CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW
NetLibrary eBook Database
April 2008

In April 2008, selected members of the Council of Chief Librarians, Electronic Access to Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of the NetLibrary eBook database.

The NetLibrary eBook database includes over 150,000 titles from a wide range of publishers. NetLibrary also has e-audiobooks and e-journals; however, this review will only discuss the eBooks.

Each reviewer independently, or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staff, reviewed and evaluated the NetLibrary eBook database. Though other faculty and/or staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member only and not transferred to another. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the service to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT RANKINGS

#1 --- Not Recommended
#2 --- Recommend with reservations as noted
#3 --- Recommended
#4 --- Outstanding offer and opportunity

OVERALL ASSESSMENT 3.5, 3.5, 3.5

Is the product suitable for community college students?

> The sub-committee rated the following elements using a scale ranging from 1 (Not recommended) to 4 (Outstanding offer and opportunity). The following attributes were considered in this the Overall Assessment rating:
> - Information Database
> - Search Interface
> - User Support Services
> - Cost and
> - Accessibility of Service

The NetLibrary eBook Database received an overall 3.5 rating and none of the elements were rated at less than 3: Information Database (3.5), Search Interface (3.5), User Support (3.0), Cost (3.5), Availability/Accessibility of Service (3.0).

NetLibrary draws from a wide range of publishers, offers selection choices that grant individual libraries and consortia the ability to hand pick the most appropriate resources for their users, offers purchasing options that are well suited to the budgets and needs of community college libraries, and offers reliable access to full-text resources 24/7. This resource is an excellent value for most community college libraries.

DATABASE FEATURES RANKINGS

#1 - - - Poor
#2 - - - Needs Improvement
#3 - - - Good
#4 - - - Excellent

The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE 3.5, 3, 3.5
Consider functionality, appropriateness of format, database content, adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

Titles may be selected for the NetLibrary eBook databases in several ways: 1) individual libraries may select title-by-title; 2) individual libraries may opt for packages of titles selected by NetLibrary; 3) consortia may select either title-by-title or NetLibrary selected packages. With the first option, libraries may create collections customized for their patrons. Given the number of titles available and the wide range of publishers, it is likely that most community college libraries will be able to create a collection appropriate for their students. The Community College League's consortial collections are selected by community college librarians and represent an outstanding value to participating libraries. Some of the publishers represented in collections selected by community college librarians are Oxford University Press, Greenwood, Wiley, Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, and ABC-CLIO.

One hundred percent of the titles selected for collections are in full-text. It should be noted that in collections including reference titles (or other superseded materials) the older edition remains active unless the title is specifically weeded.

SEARCH INTERFACE 3.5, 3.5, 3.5
Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

Users will access NetLibrary titles in one of two ways: either directly through the NetLibrary interface or through a library catalog.

The NetLibrary interface provides both basic and advanced searching options. The basic search screen is straightforward with one search box and a pull down menu allowing the user to select either full-text, keyword, title, author, or subject. It would be a useful enhancement if there was an option to allow institutional administrators to change the default search from full-text to keyword. NetLibrary titles are assigned Library of Congress Subject Headings.

