

Institution Case Study: ThinkQuest Library

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PLACE INFORMATION AND INTRODUCTORY GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Location Address-URL:

<http://thinkquest.org/pls/html/think.library>

Introduction and Location Background

Each institution is unique in its own way. The idea of this case study is to analyze its components by the following general sections and detail considerations that are either good or poor. Being a case study, observations are subjective to the observer. This introduction takes into account the following general points of consideration (not all points will necessarily apply to this institution): *location data, purpose/mission of the institution, its background/history, and general feel of the facilities on arrival, etc.*

An innovative interpretation for the merging of library and information technology, Oracle corporation created and host this open access Website for general educational purposes. As stated on the Website:

The ThinkQuest Library provides innovative learning resources for students of all ages on a wide range of educational topics. Featuring over 8,000 Websites created by students for students, the ThinkQuest Library is visited by over 30 million Web learners each year. All of the Websites in the ThinkQuest Library were created for the ThinkQuest Competition. (ThinkQuest, 2011b)

The ThinkQuest Competition is an annual competition the organization opens in September and judges in June that offers tiered awards for students who utilize technology, critical thinking, and communication skills to solve the issues of a specific project. The competition is divided in

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three separate age groups: 12 and under, 16 and under, and 19 and under choosing from three primary project focuses:

- Develop a Website in ThinkQuest Projects
- Produce an online journal/blog, a stand-alone Website, photo essay, animation, public service announcement, video or some combination of these items
- Develop an interactive application or game (with two age grouping: 17 and under, 18-22)

Awards include a combination of laptops, trips to ThinkQuest Live (an educational themed vacation in San Francisco), monetary donations to the schools with the highest participation, and internships for the top age tiers (ThinkQuest, 2011a).

The patron of the site, the Oracle corporation, is a major information technology developer mostly known for their database product-line and later acquisition of the pivotal Sun Microsystems corporation in January 27, 2010. Sun Microsystems was the company behind the development of Java and the Java Runtime Environment software, a programming language and software/compiler duo that has in many ways revolutionized how people access content from the Internet, and inter-platform compatibility—an issue that has plagued computer systems since their inception. Sun Microsystems, though a for-profit organization, was a major leader in the open source movement in the IT field; especially, with the development of OpenSolaris operating system (Stallion, 2010) and OpenOffice (Watters, 2011), a free (i.e. ‘open source’) suite of basic office productivity applications, such as word processing, spreadsheets, etc., very similar to Microsoft’s long dominate and costly Office suite of applications. Oracle, after the acquisition of Sun Microsystems, terminated future developments in these applications and discontinued support of them.

COLLECTION SPACE OBSERVATIONS

Virtual Collection

Section general rating: 4

Rating scale: 1 = bad, 2 = bad-average, 3 = average, 4 = average-good, 5 = good

This section focuses on specifics in collection management of the institution’s collection space. The general rating (listed above) took into account the following general points (not all will necessarily apply to this institution): *the virtual collections (e-books, etc.), online databases, intranet, and Internet availability; as well as the ease of access, organization, and how searchable they are.*

Specific considerations worthy of a 1 (poor) rating or 5 (good) rating are detailed below. Considerations rating 2-4 will not be as well documented. The idea is to highly document practices which can either be avoided (in the case of poor) or utilized (in the case of good) in future planning and design in either library renovations or new establishments.

The Website offered an efficient and very professional portal to access the submissions. Past submissions could be easily located and browsed, making the site as a whole a wonderful educational resource for the targeted age group.

CONCLUDING GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In conclusion, I will take into account the following general considerations that are applicable to the entire institution: *observer’s general experience, recap of what was done well, recap of what was done poorly, and what could be recommended for use in other institutions, etc.*

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