LINX: MANAGING EARTH SCIENCES FREE WEB RESOURCES AT MILANO BICOCCA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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The library at the Università degli Studi Milano-Bicocca has adopted the Scout Portal Toolkit (SPT) open-source software. This toolkit is used to catalogue, display, and share a collection of data about web resources. The result is the creation of "LINX – Link e strumenti X la ricerca" portal, which integrates a dedicated 'Earth sciences section'.

LINX is a collection of free resources for both education and research which has been carefully selected by the library staff; it consists of: web sites, databases, virtual reference desks and repositories etc. It is an ideal place for both members of the library and members of the public to suggest and share resources. Above all, it is available to everybody, not just for browsing, but also for taking an active part in cataloguing these resources. They are catalogued with simple and qualified "Dublin Core Metadata Elements", and can be place in order of classification in one or more categories or subcategories. LINX can also be searched by resource title, author and keywords, and browsed by category. With LINX, the library can offer its patrons,

scholars and researchers in general, a chance to share their personal 'bookmarks,' in an informal way, and moreover gain in the advantage of helping one another find their way among the many resources available

on the net.

A special feature of the LINX portal is that it allows users not only to interact with library staff by recommending specific resource data, but also to interact with each other, by way of posting comments on

any existing data. It is easy, even so when recommending a new resource, there is no need to register: users are simply required to fill in a dedicated form; the library staff can then evaluate the data, complete the description and publish it. Users will be notified when their record is published. Registration is required when users wish to set alerts, rate certain resources or add comments – ratings and comments can be viewed by other users too.

LINX also has a page called "Risorse suggerite" for logged in users, where the system suggests other web resources according to the ratings given by the same user to existing records. The university audience has the advantage of connecting to LINX from the familiar frame of the institutional library site, where the home page links directly to the portal. The choice to include only free resources means that all the data is available to everybody and at any time, regardless of location and user status.

For the Earth Sciences domain, LINX means finding useful material such as: cartography websites, directories of open access journals, repositories and websites of professional associations and institutions already selected and then grouped into categories and subcategories. The Earth Sciences category is subdivided into several subcategories corresponding to even more specific subjects, such as: Mineralogy, Environmental Geology and Oceanography.

This real sense of community is adopted by the freedom to suggest, rate and collaborate and comment. In context where today's scholars and researchers are struggling against information overload, even within a single discipline, LINX is the perfect tool in which Bicocca has chosen to help its users find the right material for their needs.