

Examining Networked Resources

Selection of networked electronic resources involves evaluation of content, presentation, and technical requirements as well as business arrangements, and service impacts. The following checklists should assist in the decision-making process.

Content Checklist

Note: This checklist focuses mainly on those aspects of content evaluation that are unique in networked resources. An assumption is made that subject selectors will apply general content evaluation procedures to networked resources as they would to any other resource.

Consider:

_____ Accuracy and completeness as compared with print equivalent, if available

_____ Timeliness of updates

_____ Years of content. Do years roll off of product? Is that acceptable?

_____ Overlap with materials already owned or accessed by Library

_____ Whether networked access is needed for this content

_____ Stability of content for aggregate files (do files come and go?)

Presentation Checklist

Note: This checklist focuses on presentation evaluation. It can be appropriately used to evaluate between several interface presentations of the same data as well as help assess the quality of a single interface.

Consider Generally:

_____ Ease of novice use

_____ Ease of familiar use

_____ Ease of sophisticated use

_____ Different searching levels (novice/expert). Does this affect above?

_____ Screen layout, use of color, browse functions

_____ Ease of movement among various parts of search interface

_____ Whether electronic version enhances access significantly over paper format, if available

_____ Whether there is unnecessary rekeying of searches

_____ Response time

Consider Searching:

_____ Boolean searching

_____ Natural language searching, if present (acceptable algorithm?)

_____ Relevance searching, if present

_____ Ability to search a basic index

_____ Include abstracts

_____ Include full text

_____ Ability to search specific fields

_____ As appropriate—ability to search for:

_____ Author

_____ Title

_____ Subject

_____ Controlled Vocabulary (Thesaurus)

_____ Source/Citation data

_____ Full-text

_____ Other fields

_____ Ability to combine previous searches

_____ Ability to modify previous searches

- _____ Ability to delete searches from search history

- _____ Existence of year groups (file segments)

- _____ Ability to search in combined year groups (file segments)

- _____ Ability to limit by:
 - _____ Language
 - _____ Year
 - _____ Country of origin
 - _____ Local holdings
 - _____ Reviews
 - _____ Full text available
 - _____ Others specific to database

- _____ Whether indices are browsable

- _____ Truncation (right/left/internal)

- _____ Ability to carry search from one database or file to next

- _____ Multifile searching

- _____ Cross-searching with files in other interfaces

_____ Ability to save searches and re-run at later date

_____ Whether system can save searches, automatically run them, and deliver results via email or another notification mechanism

Consider Retrieved Records:

_____ Display options (alphabetic? chronological?)

_____ Brief view

_____ full view

_____ user defined view?

_____ Sort options

_____ Ease of movement from list to single record to full text and return

_____ Whether links to other files and databases are enabled

_____ Ability to mark records, create sets

_____ Ability to email

_____ Pages

_____ Parts of pages

_____ Full documents

_____ Ability to download
_____ Pages
_____ parts of pages
_____ full documents

_____ Interaction with citation management software

_____ Ability to print
_____ Pages
_____ Parts of pages
_____ Full documents

_____ Whether oversize documents can be scaled down for printing (Is there anyplace on campus where color, oversize printing available?)

_____ Whether viewing or printing
_____ Are all ASCII and marked-up text properly aligned and free of corrupting control characters?
_____ Is the document layout itself preserved with all of its special characters, fonts, and graphics intact?
_____ Are page images completely legible?
_____ Do page images retain attributes of original document? (Color, gray-scale?)

_____ Full-text options

_____ Full content? (graphics, tables, special symbols)

_____ Explanation of partial content for user?

_____ Bitmapped images of documents viewable through standard client software?

_____ Are page images completely legible?

_____ Is text in standard formats that support both text and graphics (e.g., HTML, PDF)?

_____ Are multiple image formats provided? (e.g., different quality images for browsing, reading, examining details).

_____ Is there a table of contents or document outline allowing jump to specific page?

_____ Ability to flip through pages (jump to beginning, jump to end)

_____ Are there links to the finer organizational components of a document (e.g., chapters, list of references, appendices).

Consider Help and other issues:

_____ Help, system messages

_____ Online help context sensitive?

_____ Printed documentation? (useful?)

_____ Online Tutorials?

_____ Helpful Error messages?

_____ Online Thesaurus

_____ Auto-mapping to thesaurus terms

_____ Whether source lists for titles covered or provided are available
_____ Integrated into interface or separately listed?
_____ List years of coverage by title?

_____ If simultaneous users-logout easily accomplished (if applicable)

Technical Checklist

Note: This checklist focuses mainly on technical issues that a selector may want to initially investigate. It is not intended to be a comprehensive list of items needing consultation with systems staff prior to decision-making.

Consider:

- _____ Required authentication
 - _____ Identification other than IP address or domain names?
 - _____ Password needed?

- _____ Ability to customize locally
 - _____ Items obviously needing immediate customization

- _____ Whether interacts or can be encouraged to interact with overarching meta-interfaces
 - _____ With meta-interface designed to create interlinks between existing interfaces
 - _____ With meta-interface designed to replace existing interfaces

- _____ Whether uses telnet/www clients
 - _____ Functions correctly with which telnet clients?
 - _____ Functions correctly with ITS provided clients?

- _____ Other required clients

- _____ Local Loads
 - _____ Frequency of updates

- _____ Ease of security, virus control, etc. of locally maintained hardware/software

- _____ If needed hardware already exist in the library or on campus

- _____ Memory needed for optimal operation

- _____ Hard disk space needed for optimal operation

- _____ Technical expertise needed for software installation and maintenance

- _____ Whether data formats follow industry standards

- _____ Whether vendor provides technical support during library working hours

- _____ If vendor supplies analytics, whether format is standard and a loader easily created.

Licensing and business arrangements Checklist

Note: This checklist focuses mainly on those aspects of business evaluation that are unique in networked resources. An assumption is made that subject selectors will apply general business/acquisition evaluation procedures to networked resources as they would to any other resource.

Consider:

_____ Whether use restrictions in license acceptable

_____ Whether other terms in license acceptable

_____ IP address/domain name authentication (anything else, see technical)

_____ Whether archive/backfile available

_____ Lease/Purchase
_____ What perpetual rights do we have?

_____ Cost
_____ Compare with costs of print equivalents
_____ Additional costs for future upgrades?
_____ Bundled resources?
_____ Are backfiles one time cost or ongoing?
_____ Consortial pricing?

_____ Whether consortium (NERL, other) interested

Vendor

Reliability and business record
Support services offered (including training)
Customer support during library working hours
Alternate vendors of same database

_____ Trial period before purchase

_____ Whether vendor supplies analytics for aggregated files

_____ Whether vendor offers training

For staff
For patrons
Timeframe after signup

_____ Whether vendor offers training passwords when simultaneous user limitations exist for resource

_____ Whether vendor provides training documentation

Service Impacts

Note: This checklist only covers service impact generally. Specific issues of interest to a particular service area should be solicited from that area.

Consider:

- _____ Impact on library services
 - _____ Instruction and User Guides
 - _____ ILL
 - _____ Reference
 - _____ Acquisitions/invoice payment
 - _____ Cataloging
 - _____ Publicity

- _____ Impact on library space
 - _____ Disposition of print to off campus or discard of duplicates