**Method**

*Pilot: Search Engine Optimization Service within CUL Central Library Operations: Using the Google Search Appliance Logs and the Cornell University Library Logs System to Analyze Use of Cornell University Library Websites*

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**Method**

We are investigating a creating a new search engine optimization (SEO) service designed to improve the quality of CUL content in the result sets of search engines. The scope of our initial pilot CUL hosted and locally indexed content, such as library websites hosted in Drupal. If this pilot proves promising we may extend the scope of our work to CUL content indexed in other search engines (such as Google). Wikipedia (2011) defines search engine optimization as “the process of improving the visibility of a website or a web page in search engines via the ‘natural’ or un-paid (‘organic’ or ‘algorithmic’) search results”. The topic is drawing attention from university communications offices, for example, at the University of Iowa. It is also of interest to scholars themselves, in the form of “Academic Search Engine Optimization”, as Bell and Gipp (2010) call the process of trying to increase the search journal citation result rankings in Google Scholar and other search engines. Search engine optimization, and how it can distort results is also an information literacy concern, according to Fabos (2006) and Washington State University Libraries (2010). Search engine optimization appeared recently at librarian job descriptions at Montana State University, George Washington University, and North Carolina State University Libraries. One of the most ambitious efforts in libraries is at Binghamton University Library. Erin Rushton has been writing and presenting on the experiments they are doing there to increase the relevance ranking for BU Library content in search engines for over two years (Rushton 2008, 2010, 2011).

The idea in our initial research is to take the log files for a given CUL hosted site and sort the searches to reveal the most popular search terms used by patrons. With this list in hand we have a much clearer sense for what our users think they might find by typing a search into that particular search box. The second step is to manually type these terms into the same search box, review the results, and then make a best guess as to which of the links in the result would have served the user best. If a user types in “library hours” we can say with a great deal of confidence what they were trying to find -- library hours (of course, it is not always that easy). Analyzing the search results provides the base data set which will then be reported to site administrators.

**References**


Montana State University. MSU-Bozeman Faculty Position Vacancy Announcement. [http://www.montana.edu/jobs/faculty/11123-2](http://www.montana.edu/jobs/faculty/11123-2).


