

Introduction

Sevamed is a quarterly publication of the Bioinformatics Centre, JBTDRC, MGIMS, Wardha. It contains updates on Tropical Disease Research and Traditional Medicine. Sevamed has an editorial, various announcements like events, news and jokes. Its main feature is the Bibliography section, where it offers the most important abstracts and/or references for over 20 diseases - asthma, amoebiasis, ascariasis...and so on. For each disease - there is a list of references and/or abstracts on a few aspects of the disease. Sevamed is produced in print and also available on the JBTDRC website. In the Internet era, it is important to see how technology can be exploited to make the Bibliography section more interesting and have increased utility.

Methodology

In an online version of Sevamed, we should substitute a list of references with hyperlinks that will search a database and fetch highly relevant references. This methodology has two advantages

- a) The hyperlink will conduct a real time search and constantly retrieve latest references; in other words it will be self updating
- b) It will offer interactivity too; for example if the hyperlink searches PubMed, we may be able to access the abstract and full text too, if it is available free or through an institutional subscription.

There are some minor disadvantages:

- a) One needs to be connected online, to see the bibliography / abstracts etc
- b) Sometimes databases undergo some technical changes, and hyperlinks can then fetch weird results.

But overall the disadvantages can be overcome with alternative methods and some workarounds that may need to be done once a year. The advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Steps for implementation

Let us take the example of Malaria, in the October 2008 issue of Sevamed - available at <http://www.jbtdrc.org/October%202008/bibliography%20Pages/malaria.htm>

In this page there are lists of references under the following headings:

- Diagnosis, Diagnostics, Immunodiagnosis, Immunodiagnosics & Molecular diagnostics
- Vaccines
- Chemotherapy, Immunotherapy, Management & Drugs:

What we can do in the new model is to have a larger number of topics under malaria if it will be useful. For example:

Etiology, Epidemiology, Diagnosis, Vaccines, Treatment, and special topics like Falciparum malaria etc.

For each of these we can have two hyperlinks:

- Non-free references with abstracts
- Free articles

The web page will appear as below

MALARIA

Etiology	Core references	Free articles
Epidemiology	Core references	Free articles
Diagnosis	Core references	Free articles
Vaccines	Core references	Free articles

The above listing can include any number of topics for Malaria. The links will retrieve references etc from PubMed - which is a free database. An additional advantage with PubMed is that institutions can customize it, so that search results can be retrieved with relevance to their library collections.

In addition - other information resources that can be exploited by creating url for search results can be used - examples are Google Scholar, NHIC, Openmed etc.

This same strategy can be implemented for every disease covered in Sevamed

The advantage of such customization is that there can be a huge time saving for users, and a great return of investment in library collections & subscriptions.

There are of course certain primary requirements to implement the above - expertise in searching, and knowledge of the methodology. Searching PubMed for instance, is not just about keying in a few keywords and browsing several pages. Using appropriate search terms (MeSH) and other features one can fine tune retrieval to local needs.

There is a real dearth of trained professionals to carry out such efforts. But once implemented, the benefits are huge, for users, libraries and parent institutions. A collaborative exercise between trained librarians and users who will work at giving feedback can produce wonders.

A word about the print version: the print version should ideally contain only the bibliography - which can be a printout from the web version. PubMed offers printer-friendly formats that include the PMID for each reference. A reader wishing to view the abstract or full text can simply key in the PMID in PubMed and retrieve the same.

Conclusion

Sevamed should definitely explore enhancing both print and web versions for better interactivity and value addition. In the web version - there may be many more features that can be incorporated - facilitation of a document delivery service for full text through NIC's Union catalog for tracing availability and / or links to providers of such services. The biggest challenge is to select the right search strings to retrieve most relevant references for each subtopic, but the presence of organizations like QMed who carry out such projects and also train people should make it very feasible.