



BURKE GEOLOGY LIBRARY DATABASE



Background

The Geology Library exists to provide free resources to students, staff, faculty, and volunteers in the Burke Museum Geology and Paleontology Department. While many of the materials are also available through UW Libraries, this collection is more accessible because of its proximity to the on-going research and because a library card is not required to use the materials. This resource is especially useful to volunteers, who do not have access to many of the online reference databases to which UW subscribes.



Need

Despite existing for over half a century, the Geology Library collection has never had a complete and official catalog. This means that new users are at a significant disadvantage when attempting to use the collection. The reorganization of the physical collection I completed following the relocation to the new museum has made the collection easier to browse, but it is still tedious to try and find information. If you do not already know the publisher and approximate year the item was published, it can be almost impossible to find.



Implementation

The database was created in FileMaker Pro at the request of the organization. The database itself utilizes linked data to allow for easy browsing. It consists of five main tables: work, creator, series, article, and a join table called resource. The relationships between the tables mean that portals can display connected information from one table to another. For example, works have all their corresponding articles displayed directly on the page to facilitate searching and discovery. It also makes use of its own controlled vocabulary and fully-documented schema that allows for Burke-specific terminology and subject headings. As part of its creation, over 250 records were entered to test its capabilities.

Impact

The Geology Library database will increase access to materials for library users by promoting discoverability and facilitating searching at a level never available before. Once it is fully populated, the database will increase ease of access to materials for the volunteers in particular, who do not have the same level of access to UW Libraries as their paid colleagues. Despite the ubiquity of online library resources, many of the materials in this library are unique to the collection. Allowing the users to identify and locate these materials whenever they need will increase the knowledge available to the Burke scientists and expand the research capabilities of the institution as a whole.