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## LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ROUND TABLE NEWS

The purpose of LIRT is to advocate library instruction as a means for developing competent library and information use as a part of life-long learning.

# LIRT

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From The Vice President



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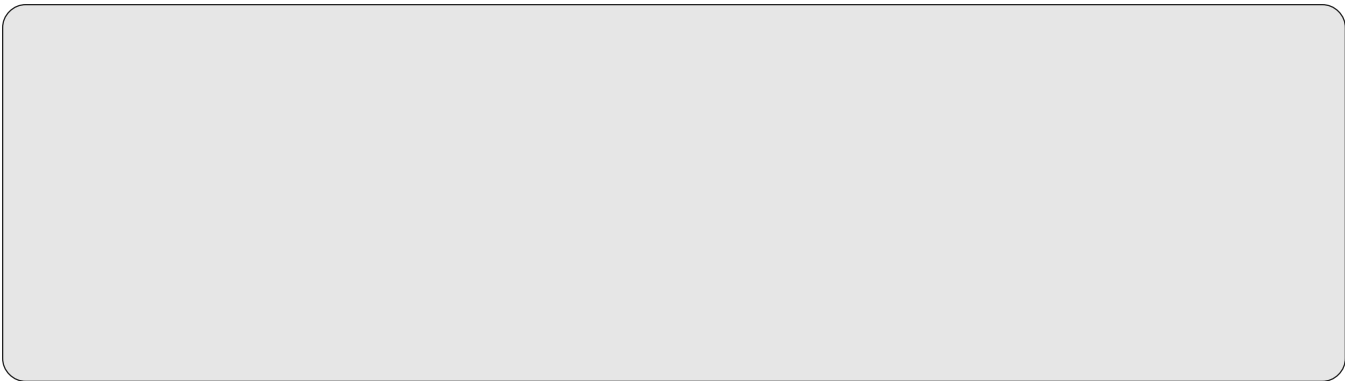
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continued on page 2

Slate for LIRT Offices, 2006 - 2007













Dear Tech Talk:

I've come across an Internet search engine (Grokker) that provides search results in a completely different way: providing them in a somewhat organized fashion. I've used it a bit, and find it a bit disconcerting. What's the deal with Grokker? Are there other similar tools? Is this the future of Internet search engines? —Grasping Grokker Gracefully

Dear GGG: Grokker, created by Groxis Inc., made its debut on the Internet in 2001, first as a desktop application and now as a web-based application, and is one of several search tools that uses clustering or visual search displays to provide a "guided" search interface. The name "Grokker" originates from the word "grok", which the Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grok>) defines as a verb that means most precisely "to achieve complete intuitive understanding" — comprehension without any necessary contemplation or explanation — and was coined by Robert Heinlein in his book, *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

What is it about Grokker that potentially gives it an edge over other search engines? It's the fact that it categorizes a large quantity of search results, presenting the searcher with clusters of information related to the topic searched; as opposed to long lists of search results displayed according to relevancy. By clustering the search results, the searcher immediately sees the individual facets of the information and is presented with immediate options for focusing on specific information needs. In the case of Grokker, the clustered search results can be displayed in one of two different ways: "Outline" (which uses descriptive text links) or "Zoomable Map" (which uses colored circles that contain other colored circles or squares). In either case, the searcher clicks on the cluster of information she wants to explore and drilling down to more specific information. With the visual representation, the "bubbles" represent a cluster of information that may contain more clusters of information (more bubbles) or may contain specific information objects (squares). Each visual cluster is associated with a text description that pops up when the mouse moves over a bubble or square.

The Grokker web site (<http://www.grokker.com>) provides Grokker search options in partnership with Yahoo!, the ACM Digital Library, and Amazon.com. Grokker technology is also being incorporated in other environments as well. Stanford University is using Grokker to provide "a single point of access to Socrates, the Stanford Library information system; HighWire Press (part of Stanford); Academic Search Premier (from EBSCOhost); Expanded Academic (from Thomson Gale); the Library of Congress; and seven Internet search engines." (<http://www.infotoday.com/newsbreaks/nb041220-1.shtml>) EBSCOhost is using Grokker technology to implement their new "Visual Searching" (<http://www.epnet.com/thisTopic.php?topicID=407&marketID=1>), which will be released in 2006. For California K-12 schools that are members of CalSAVE, Grokker is providing the opportunity to participate in a "free, web based pilot program, which

gives the school district access to a web version of Grokker in exchange for feedback about the application." (<http://www.calsave.org/companies/grokker/>)

