

by *Ralph Lee Scott*

Google Print

Google is working on a project to digitize much of "the world's information" through two main projects: the Google Print Library Project and the Google Print Publisher Program. While these two projects are still in the start up stage, the Google Print is currently available via a beta test version at: http://print.google.com. Google Print differs from Google Scholar in that Google Scholar attempts to index and present scholarly articles from professional literature, while Google Print provides the full text of print books. Google Scholar may however index the title and contents of a book, but the reader will have to go to Google Print to read the full text of the book.

The Google Print Library Project is attempting to digitize the libraries of Harvard, Stanford, Oxford and Michigan universities as well as the New York Public Library. Google Print Publisher on the other hand partners current publishers and book readers with a combination electronic content delivery and bookseller interface. Readers have a choice between buying the book online or reading selections via their computer. The beta version of Google Print presents readers with both books still in copyright and those in the public domain. The public domain titles can be paged through their entirety. Copyright works however have limitation on how much of the text you can view. For example looking at "The Definitive Journals of Lewis and Clark: From Fort Mandon to Three Forks", copyright by the University of Nebraska Press, you can search for entries on buffalo, and Google will supply the relevant text pages. Google will however not allow you to page through the entire volume. The search term is highlighted in the text. The search screen also offered me an opportunity to search for buffalo on eBay and as well to purchase the book from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Booksense, and Froogle. Another search on "the legend of sleepy hollow" produced several current editions and an entry in The Complete Idiot's Guide to American Literature." The idiot's entry had general information about Washington Irving and the hint not to confuse Washington Irving with John Irving! At this point I had exhausted my "free" pages on Google Print I guess, because the system next asked me for my Google account ID and password. After typing in the ID and password I was able to look at a few more pages in each.

If you want to get some quick information from printed works, then Google Print is a neat way to find stuff fast. However, it does place limits on the amount of information that is viewable without purchasing the book. Will this replace libraries in the future? Probably not, but it does offer your patrons a place to read selections from books they don't own at 1 a.m. in the morning. Too bad Google does not provide a link to a local public library so the readers can check to see if he/she can borrow the book as well as buy it. Maybe next year?
Google has come under fire recently from French President Jacques Chirac who is proposing a European wide consortium to confront the large scale digitization of "Anglo-Saxon" book collections. Equivalent access to the content of European national libraries is "fundamental for the dissemination of knowledge." Jean-Noel Jeanneney, president of the National Library of France, noted that "'the digitization will be inevitably marked by the American influence' and described American description of the French Revolution as 'insufficient and skewed.'"

Google does have the ability to change the language search field. One can do this through the main Google page (www.google.com) under the "preferences" link. You can select a number of languages by checking off the language under the "search language" section box or just select the "search all languages box". My experience has been that if you just select one language such as "Russian" or "French" then you are likely to get more items from that language displayed at the beginning of the search results display. If you change the setting, just be sure and return your normal Google preferences before searching the Net again.
Google print promises to be an interesting online alternative to traditional print volumes. Give it a try, you might just be surprised at the wide range of offerings.