide a trusted source of selected, high quality information. It is a part of U.K. Resource Discovery Network.

- ▣ PSIGat- Physical Sciences Information Gateway- is a hub of the physical science of the Resource Discovery Network. A full description of each resource is provided .

- ▣ BIOME- A collection of gateways which provide access to evaluated, quality Internet resources in the field of health and life sciences.

 INFOPORT-INFLIBNET Subject Gateway for Indian electronic resources-

The INFLIBNET centre promotes open access to Indian Scholarly content through the InfoPort.

Discussion Lists or Forums

Discussion Lists or Forums/Usenet Newsgroups Discussion lists, Usenet newsgroups, mailing lists are used almost in the same connotation. The fact is that the Internet is interactive and offers new channels for scholarly discourse and new sources of information based on archives of this discourse. One can choose to communicate with people or simply to observe other's communications. Discussion lists are also sometimes called mailing lists or listservs. These are e-mail based lists available to a group of users who are interested in a particular topic in a specified subject area. Software is used to enable e-mail users to subscribe to (join) a list, who can then post messages to the whole group, participate in discussions, receive all the messages which are posted. Joining the forum is called 'subscribing' while leaving the forum is called 'signing off'. A major network resource that serves the purpose of current awareness, Usenet newsgroups are a world wide distributed system of bulletin boards, which are arranged hierarchically into topic areas. These are similar to discussion lists in that different users can discuss a particular area of interest, but users do not have to subscribe, and anyone can view the messages, provided they have access to the

software required. Usenet newsgroups and discussion lists are differentiated by their means of accessing the information.

However, there are similarities such as the ways in which the newsgroups and discussion lists are commonly used. There are three such ways: (i) users may wish to post a query or a reply, (ii) they may lurk in a newsgroup or list, that is reading the messages and follow the discussion but without posting a message; (iii) or they may want to browse an earlier discussion using an archive. Discussion lists or Usenet newsgroups provide an important platform to keep up-to-date with current developments; seek solutions to the problems you pose; and know about new Net resources. Of course, there are some drawbacks also - such as receiving irrelevant mails or what you call junk mails, etc. There are a large number of scholarly discussion groups available and some possess archives of all the messages posted to them, which can be often searched by keyword.

Examples include the following:

i) STM Gentalk - Subscription to: listserv@usa.net Provides a forum for discussion of genetic problems, lab protocols, current issues dealing with genetics and genetic engineering in general.

ii) Social Sciences Mailbase (<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists.html>) Provides access to over 2,000 electronic discussion lists for the UK higher education and research community. The site provides education descriptions, message archives and subscription information for

numerous mailing lists relevant to education. The site also includes information about how to join any of these lists. The SOSIG Mailing List (<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/sosig/>) It has over 400 members from the worldwide social science community and distributes messages about among other things, new Internet sites and services for social scientists.

iii) Humanities HUMBUL–Humanities Bulletin Board (<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~humbul>) Gateway site, maintained by Chris Stephens at Oxford University, is the best Internet resource in the humanities, and also with a conference diary.

Web Portal

A **portal** is a web-based platform that collects information from different sources into a single user interface and presents users with the most relevant information for their context.

1. Definition

A web portal is a specially designed website that brings information from diverse sources, like emails, online forums and search engines, together in a uniform way. Usually, each information source gets its dedicated area on the page for displaying information; often, the user can configure which ones to display.

It can also be considered a library of personalized and categorized content . A web portal helps in search navigation, personalization, notification and information integration, and often provides features like task management, collaboration, and business intelligence and application integration. Web

portals are also known simply as portals. They can be Personal, Government, Cultural, Corporate, Stock, Tender, Hosted, Domain specific.

2. Features :

- A private location on the internet it can be accessible with unique url and unique username and password.
- Login required.
- Only member of the webportal having access can see the content of web portal.
- Dynamic content changes more frequently than typical websites.

3. Functions of Web Portal

- **Upgrading your website** -Web Portal development help you in improving the capability of the web pages that help you deliver a quality information, thus a web portal is the new world toolset that makes implementation of information better and behaves as a different communication approach.
- **Improves Relations immensely** It helps in enhanced customer-company relations as it helps in improving their customer relations by providing high-end and filtered information on a user-friendly and comprehensive platform.
- **Domain Specific** Domain Specific development of web portals helps to attract the users that seek information and services on that domain. Thus, helping to attract a particular area of domain.

■ **Interaction** When done efficiently web portal design services helps a lot in interacting better with the customers and clients. They help to make the web pages very interactive and target better to the audience.

4. **Process of web portal designing services** Web portal development and designing is a complex art as its functionality is highly difficult to render. The complex process of web portal development includes similar steps as website development. However, the difference is in its features, functionality, coding, testing and integration. Since web portals are differently designed websites, the languages are similar that we use in building and web designing services in a website development.

