Syracuse University

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An Overview of the Engagement with Stakeholders to Determine Logical Subject Headings

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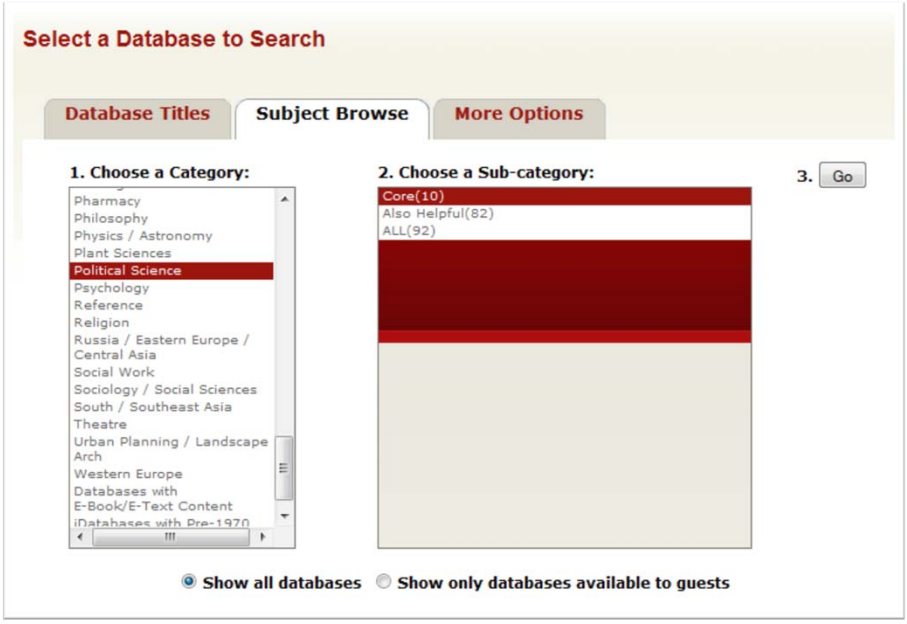
Xerxes

An Overview of the Engagement with Stakeholders to Determine Logical Subject Headings

Where we started



18 broad subjects/173 specific subjects

To select a database, you choose a broad category (engineering, social science, etc.) then narrowed it down further by major or by resource type (civil engineering, political science, e-book, patent, etc.)

Where we are now

By Subject

Search by Subject: Search databases specific to your area of study.

Temporarily Saved Records

Africa / Middle East	Family Studies	Medicine / Public Health
Agriculture	Film / Television	Microbiology
Animal Science / Vet Medicine	Food Science / Nutrition	Multidisciplinary / Dissertations
Anthropology / Archaeology	Gender / Sexuality / Women's Studies	Music
Art / Art History / Architecture	Genetics / Molecular Biology	Newspapers / Current Topics
Atmospheric / Oceanic / Climate Studies	Geography	Nursing
Biochemistry	Geology	Pharmacy
Biology / Zoology	Government	Philosophy
Business	History - General/Worldwide	Physics / Astronomy
Chemistry / Chemical Engineering	History - U.S./Canada	Plant Sciences
Civil / Environmental Engineering	History of Science, Medicine, Technology	Political Science
Classics	Industrial Systems Engineering	Psychology
Communication / Journalism / Rhetoric	International Affairs	Reference
Computer Science / Electrical Engineering	Latin America / Caribbean / Iberia	Religion
Dance	Law	Russia / Eastern Europe / Central Asia
Design Studies	Library + Information Studies	Social Work
East Asia	Linguistics / Language	Sociology / Social Sciences
Economics	Literature	South / Southeast Asia
Education	Materials Science / Biomedical Engineering	Theatre
Environment / Natural Resources	Mathematics / Statistics	Urban Planning / Landscape Arch
Ethnic Studies	Mechanical / Nuclear Engineering	Western Europe

