CRRA Update
September 2009

To help keep you informed of the CRRA's activities, welcome to the first installment of the "CRRA Update." CRRA Updates will be distributed monthly to all CRRA members. Following are highlights of CRRA activities for the month of September. Enjoy!

Portal Preview/Focus Groups at Notre Dame
This month, Team Catholic Portal (TCP) hosted four focus groups with Notre Dame graduate students and faculty engaged in Catholic and religious studies, with a total of fifteen participants. The goal of the focus groups was to preview the portal with potential users and gather ideas about what scholars want and need from an online resource dedicated to Catholic research resources.

Each session included a brief overview of the CRRA and the Catholic portal, participants then had the opportunity to search the VuFind test database: http://vufind.library.nd.edu/. Our discussions focused on resources they currently use, gaps in their research resources, and what the ideal Catholic research resource would look like.

An unexpected benefit from the sessions was the enthusiasm and support generated for our project here at Notre Dame. We have been invited to meet with groups on campus to show the portal and share news of the CRRA.

In October and November, member institutions will conduct similar sessions. Pat and members of the TCP will help you organize similar sessions with local scholars. Once sessions are completed at member institutions, we will have previewed and discussed the portal with approximately 100 scholars from coast to coast. To help you get started, all documents from the Notre Dame sessions are available on the CRRA website. Documents include Steps in the process, Sample Emails to participants, Agenda, Handouts, etc. To access these documents, go to the Administrative area of the CRRA site:

1. Go to: https://catholic-portal.library.nd.edu/admin/
   User name: catholic
   Password: portal

2. Select "Documents" tab at top

3. Select "Portal Preview 2009"

Collection Policy Statement

Bob O'Neill (BC) and Alan Krieger (ND) drafted a CRRA Collection Policy Statement and shared the document with CRRA members earlier this month. They have since revised the Statement based on feedback received. Bob and Alan will submit a final draft to the Board by the end of October.

Thank you, Bob and Alan, for your work in drafting an eloquent statement that captures the CRRA's current collecting focus.

The Pilot Project

The pilot project goals have been met! We have ingested 20,000+ records into the VuFind test database, with contributions from all member institutions! Thank you all for your diligence in working to get your records into the portal.

Our next step is for each institution to identify and address common search and retrieval errors found in the test database. As you search the portal for records, if you notice any errors, please send them to Eric and Pat's attention. More on this to come …

Upcoming: ARL/CNI and ACCU in mid-October

The CRRA will be well represented at the coming *Forum on Distinctive Collections in the Digital Age*. Pat Lawton, CRRA Digital Projects Librarian, applied for and received a scholarship for the ARL/CNI meeting. Bob O'Neill (BC) and Jennifer Younger (ND) are participating with their institutional hats on, but also with a perspective of how we advance the Catholic Portal.

The Forum builds on the work of the ARL Special Collections Working Group. The goal is to focus attention on opportunities available in the digital environment for leveraging the strengths of special collections, making them more widely accessible. The co-hosts seek to bring together librarians, archivists, and others with responsibilities for stewarding special and distinctive resources, and to identify strategies for advancing this goal. Specific topics include exploring the value proposition of special collections, collaborative strategies to build cross-institutional collections, special collections as laboratories for researchers and students, integrating special collections into the enterprise and what changes with digital content? You can find out more at:
http://www.arl.org/events/fallforum/forum09/index.shtml

While in DC, Pat will be providing a demo of the Catholic Portal with ACCU President Richard Yanikoski and his staff on Thursday morning.

Please send your comments or suggestions for future updates to Pat Lawton at plawton@nd.edu.