

# 24/7 Anywhere Anytime

## Lessons from eBooks

In my first year of *Gale Virtual Resource Library* adoption, I had almost 21,000 searches for a total of 5350 total retrievals; 746 off-site retrievals. What did I learn?

- ◆ Creating sub-collections is not difficult and does not take a great deal of time.
- ◆ You can create links directly to an article in any of the eBooks – as many or as few as you need.
- ◆ Place links to these sub-collections or articles anywhere that meets your needs, on your library Web page, on a department’s assignment page or in an e-mail.
- ◆ Gale technical support can help you set up alternatives if you don’t have your own Web page.

## Is there a future for print?

So, “Is Print Reference Dead?” For us, for the most part, the answer is yes. I prefer electronic reference sources because they are available to every computer in our library, every computer lab in our building and 24/7 anywhere our students have access to a computer. This greatly increases our “circulation” – first because we never circulated our print references, and second because students tend to choose computers over print for their research.

Beyond the convenience factor of electronic reference, the teachers appreciate the flexibility of these resources. We can easily make assignment-specific groups of books and “shelve” them with links on our library Web site, on Blackboard, in e-mails or anywhere else that works for us. We also like the reliability of e-reference. We always know where the book is. We know we won’t find a page torn out or a volume missing.

I think there will always be a place for a well-chosen print book – I would choose a printed library science volume because the 3 librarians can easily share and indeed can loan it to our sister school’s librarians – but the accessibility, flexibility, reliability and ease of electronic reference makes it the “go-to” answer to most of our reference challenges.



Pat Luebbe

## About the Author

Pat Luebbe is “Librarian Emeritus” at Glenbrook South High School in Glenview, IL. In June 2007, Ms. Luebbe retired after 24 years from Glenbrook South. Recently she was called back to full-time work to fill in for an injured colleague. She was Electronic Resources Librarian at GBS for as long as there were electronic resources.

Glenbrook South High School is part of a high school district in Glenview and Northbrook, IL – a suburb north of Chicago. GBS is in a generally affluent area, but their student body is diverse. The school is large – over 2600 students - over 28% are minorities and 13% are low income. They have 215 teachers, 78% of whom have master’s degrees.

# Is Print Reference Dead?

## A Librarian's Perspective

by Pat Luebbe

I became a librarian because I loved books and I love to read. These things are still true, but I fell in love with something new along the way. I love electronic reference!

The Reader's Guide was "it" for ages, and teaching my students how to use it didn't change because the Reader's Guide didn't change. Encyclopedias were "it" too. They didn't change much as time went by either.

Then along came computers and electronic resources. The first time I saw a CD-ROM encyclopedia (Compton's by Encyclopaedia Britannica) I knew I would never own a print encyclopedia again, even though I was a librarian and had grown up in a house with an encyclopedia. It was just too cool for words.

I still feel the same way about electronic resources. But was this the death knell for print reference? I don't think I would have said that it was at the time.

Now consider electronic periodical databases. How cool is it to search for magazine articles and be able to use five keywords...or more? The Reader's Guide only lets you look up a subject and then one level of subheading. You couldn't add more words to narrow a subheading search.

CD-ROM encyclopedias and periodical databases were "it" for a while. Then they were delivered online. Wow! More and more resources became available online. I loved them all.

One day, my Gale rep talked to me about electronic reference books. Not the eBook that requires a special reader or that only one patron can access at a same time. No, these were real, live reference books that couldn't be lost or stolen. No one could tear out the pages. Or spill cola on them. And though Susie is currently using Vol. 7, everyone else can use Vol. 7 at the same time.

At Glenbrook South, we never circulated our print reference. We made this decision to keep our reference books available to our students at all times in school. But this new electronic resource could be used at home 24/7. It was a little extra money to buy one of these new eBooks from Gale, but I decided to give it a try. And one of our assignments presented the perfect challenge to test an eBook's effectiveness.

### Challenge: Everyone wants the same book at the same time

We had 14 sections (32 kids per section) of Biology doing the same cancer report at the same time. That's nearly 450 students

- ◆ We owned two encyclopedic cancer reference books
- ◆ Perhaps two students per period were able to use each book each day, which amounted to 28 uses of each book during the assignment
- ◆ We couldn't circulate the encyclopedias because they were so in-demand for the report.
- ◆ Because of the demand and kids' busy schedules, frequently the students had only one chance to access the print resources during the assignment period