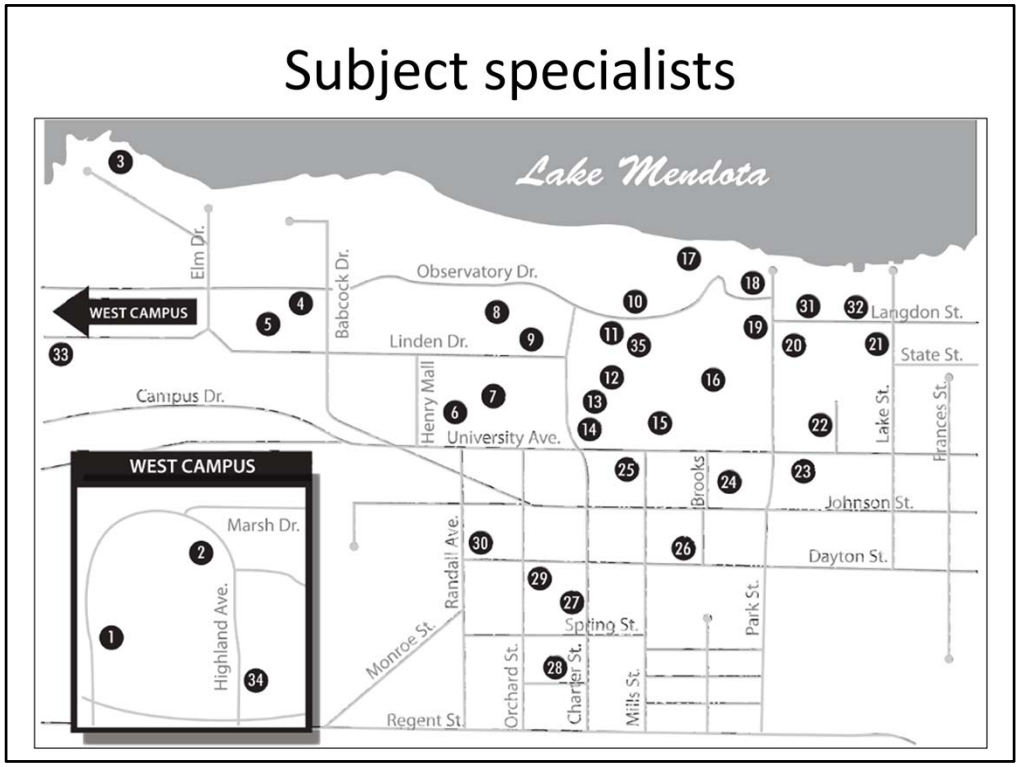
63 subjects that strike a balance between the 18 broad subjects and 173 specific subjects

How we got there

- Draft organization
- Subject specialists
- Coordinating committees
- User testing
- Compromise, compromise, compromise

The first draft of the subject organization was put together by the Xerxes Implementation Team. Team members included:
Todd Bruns, chair (now at Eastern Illinois University), Allan Barclay, Sue Dentinger, Mitch Lunquist (WSMT Liaison), Annie Rauh, Curran Riley

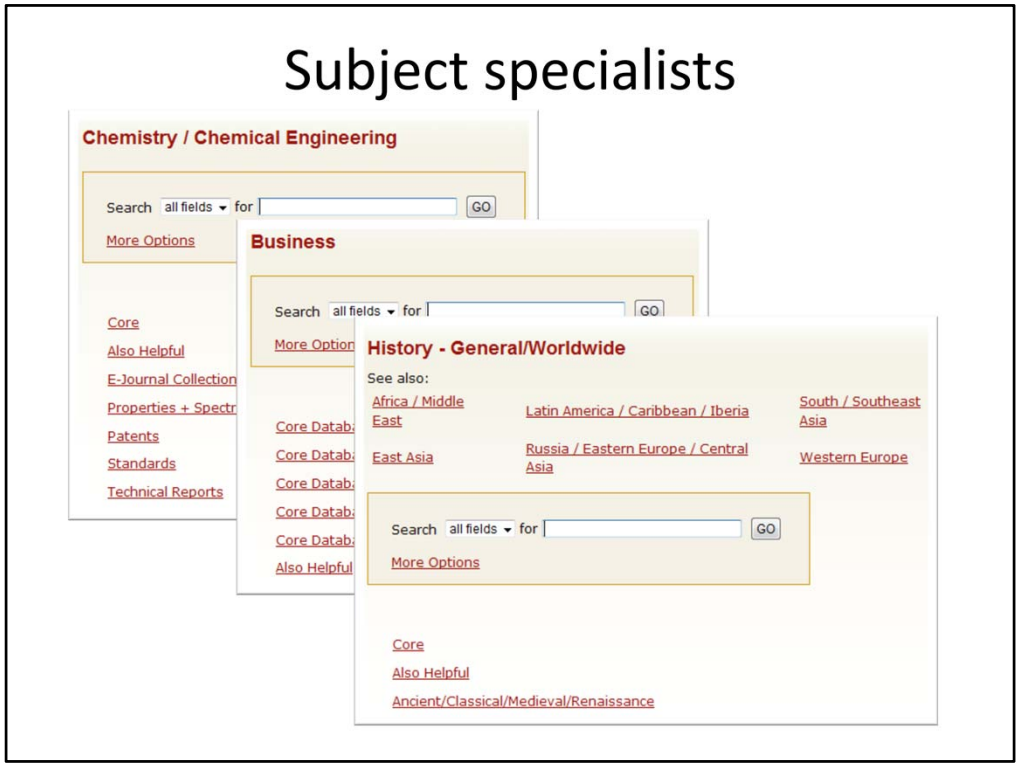
Drafts of the overall subject page were put into place on the test server and drafts each individual subject page were created in word documents for easy updating before we made changes online.