Figure 1. NetLibrary basic search screen.
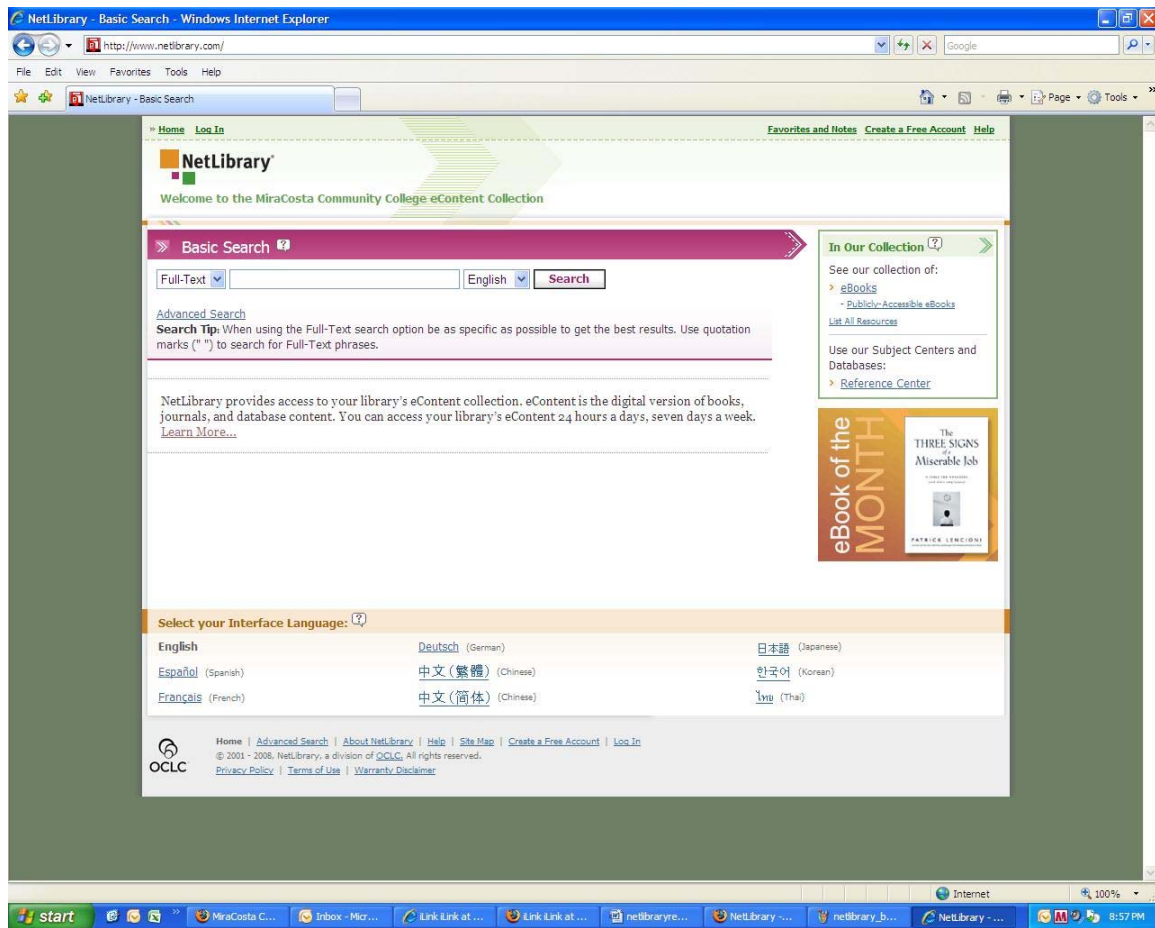
The advanced search option allows for additional searchable fields, such as publisher and ISBN. It also allows users to combine search terms, search by author, keyword, publisher, language and limit by date. The advanced search option allows users to combine search terms using drop-down menus for Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT). Search results can be sorted in chronological order, reverse chronological order, by relevancy, by title, or by author.

Figure 2. Advanced search screen.

Given that searching books is generally less complicated than searching in article databases, the basic and advanced search features offer adequate options for most users.

In addition to using the NetLibrary interface, a user may access NetLibrary titles through their library's online catalog, if the library has chosen to load the MARC records. NetLibrary provides the MARC records at no cost to the library. Having full MARC records means that the users can have direct access to each NetLibrary title through the library's online catalog. The advantage to this is that online e-Books will then be accessible to users in the same way that print books are. A user will not specifically have to be looking for an eBook to find a NetLibrary title. This should help raise the visibility of the eBook collection.