5. **The difference between Website and Webportal**

Websites and web portals can be differentiated on different aspects, firstly websites are majorly focused on driving traffic while web portals are for limiting the traffic. Whereas the web portals require users to login while websites are open to being visited by any individual.

Thus, on differentiating it based on their uses, a web portal is creating and attract a specific audience experience, control user's functionality on page, multiple source integrations to provide uniform information and other user management and permitting features.

Bulletin Board

Many Library and Information Services provide bulletin board within their websites as a means of enabling their users to discuss ideas and share information. They provide a facility for discussion under various topic headings and not in a real time. They allow individuals to respond to topics or to begin a new topic. Any message sent to a discussion group are permanently visible to everyone who has access to it. Aesthetic bulletin boards serve two very important purposes:

(a) they help students develop an appreciation for the world in which they live, and

(b) they provide opportunities for students to “dabble” into unfamiliar topic areas and to develop interests they did not even know they had.

1. Purpose

A bulletin board can serve several purposes.

- Additional visual information about the topics that are taught.
- Quotes and pictures that provide general enrichment on the subject.
- A show case for students' work.
- A review of past learning/lessons

2. Characteristics of a Good Bulletin Board or Multi-Purpose.

- It should be with finished edge.
- It must be fixed on the wall to prevent accidents.
- It must be colourful and attractive.

- Have at least a unified theme for clarity.
- Avoid overcrowded display.

3. Importance

Bulletin boards are an important component of classrooms. They provide a way to introduce new material or display student work. Educators should create boards that are equally engaging and educational. The use of interactive boards in the classroom ensures that students recognize the importance of the posted materials. Bulletin boards should be changed frequently and relate to concepts currently being covered in class. There are four main **types** or categories of bulletin boards that can (and should) be utilized in the classroom including child-created, decorative, conceptual, and interactive. Child-created bulletin boards are an effective tool used in the display of student's work—art projects, writing prompts, science projects, etc.

4. Advantages of Bulletin Boards

Bulletin boards serve multiple purposes. They can convey a variety of information from meeting announcements and parent news to curriculum overviews and displays. One of the main advantages of having bulletin boards is that they allow teachers to take advantage of functional wall space. Bulletin boards impart information and facilitate communication. Both traditional and online bulletin boards save time, keep people informed and can serve a variety of purposes, from inspiring students to providing information about community resources.

■ Information

Bulletin boards keep people abreast of events, opportunities and peer activities in school or at work. A college bulletin board, for example, provides information about everything from summer vacation job opportunities and forthcoming poetry readings to graduate research opportunities and student accommodation.

■ Sense of Community

Traditional and online bulletin boards can symbolize a sense of belonging and social cohesion. Libraries, for example, serve their local population and are a center of community activity, while a library's bulletin board is an extension of this service and is a communal facility. Someone running a computer education program for seniors, for example, could post information about this on the library's bulletin board. Online bulletin boards, such as one for writers, also help impart a sense that people who make use of the board are part of a wider community.

■ Fostering Inspiration

Bulletin boards sometimes serve to inspire and motivate. Classroom bulletin boards, for example, showcase students' pictures, poems and stories to encourage them and make them feel that their talents are valued and appreciated. They can also serve as a useful learning tool.

■ Build Interest

An eye-catching bulletin board will build interest in every student. Educators should strive to create bulletin boards that introduce new concepts in an exciting way. Bulletin boards appeal to the visual side of learning for students. To build interest, educators should decorate the boards before a new concept is discussed with the class. Students' curiosity will begin to build and they will be more likely to pay attention to the lesson.

■ Motivation

Motivate students to work harder with a bulletin board that displays outstanding student work. Educators should strive to draw attention to every child's work at some point during the year. Students will be motivated to do better on assignments to have their work displayed. After viewing their work posted on a bulletin board, students develop a sense of pride, ownership and motivation to continue to create work that is worthy of attention.

■ Interaction

Interactive bulletin boards are perhaps the best type of display. Students will spend more time viewing and attempting to understand interactive bulletin boards. Students should be able to move pieces around on the board, solve puzzles or put their own spin on the board. This type of kinesthetic learning will encourage students to build understanding. Interactive bulletin boards add some excitement to this typically visual decoration.

■ Review

Bulletin boards can be used to revisit concepts that have been previously covered in class. Material can be reintroduced before an upcoming test or at the end of a unit. Bulletin boards can be used to prompt the students' memory of previously covered material. Students will enjoy seeing a board full of information that they have already learned about. Bulletin boards used to review older concepts provide encouragement to students as they realize just how much they have learned.

5. Disadvantages

- Distraction.
- Student Fairness.
- Clutter and Confusion.
- Sharp Objects.