Todd and Annie visited subjects specialists at almost all of our campus libraries to get input on the drafts. At larger libraries we met with liaisons and / or bibliographers. Librarians from across campus used their knowledge of their subjects and patrons we serve to edit our draft. Some examples included:

- Labeling Consumer Science and Human Development and Family Studies as Family Studies
- On our campus, architecture is more related to Art and Art History as we don't have an architecture program, so people who study it are interested in it as an art while landscape architecture is more related to urban planning
- We have a HUGE number of history resources and nothing in World History is core to US history and vice versa
- Not all engineering could be covered in one subject area but the nine engineering departments could be broken down into four or five areas based on resources some of them could be merged with areas outside of engineering (Chemistry / Chemical Engineering)

In order to keep this page at a manageable size, we tried to keep everyone focused on the resources rather than the department they represent and we tried to keep names general so patrons did not expect to see the name of the department they are in.

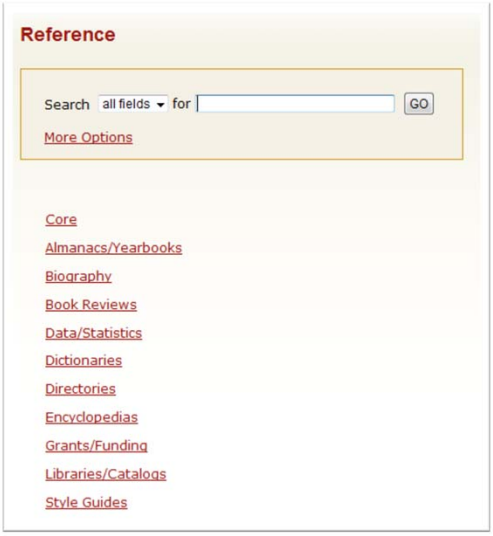


Once the top level of a subject was decided, subjects specialists were left with a word document mock up of a subject page. They were asked to break down their resources by Core resources (which would be the default for the metasearch) and other subcatagories that were useful to their subject page. In some cases, there were a number of subject specialist for each page and in that case they were expected to collaborate on this break down.

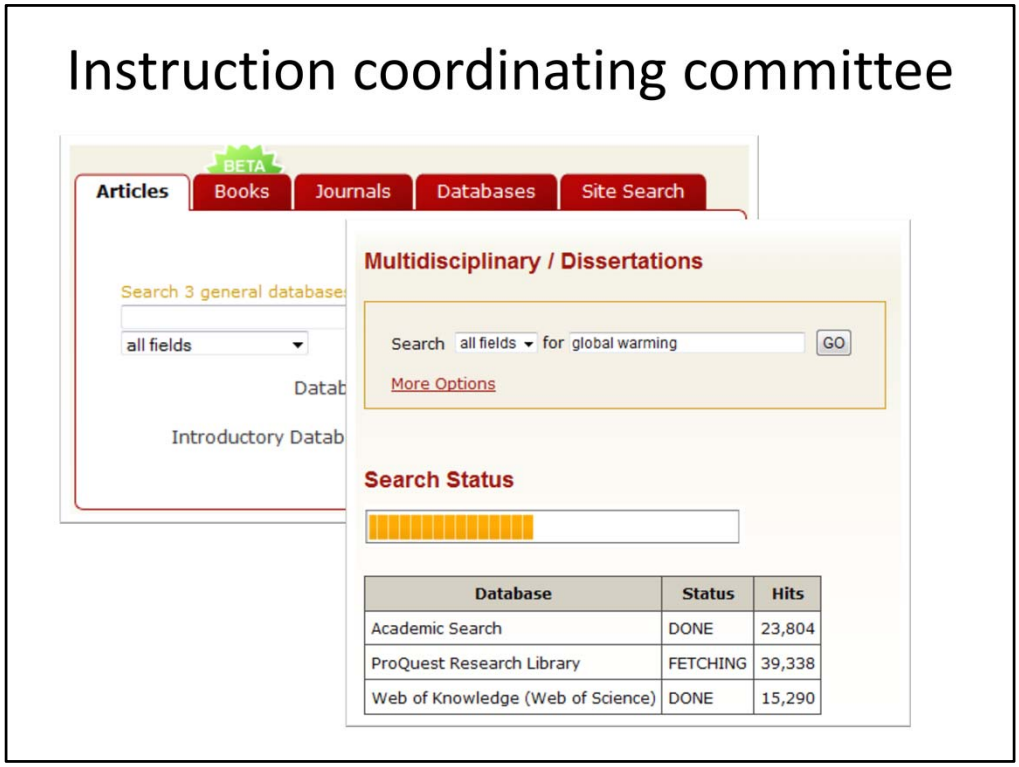
These are a few examples of sub-categories in different subject areas:

- Chemistry / Chemical Engineering includes Properties + Spectra
- Business includes sections for company financials and market research
- World History includes links to the area specific subject pages

Reference coordinating committee



One of the coordinating committees that we met with was the Reference Management Team who coordinates reference service and policy across campus. They were particularly interested in how reference material would be organized and how generalists would be able to use the subject pages for general reference questions.