▲ Glenbrook's Library homepage



▲ All students of a particular class can access simultaneously

## Solution: Gale Virtual Reference Library (GVRL)

- ◆ Our first eBook purchase from GVRL was the *Gale Encyclopedia of Cancer*
- ◆ Two classes per period for seven periods began using it immediately
- ◆ Students liked the immediacy of the computer instead of waiting for the book
- ◆ Teachers liked the reliable content as an alternative to surfing the wild and woolly Web
- ◆ Librarians liked that the eBook worked so effectively for students and teachers
- ◆ We had more than 900 retrievals that first year – a number we could never achieve with a print reference

## Authoritative, indestructible and always available

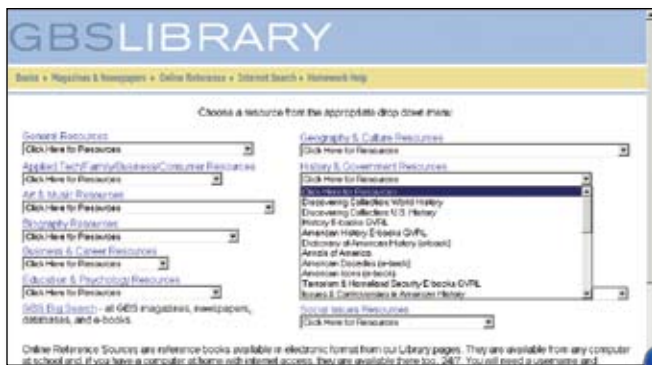
Another success story took place in our Psychology classes. We purchased the *Gale Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders* to answer a need we had with an existing assignment. The teacher was thrilled. He asked us to demonstrate the use of the eBook soon after the purchase. He was so enthusiastic about the resource that the students couldn't help but see using it was a good thing for them in many ways. We introduced *Psychologists and Their Theories for Students* recently to equal success. This teacher has told colleagues and is helping the eBook cause.

When I was in graduate school, this kind of thing was referred to as “missionary work.” We go out into the faculty and find a colleague who is interested in our mission. We make it work for them and their success becomes our success. The flexibility of GVRL and *Gale PowerSearch* make the mission easier.

We had purchased about 50 individual titles or volumes before we purchased a bundled package through our library system. Now we have over 400 GVRL eBooks. We also have about 30 eBooks from other vendors.

We organized all of our electronic resources on our library Web page. Everything is categorized, but the cool thing is that something can appear in more than one place. You can't shelve a book in more than one place.

Subcollections are the greatest thing since sliced bread. Group books any way you'd like. Books can be in more than one subcollection. It's easy to do, and it really lets you customize your collection.



▲ Glenbrook South sub-collections pages

## My “aha” moment

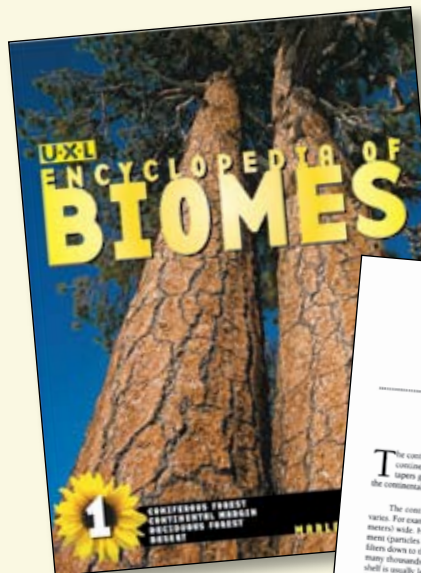
Recently I had an “aha” moment. A language-assisted class working on biomes was scheduled into the library, and I knew that *U•X•L Encyclopedia of Biomes* would be just what they needed. That got me thinking about all of our students reading at a lower level. I decided to make a group (sub-collection) of all of our *U•X•L* titles. In fact, I made a group of all *U•X•L* science titles and another with all of our *U•X•L* history titles. We now have these three sub-collections to market directly to the teachers of these students.

There are currently 315 volumes and 81 *U•X•L* titles in *GVRL*. These books are written at the 7th-grade level, but are right on target for the high school student’s needs. Using the sub-collection feature allows us to target specific portions of our collection directly to appropriate groups of students and their teachers.

## Gale PowerSearch for more success

Gale’s *PowerSearch* allows you to create a custom collection of periodicals and eBooks.

Glenbrook South has a law collection that was designed to meet the needs of our debate program a couple of years ago. It includes all law periodicals/journals in *General OneFile* in a group made for us at the time by Gale. It also includes all of the law eBooks in our *GVRL* collection. Both periodicals and eBooks can be searched together. This custom collection was just what we needed for debate that year. And it’s still getting used today.



*U•X•L Encyclopedia of Biomes*  
Book Version



*U•X•L Encyclopedia of Biomes* *GVRL* Version

