

# Views on Free and Fee-Based Resources on the Internet



The growth of the Internet as a research tool presents challenges to the library community. Librarians and end users are sharing their views about popular Internet search engines, databases and research techniques, assessing their impact, and debating the best use of each. In his presentation below, Steven Bell presents a strategy that encourages the best use of new technology, librarian experience, and education for researchers at all levels. Professional librarians from libraries at Princeton University, and Johnson County, Kansas continue the discussion, and offer their insights and analysis of the benefits of free versus fee-based library resources delivered via the Internet.

## I. “Don’t Surrender Library Values”

By Steven J. Bell, Director Paul J. Gutman Library, Philadelphia University,  
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### White Flag Wavers

- Abdicating long-held values connected to user education
- Are we surrendering to Google™’s domination of search?
- Is surrender easier than staying committed to user education?

### Five New Platitudes

1. Let’s Turn Everyone into Librarians
2. Good enough is okay
3. Only librarians like to search
4. Library databases are too complex
5. Change it all for Millennials

### Instead of Platitudes...Create Wise Information Consumers

- ✚ Help users know about all research options
- ✚ Collaborate with educators and other learning support professionals
- ✚ Retain core values yet adapt to new landscape

## I. “Limitations on the Kindness of Strangers: Free and Fee-Based Social Science Research in a Time of Google™”

By Susan Bennett White, Sociology and United Nations Librarian, Princeton University; ALA Program June 27, 2005

### What do the Fee-based Services Provide, that the Open Internet Does Not?

- Framed Knowledge Set
- Subject Centered Content
- Sound Sources
- Language Authority
- Consistent Indexing...
- Refereed Materials
- Useful and Uniform Formatting
- Junk Filter
- Added Value
- The Only Source

### Where do Google™ and the Open Internet get High Marks?

- Fuzzy Searching
- Quick Fact Check
- Very Current
- Government Documents
- Grey Literature

## III. “Sometimes you have to pay for it!”

By Tim Rogers, Associate Director for Operations, Johnson County Library, Kansas; rogerst@jocolibrary.org

### Librarian View 1. - We don't need to pay for content!

- There's a lot of stuff available for no charge on the Internet
- People can get to it with free search engines
- Finding seems easy
- People do it all the time and don't need a card

*more...*

## **Librarian View 2. - We need to pay for content!**

- Cool content costs real money
- Cool stuff often requires specialized finding/viewing tools that aren't free (at least at first)
- Because it's not as widely available, we need to spend to tell them it's there and how to use it

### **And really ... everything has a cost.**

- The free stuff can cost us too.
- Self-created content isn't cheap.
- Applications needed are not ubiquitous.
- Real cost = time + \$.

### ***Advantages***

#### **Fee-based:**

- Available
- Accurate
- Authoritative
- Stable
- Easy to use

#### **Free:**

- Always new
- Variety of viewpoints
- Authentic voice
- Easy to find something

### ***Disadvantages***

#### **Fee-based:**

- Expensive
- Can be complex
- Hidden in library's web world

#### **Free:**

- Inaccurate
- Not authoritative
- Unstable
- Overly complex

## How we get it funded... (strategies for funding resource purchases)

- Talk about the stories, not the title counts
- Do the math ... free stuff costs you too
- Don't just talk about your "databases"
- People remember ... give them a new memory

## How can library vendors help?

- Identify markets with us
- Joint promotion
- Lobby at the federal, state, and local levels
- Help us (*librarians*) think of the final customer
- Don't let us not let you (*assist*)

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