However, Groxis isn't the only company that provides a new approach to search technology. Other "data visualization" companies include:

- x AquaBrowser <<http://www.medialab.nl/>>
- x Endeca <<http://endeca.com>>
- x Inxight (StarTree) <<http://www.inxight.com/products/sdks/st/>>
- x Vivisimo <<http://www.vivisimo.com>>

Some use text-based clustering and others use visual clustering; however, they all provide the option for the information seeker to view and manipulate large search result sets in a "guided" mode. An interesting complement to Grokker is the visual approach used by Inxight StarTree, which provides an interactive "tree" that changes the search results as the searcher focuses on and manipulates the information elements in the "tree."

Examine implementations of these data visualization technologies by exploring:

- x Clusty (Vivisimo) <<http://clusty.com>>
- x FirstGov Search: The U.S. Government's Official Web Search (Vivisimo) <<http://firstgovsearch.gov/>>
- x LexisNexis Directory of Online Sources: Interactive Map View (Inxight StarTree) <<http://www.lexisnexis.com/startree/>>
- x National Science Digital Library Collections by Subject (Inxight StarTree) <<http://nsdl.org/browse/ata glance/browseBySubject.html>>
- x NCSU Libraries Online Catalog (Endeca ProFind) <<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/catalog/>>
- x Queens Borough Public Library Online Catalog (AquaBrowser) <<http://www.medialab.nl/pop.asp?sub=maindemo>>

Many of these data visualization techniques have emerged from the world of business—not the world of libraries and information professionals. As the amount of information that companies and organizations gather and manage continues to grow, managers are looking for effective methods to maintain ongoing access to these mounds of information. In the business world, effective access to information by employees at all levels can be imperative to the success of companies. Consequently, these companies need the most effective search techniques—preferably techniques that are highly effective in sorting through large amounts of data with the least amount of effort on the part of the employees.

Library professionals are noticing these new search capabilities and considering how they could improve the automated library systems. For example, in recent years many library professionals, including Andrew Pace and

continued on page 10

**TECH TALK** continued from page 9...

Roy Tennant, have expressed dismay over online catalog







## STANDING COMMITTEES

### Library Instruction Round Table

**Adult Learners** - Assists library professionals to understand, find information or promote ideas on learning styles, teaching methods, and training resources most often associated with adult learners.

**Conference Program** - Plans the LIRT program for the ALA Annual Conference. Makes arrangements for speakers, room, handouts, and activities during the program.

**Liaison**- This committee shall initiate and maintain communication with groups within the American Library Association dealing with issues relevant to library instruction and shall disseminate information about these groups' activities.

**Newsletter** - Solicits articles, prepares and distributes the LIRT newsletter. The Executive Board of LIRT serves as the Editorial Board for the LIRT newsletter.

**Organization & Planning** - Is responsible for long range planning and making recommendations to guide the future direction of LIRT. Reviews, revises, and updates the organization manual of LIRT. Recommends to the Executive Board, and

through it to LIRT members, the establishment, functions, and discontinuance of committees and task-forces. Maintains the Constitution and Bylaws of LIRT and recommends amendments to those documents. Prepares a slate of candidates for LIRT offices and maintains records on procedures, candidates, and election results. Solicits volunteers for LIRT committees and maintains files of prospective committee appointees dates, and election results. Solicits volunteers for LIRT committees and maintains files of prospective committee appointees.

**Public Relations/Membership**  
Publicizes LIRT purposes, activities, and promotes membership in LIRT. Develops brochures and news releases to inform members, prospective members, and the library profession about LIRT activities. Sponsors an exhibit booth at the Annual Conference. Organizes BITES (meals for instruction librarians to meet for food and discussion) at conferences.

**Publications** - Establishes, maintains, and disseminates LIRT Publication Guidelines. Solicits ideas for publications and advises as to the appropriate means for publication.

**Research**  
Identifies, reviews, and disseminates information about in-depth, state-of-the-art research concerning library instruction for all types of libraries. Pinpoints areas where further investigation about library instruction is needed.

**Teaching, Learning, & Technology**  
Identifies and promotes use of technology in library instruction, with special attention given to technologies that enhance learning and can be easily adapted to a variety of different learning environments.

**Transition from High School to College**  
This committee builds and supports partnerships between school, public, and academic librarians to assist students in their transitions to the academic library environment.



### Library Instruction Round Table News

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