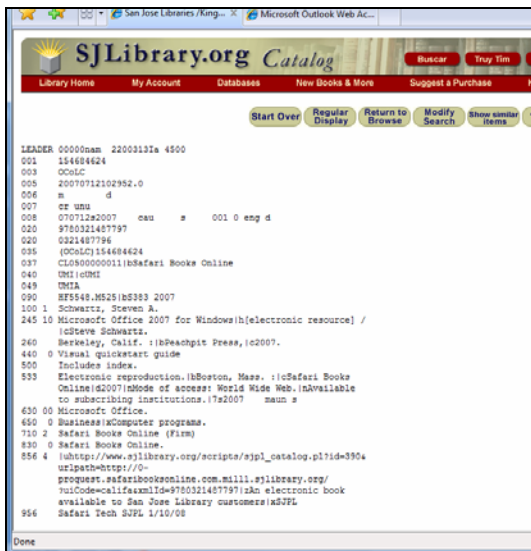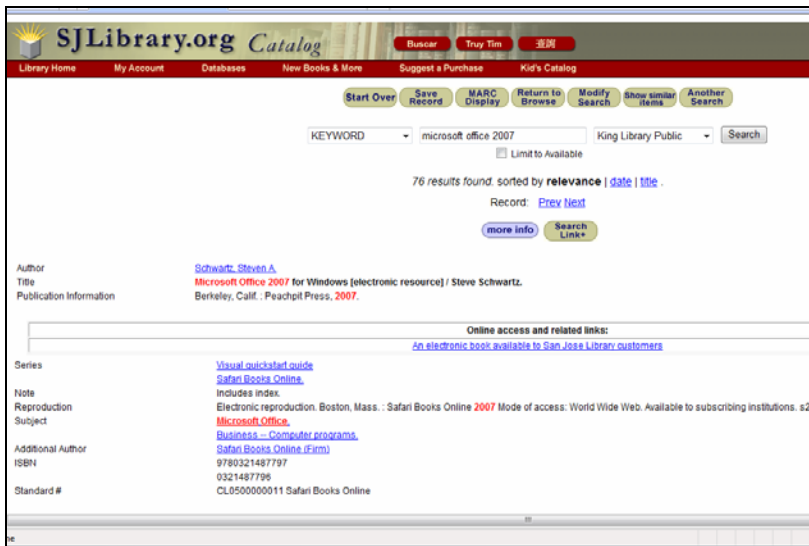Figure 3. MARC Record for a NetLibrary online eBook.

Figure 4. MARC record field 865 link to NetLibrary eBook.

Once a user selects the "view this eBook" link or similar notation (whether from a list of results within NetLibrary or after clicking the 856 link within a library catalog record), they are presented with the opening screen of the eBook with the table of contents on the left side, and a picture of the cover on the right.

Figure 5. Initial page view for NetLibrary eBook.
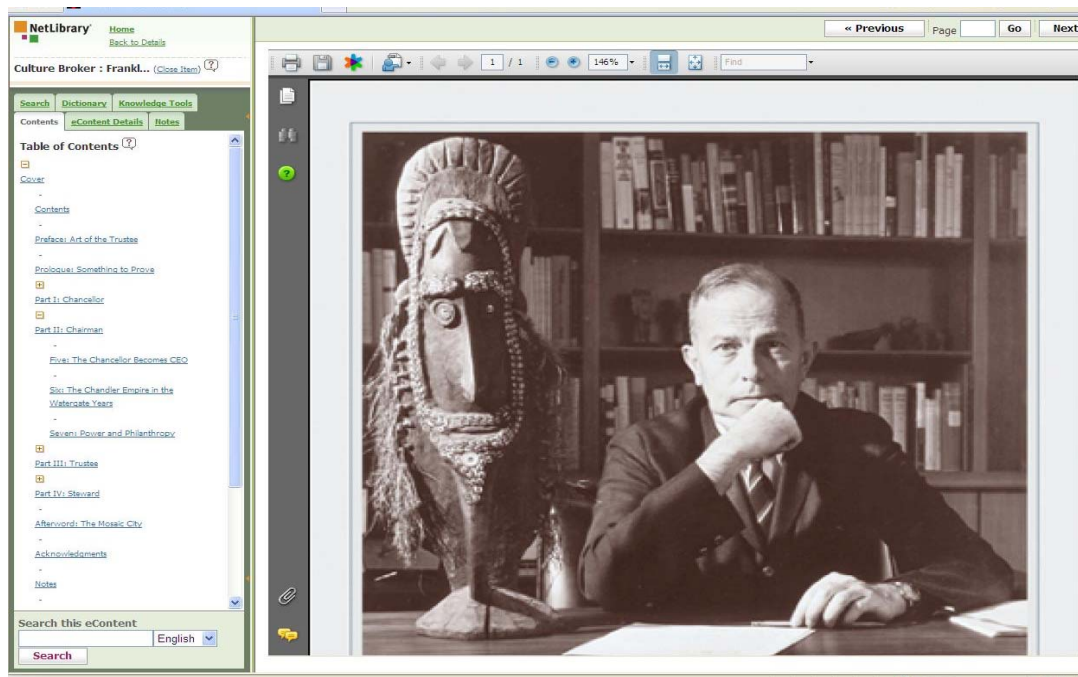
From here the user may leaf through the pages one by one (just like a print book). However, most users are likely to either use the links in the table of contents section, the book's index, or the full-text Search this eContent box. These links are present in a left-hand side navigation menu. Other clickable tabs include bookmarks, notes, eBook Info, a dictionary--and a link to online help. These options provide users with quick ways to search through an eBook, and represent a distinct advantage over their print counterparts.