Another coordinating committee that we met with was the LILI Coords who coordinate instruction across campus. They were particularly interested in the “articles” tab on our home page – a feature for quick searching – would work with the implementation of Xerxes.

They helped us select databases for the core Multidisciplinary search which would also be the search from our home page.

Once implemented, LILI Coords worked to integrate Xerxes in teaching though out the libraries.

User testing

1. Recent research
2. Commenting on interface design
3. Specific tasks

Once we had made revisions based on the subject specialist and coordinating committee input, we began around of user testing. The tests were administer to approximately 15 participants from across campus. The participants represented faculty, staff, graduate students and undergrads.

The user testing had three parts

1. The users were ask to perform a research task they had recently done using our old interface
2. They were then asked to comment on differences between the old interface and new interface and what they liked and did not like better
3. Lastly, they were asked to do a number of specific tasks such as locate resources about green building, find the database Academic Search and locate a dissertation in their research area.

User testing comments

"This is really cool. It's much more appealing and easy to use than [the E-Resource Gateway]."
-Mechanical Engineering Undergraduate

"I like that I can check/uncheck databases to search. The subject list is much better than the ERG...the status bar when searching is great. The peer review icon and the citing information are great."
-Library Science Grad Student

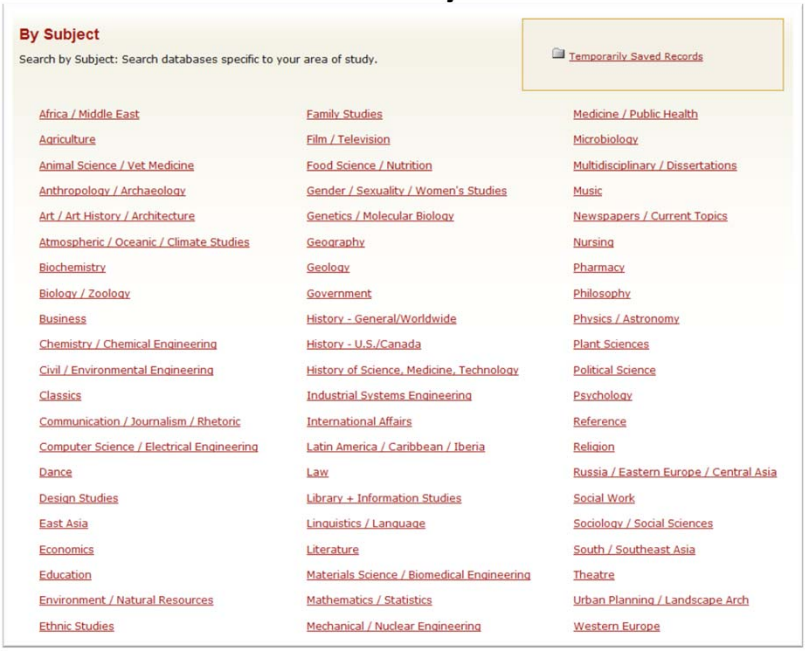
"Chemistry and Chemical Engineering make sense together."
-Chemistry post-doc

These were a few of the comments that we received. Comments had to do with all aspects of the project – how each piece worked, the subject assignments, which databases were found where, the color chosen, etc.

After taking the test results into account we made a few additional changes and recommendations for future updates.

The most significant change we made at this point was to correct the partial word search. Because Xerxes would search for partial words, when you did a search for art, to find databases about art, you received results from every database with the word "article" in its description…

Today



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And with that, this is where we are today. The process took approximately four months (not including initial installation, decision to buy server, etc).

To get here we relied on lots and lots of expertise around campus – subject specialists, librarians who work closely and teach to undergrads, reference generalists, technical expertise.

Priorities going forward

- Distinguish format versus subjects
- “Value added” box
- Language

We recently completed another round of assessment as we have been using Xerxes for a year. This test was only administered to undergraduates and graduate students who work in the library so it will need to be expanded but some priorities we’ve set are:

- Find a way to distinguish format versus subjects – news papers, dissertations don’t fit with what patrons expect to find on a subject page
- Patrons are not reading the right hand box on each subject page – find ways to make it more appealing
- Clarify language used within the interface – multidisciplinary, subject specialist were not terms familiar to the undergrads that took part in the user testing

Questions?

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Sue Dentinger, Natalee Hattig, Kerry Kresse,
Anne Rauh, Curran Riley

Team members include Sue Dentinger, Natalee Hattig, Kerry Kresse, Annie Rauh, and Curran Riley.