Reference Universe
Profile in Reference Service

"We don't know what's in our reference collections, print or electronic. **Reference Universe** *makes the connection for us."*

**Don Hartman
Associate Librarian
Reference/Collection
Development
Lockwood Library**

Name of Library: Lockwood Memorial Library

Name of University: University at Buffalo, The State University of New York

Location: Buffalo, NY

Population Served: 27,220 students; 4,000 faculty; 6,488 full-time staff

Paratext Product: Reference Universe

About University at Buffalo

The University at Buffalo (UB) is the largest and most comprehensive in the 64 campus State University of New York system. UB offers more than three hundred undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees, and was the first public university in New York to be admitted (in 1990) to the Association of American Universities, joining North America's other leading research universities. Almost 15% of students come from outside the U.S., placing UB among the top five universities in attracting foreign universities.

The University at Buffalo Libraries collectively form a major academic research library that is ranked within the sixty research libraries in North America. The Libraries include the Arts and Sciences Libraries (ASL), Health Sciences Library, Law Library, Music Library and Special Collections. The Libraries house 3.5 million books and 22,000 serials. Several "cybraries," located in the Libraries, provide access to over 500 public computer workstations and software.

The Lockwood Memorial Library, part of the ASL, is the University's research library in the Social Sciences and Humanities and is the largest library in the SUNY system. Its collections range from sixteenth-century books to the latest news reports from around the world as provided by online systems. The holdings include over 1.5 million print and electronic books, periodicals, and government documents, as well as extensive digital and microfilm collections.

Reference Challenge

According to Donald Hartman, Associate Librarian, Reference/Collection Development at Lockwood Library, the complexity of the print and electronic reference collections in today's major research libraries makes it impossible to keep track of what you have. Helping students find what they need often means starting with an overview of the subject. Finding the right source for that overview can be difficult, especially if the search involves biographical information for people not well-known or isolated historical incidents.

"Research libraries have invested heavily in building collections of specialized encyclopedias, but who can keep track of what's in them? … I want federated searching across my print and online reference collections that brings relevant articles from those sources to the top of my search results."

The Paratext Solution

Don cites an example of a history research project where a student was looking for newspaper articles on the 1759 capture of Fort Niagara. "I use *Reference Universe* all the time as the first step in helping students," Don said. "In this case I started with a *Reference Universe* search figuring that it would lead me to a good source with background information and possibly citations to newspaper articles. What I found was even better."

"The first entry in *Reference Universe* was for the *Greenwood Library of American War Reporting.* This print source had excerpts from newspaper articles about the capture. I was looking for background information but I actually found the information the student needed. Without *Reference Universe*, it would have been very difficult and time consuming to track down this information - even though it was in a reference source we own."

"As reference librarians," Don says, "we want to go to one place and be able to search across difference databases and print resources."

Why Libraries Need Reference Universe

Don Hartman says there are several reasons a library needs *Reference Universe.*

■ **Federated Searching for Reference Literature.**
"We don't know what's in our reference collections, print or electronic. *Reference Universe* make the connections for us."

■ **Visualize the Search Differently.**
Using *Reference Universe* helps you get from a narrow phase into a broader concept. "For example," Don says, "a search on Jet Lag in *Reference Universe* led to the *Encyclopedia of Sleep*. A reference librarian wouldn't automatically think of consulting that encyclopedia; *Reference Universe* helps you pick up on aspects of a subject that might not readily come to mind."

■ **Find Good Background Material in Your Collection.**
"Sometimes students are told not to cite encyclopedia articles. However, that doesn't mean they shouldn't consult encyclopedias for a solid grounding in their subject. An example of this," Don says, "is doing a search on Gray Ladies in *Reference Universe* led to the *Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits*."

Without *Reference Universe*, the student would have had to settle for what he could find on the Internet. "*Reference Universe* is a good place to start," says Don.

■ **Get a Return On the Investment You've Made in Your Reference Collection.**
"Libraries have spent thousands of dollars on reference books sitting on their shelves and e-resources available online," Don says. "Why are we buying these things if we don't have *Reference Universe*? No one's using them because we don't know what's in them."

About Reference Universe

Paratext began compilation of the *Reference Universe* database in 2003 and now works with over 250 imprints, spanning more than 11,000 reference works in English. New content is added each quarter, with the goal of providing complete coverage of all reviewed works published from 1985 forward.

Additional information can be found at www.paratext.com