There are some limits on access and printing that some users may find cumbersome: For example, NetLibrary permits only one user to check out a particular title at a time within a consortium. Also, users may only print out or save pages from eBooks one at a time (i.e. a user may not print out p. 1-20 in a single job; rather, it would have to be done as 20 separate jobs). Downloading ebooks is possible only through special arrangement between a library and NetLibrary. If this option is available, library patrons will see a link to Check Out and Download the ebook on the details page.

One advantage of the NetLibrary interface is that no special computer configuration or additional software is needed to view/download eBooks. All that is needed is a standard internet browser and Adobe Reader.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES 3, 3, 3
What types of customer and technical support are available for end users and library administrators?

NetLibrary offers support in two main places: at the NetLibrary site and the NetLibrary Support and Resources page at OCLC's website. End users will find helpful information on searching, viewing, and printing by clicking on the "Help" link at the top right hand corner of NetLibrary's homepage. This link is also available from an eBook's details page (a preliminary page that may be viewed before

clicking on the "view this eBook" link). Unfortunately, the "Help" link is not available while a user has an eBook open.

In addition to the topics listed above, users also have access to an eBook FAQ, demos, and a printable eBook guide. If a user still has a question after perusing this information, there is a "Contact Us" link which leads to an online question form.

The OCLC NetLibrary Support and Resources page (www.oclc.org/netlibrary) is intended primarily for library staff. Links provide information on pricing, remote authentication, browser requirements, participating publishers, pre-selected sets. In addition, there are customizable PR materials such as table tents, flyers, and e-mail announcements. Web banners are also available for download.

Online demonstrations are available free of charge, but live training is generally not available.

NetLibrary customers are also able to generate their own usage reports on demand. Reports may be created demonstrating use by title or subject. In addition, users may also generate reports on turn-aways (i.e. instances where a patron was unable to access a title that was in use by another patron).

The only customization currently available is through the "branding services" NetLibrary provides: NetLibrary will incorporate logos and color schemes to complement your library's home page.

COST 3, 3.5, 3.5
If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

Both perpetual and subscription access is available. Standard perpetual pricing for individual titles is the list hardcover price + 55%; annual access is set at list hardcover price + 15%. NetLibrary will offer discounts periodically for specific publishers.

eBooks may also be purchased in pre-selected sets. A natural assumption would be that the pricing of the sets would be the same as list price + 55% (or perhaps even a discount would be applied since it is a bulk purchase). However, this may not always be the case. For example, the Culinary Arts subject set includes 11 titles with a list price of $859.85. The 55% surcharge brings the total price to $1,332.77. Yet, the collection set is priced at $1500. While subject sets may be a convenient way to acquire eBooks, librarians may find it more cost effective to create customized collections.

NetLibrary has proven quite willing to working with consortia. Libraries are likely to find tremendous discounts by purchasing collections through consortia. While the list price + 55% surcharge on individual purchases may prove cost-prohibitive for many community colleges, consortia are often able to negotiate a substantial discount.

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE 3, 3, 3
Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate? Is product accessible to users with disabilities?

NetLibrary generally provides reliable access, with little downtime. On the PC side, NetLibrary works well with Internet Explorer, Netscape, and Firefox. The pdf files used by NetLibrary are compatible with Macintosh-supported web browsers once Mac users download and install a third-party plug-in (Schubert|it pdf Browser Plug-in). Due to the fact that many of the eBooks are in a pdf format, page loads may occasionally be slow; this is often true for the cover as it is frequently in color with graphics.

