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DSpace @ the University of Calgary: A digital library of gambling-related publications

Rhys Stevens

Affiliation: Alberta Gaming Research Institute Librarian, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta. E-mail: rhys.stevens@uleth.ca

For correspondence: Rhys Stevens, MLIS, University of Lethbridge, 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada T1K 3M4. Phone: (403) 329-5176, fax: (403) 329-2234, e-mail: rhys.stevens@uleth.ca

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Rhys Stevens has been a librarian at the University of Lethbridge since 2001. During this time, he has been responsible for the provision of library and web site services for the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. The primary focus of his work is to support the research needs of researchers and the general public who are interested in issues related to gaming and gambling.

Introduction to the DSpace collection

Over the past several years, the Alberta Gaming Research Institute Library and the University of Calgary Image Centre have collaborated on a project to digitally archive a selection of historical and contemporary gambling-related publications. As of June 2006, there were 289 items included in the collection which is accessible from the Institute's DSpace “community” at the University of Calgary: <https://dspace.ucalgary.ca/handle/1880/79>.

Resources selected for inclusion in the collection have primarily been comprised of

monographs (books), technical reports, government publications, graduate student dissertations, and journal article post-prints. The nature of the digital library, however, also makes it possible to incorporate multimedia formats such as video, sound clips, data files, web pages, and presentation files (e.g., Microsoft PowerPoint). It is anticipated that this collection of materials will be of interest to a variety of researchers – particularly those interested in tracing the growth and development of gambling in North America and elsewhere.

Examples of content included in the collection

Though the majority of items available in the collection were produced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there are a number of examples of even older materials. The earliest such document included is By the King, a proclamation for the better regulating of lotteries within the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland <<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/444>> which was a 1665 proclamation by King Charles II – See [Figure 1](#).

The earliest Canadian source appearing in the collection is the Lottery for building a prison, for the Town and District of Montreal <<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/442>> – See [Figure 2](#). This item is an image of an early lottery ticket printed in 1784 to raise funds for construction of a Montreal prison. As these examples illustrate, making accessible digitized materials online has great potential for improving access to a range of rare and potentially valuable pieces of gambling history.

While such historical materials have provided a rich source of materials for the collection, it should be noted that more recently published items are also included. Some of these items were never made available on the Web (e.g., The history of the law of gaming in Canada [1983] by R. G. Robinson for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police <<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/1477>>). Others were once available but have been subsequently removed (e.g., Native gaming and gambling in Canada [2001] by Kiedrowski & Associates Inc. <<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/238>>). Making such items permanently accessible online can be beneficial for scholars and the interested lay public when attempting to comprehensively review the specialized gambling research literature.

Using the DSpace collection

Accessing the Collection

Access to the Institute's digital library collection is free to anyone with a high-speed Internet connection. Users can either connect directly to the Institute's DSpace community from <<https://dspace.ucalgary.ca/handle/1880/79>> or first connect to the main DSpace site <<https://dspace.ucalgary.ca/>> and then select the Alberta Gaming Research Institute community – See [Figure 3](#) and [Figure 4](#).

Searching and Browsing the Collection

Site users can perform keyword searches to locate materials included in the digital library collection. A keyword search searches both the descriptive “metadata” associated with an item as well as the digitized “full-text” of the item. This type of search is most useful when attempting to discover resources when specific document titles and authors are unknown. Browsing is another way to locate documents in the collection. Users may choose to browse and sort items by title, author, or publication date (either chronologically or reverse-chronological). Such searches are particularly effective when specific information about a resource is known.

Matching document titles are returned to digital library users when performing either a keyword search or a document browse. Users can then select an item's title to reveal information such as the author, publisher, publication date, subject keywords, and abstract. A hyperlink to a PDF file also appears which allows users to view the digitized content. Although the primary file format for storing the digitized content is Adobe PDF, there are no restrictions on file types that can be included.

A special feature that may be of interest to researchers is the ability to subscribe to a reminder service that provides an email notification when new items have been uploaded to the gambling collection.

Digital library project goals

The primary goals of the digital library initiative have been to increase access to historic and contemporary gambling resources and to ensure the long-term availability of these resources.

Increasing Access to Historic and Contemporary Gambling Resources

The digitization initiative has helped to further the Institute Library's mandate of supporting the research activities of the Institute and serving as a publicly-accessible clearinghouse of gambling materials. As no comparable collection of gambling-specific digitized materials is known to exist on the Internet, it is expected that this collection will play in central role in filling this identified gap.

A significant proportion of the items selected for inclusion in the collection were published prior to the mid-nineteen-nineties. As such, they were not originally made available on the World Wide Web or included in collections of content developed by commercial publishers. This means that access to such literature was restricted to physical copies (i.e., those available print or on microfilm) available from libraries, archives, and private collections.

Increasing the availability of gambling publications by including them on the Internet is only one aspect in making them more accessible. It is also necessary to efficiently locate and retrieve such documents. The DSpace search interface provides an effective means of searching and displaying the content included in the collection. In addition, the DSpace software is fully compatible with the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) metadata standards. This makes items accessible to web search engines (e.g., Google) as well as specialized academically-oriented search engines like OAIster <<http://oaister.umdl.umich.edu/>> and Google Scholar <<http://scholar.google.com/>>.

Ensuring Long-Term Availability of Gambling Resources

Gambling scholars who incorporate web materials into their research often find that online resources are regularly relocated or removed from the Internet altogether. Web pages and web documents are ephemeral and web references cited in publications are often rendered obsolete after only a few years. The DSpace software can, however, store digital documents in a way that approximates a traditional archive. It provides for long-term access to information by making use of accepted preservation techniques for digital materials. One way in which this is accomplished is by using a “handle system” that assigns persistent identifiers to each item in the collection. Effectively, researchers who cite an item's handle are assured that the item will permanently be available at the referenced web address. For example, the handle <<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/193>> will permanently lead to the digitized version of the publication *Gambling in Canada: Golden Goose or Trojan Horse?* (1988).

Concluding comments and future directions

The Institute's digitization initiative has demonstrated that it has the potential to be an invaluable source of gambling-related material. Digital collections offer the promise of greatly increasing the availability of materials previously inaccessible to many researchers. An added benefit provided by this project is that access can be provided in a way that also facilitates stable and secure digital archiving of materials.

The nature of the DSpace software tool used to build the digital library also allows it to be used in various other ways that provide substantial future value to both the gambling research community and general public. For instance, scholarly journal article “post-prints” can be deposited and archived in the collection by authors or author designates. This “self-archiving” function has become an increasingly accepted method of scholarly communication in academia and serves to increase the impact of research and its uptake.

At the present time, it is difficult to accurately assess the ultimate value of this

project to the research community. It is anticipated, however, that as the number of items in the collection increases and as awareness of the project grows, the lasting value of the collection will become readily apparent.

Figures



Figure 1

By the King, A Proclamation



Figure 2

Lottery for building a prison, Montreal,
February 1784



Figure 3

Alberta Gaming Research Institute DSpace Community



Figure 4

University of Calgary DSpace Home Page