It is important to note that NetLibrary access is based on the traditional print book model. This means that only one user may access a given title at one-time, unless a library opts to purchase more than one copy. If an eBook is in use, the patron is informed that the library's copy is in use, and they should try

to access it again later. They are also given the option of viewing the table of contents and/or requesting to be notified via e-mail when the book is once again available. While NetLibrary does allow libraries to set check-out periods, the Community College Library Consortium's shared collections do not utilize the check-out option.   This minimizes the number of turnaways patrons will encounter.   Instead, a user has "control" of an eBook as long as it continues to be used. After 15 minutes of inactivity, an eBook will again be made available to other users.

NetLibrary supports remote access by IP, referring URL, and proxy server. Users may also create individual id and passwords for remote access; however, a library may not create one user id/password to be used by all its patrons. The need for individual user id/password may prove difficult in a community college setting.

According to the vendor, NetLibrary is 508 compliant in most areas. However, it is only partially compliant with web pages requiring applets or plug-ins. More information regarding 508 compliancy may be found here:

http://www.cclibraries.org/providers/508%20section/508netLibrary.pdf

One of the reviewers met with their College's webmaster to conduct an independent review of NetLibrary's ADA compliant status. Unfortunately, as of February 2008, he no longer has access to the Bobbie software. With this caveat, his comments are as follows:

The site is, on the whole, very well constructed. Two possible concerns:

1.   A random check of images shows inconsistent or incomplete use of ALT TAGS and TITLE TAGS.

•   Hovering over the two images below from the NetLibrary welcome page revealed no ALT TAGS at all

Figure 6. ALT TAGS are absent from these images on the NetLibrary welcome page.
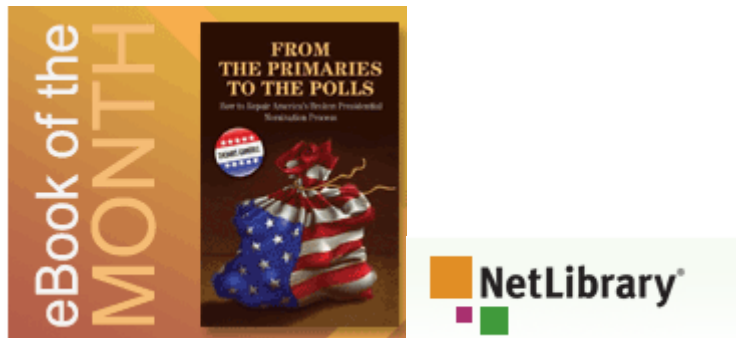
▪   Hovering over this image in the results list of a search reveals an ALT TAG

Figure 7. ALT TAGS are included in the search results

- Hovering over this table, within the content of an eBook, does not reveal an ALT TAG

Figure 8. ALT TAG is absent from this table in the contents of an eBook.

Table 21.2 Reported isolations of different potential pathogens from specific environmental sites within food preparation areas

Environmental site	Campylobacter spp.	Salmonella spp.	Y. enterocolitica	S. aureus	E. coli	Bacillus spp.	B. cereus	L. monocytogenes	Listeria spp.
Dish cloth	•			•	•	•		•	•
Cleaning cloth	•	•		•	•		•		•
Wash-up sponge	•	•		•	•				•
Wash-up brush					•			•	•
Wash cloth		•						•	
Floor mop					•	•			•
Tea/hand towel				•	•	•			

2. Another concern: the frame structure of the eBook display (hyperlinked table of contents page on the left, full content of the eBook on the right) could be problematic for older model screen readers although newer screen readers are probably up to the challenge. (Note: our reviewer did not have a screen reader himself to test this out.)

OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS PRODUCT

Brisco, Shonda. "NetLibrary." School Library Journal 52.12 (2006): 82-83.

Golderman, Gail, and Bruce Connolly. "NetLibrary." Library Journal Dec. 2004: 22-22.

Jones, M.F. "NetLibrary.' Choice Jan. 2007: 795.

O'Gorman, Jack. "NetLibrary." Booklist April 15, 2003: 1488.

O'Leary, Mick. "NetLibrary Rolls Out an Online Reference collection." Information Today: May 2003: 33-34.

Rogers, Michael. "New Purchase Model for NetLibrary." Library Journal Mar. 15, 2007: 21.