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# Providing Enhanced Access for the Oregon State University College Catalogs: A Case Study

Susan A. Kunda
Elizabeth A. Nielsen

## ABSTRACT

The academic catalog is a vital record for colleges and universities. Until the late 1980s, Oregon State University catalogs were published, distributed and archived solely in print format. With the advent of web and digital technologies, the Oregon State University Registrar's Office also began placing an electronic version of the most recent catalogs online, while the Oregon State University Libraries provided access to earlier versions of the catalog through a subscription to College Source®, an online vendor for academic catalogs. In 2006, the Registrar's Office was looking for a home for its archive of digital files, while the escalating cost of serials forced Oregon State University Libraries to cut its subscription to College Source®. The two units collaborated to preserve and provide electronic access to the entire run (1866 to present) of Oregon State University academic catalogs in ScholarsArchive, the Libraries' institutional repository. This article details this collaboration as well as the procedures and workflows for depositing digitized as well as born-digital files into ScholarsArchive (https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/jspui/) We compare the number of patron requests pre- and post- catalog placement in ScholarsArchive and describe how this project led to the OSU Registrar's Office placing additional university documents into ScholarsArchive.

The academic catalog is a vital record for colleges and universities, with long-term historical value for a variety of administrative, scholarly, and genealogical users. Archivists and campus officials have long understood the importance of the catalog, which contains general information about the university, tuition and fees, course descriptions, degree requirements, faculty lists, and, in earlier editions, student lists. In *Catalogues Are for Students Too*, the University of Michigan's Michael Radock is credited with concluding that "the catalogue is the most important single bond of communication between college students, both present and future, and through them, parents and the public at large."1

1. Committee on Catalogues of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, *Catalogues Are for Students Too* (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 1958), 1.

Fifty years later, in her presentation at the 2005 American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) Conference, Brenda Selman, university registrar at the University of Missouri, documented the importance and purpose of the academic catalog:

- Inform prospective students of the full range of curricular offerings and requirements.
- Document requirements for current degree (and other) programs.
- Guide students, staff and faculty for advising purposes.
- Historically document curriculum.
- Support student records.
- Meet policy and legal records standards.[2]

Oregon State University (OSU) recognizes the importance and historical value of its general catalog. Kent Kuo, university registrar, sees it as "an invaluable reference for any registrar's office" and describes its use at OSU this way: "We use it to help decipher old transcripts, understand grading systems, and to clarify existing conditions (e.g., academic policies) for students enrolled at various periods in our institution's history."[3]

Scholars use the academic catalog to document the development of academic disciplines and the evolution of student services, both within single institutions and comparatively among several.[4] College and university administrators rely on the academic catalog as a source for curriculum developments and academic regulations and requirements. Genealogists use the lists of faculty and students for biographical research.

Until the 1980s, the evolution of the academic catalog remained fairly stable, with institutions of higher education producing a print document that was distributed throughout the campus, mailed to select high schools, and recorded by university archive departments. In the early 1980s, registrars' offices began using word processors to produce and update catalogs, but they were still printed and distributed in the same fashion as those of earlier years. Digital technologies and the World Wide Web, however, soon led to online publication. Today, one would be hard-pressed to

2. Brenda Selman, "The General Catalog: Is It an Obsolete Concept?" (PowerPoint, presented at the annual conference for the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, New York, NY, March 28-31, 2005).

3. Kent Kuo, e-mail message to author, August 5, 2009.

4. For example, Andrea G. Radke-Moss, *Bright Epoch: Women and Coeducation in the American West* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

find a college or university that doesn't provide electronic access to its catalog, and fewer and fewer institutions are providing print copies.

But where and how are these electronic versions of the catalog being stored? Can former students and other interested parties find the matricular information they need? Like many academic institutions, OSU initially provided access to its past catalogs through CollegeSource, but because CollegeSource is a subscription-based service and available only to current OSU students and faculty, alumni and the general public were not able to use this online resource. In addition, CollegeSource only provided online access to catalogs from the mid-1990s to the present. Both the OSU Registrar's Office and the University Archives housed past catalogs (the Registrar's Office kept electronic copies; the University Archives stored print copies) and spent time fielding questions from former students and others related to the catalogs. Both campus units needed a more efficient method for providing access to these important documents.

## Literature Review

Literature about the academic catalog is sparse, with most information focused on the catalog's purpose and importance for its sponsoring institutions. Radock briefly described the disagreement among college deans regarding the catalog's purpose, listing "promotional piece, announcement, historical record, contract, mail order list, and guidance handbook" as some of those purposes.[5] Millard E. Gladfelter and The Committee on Catalogues of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers list purposes consistent with those articulated by Selman: legal document; historical record; public relations tool; and guide for current, past, and prospective students.[6]

Literature about the catalog's delivery method is also scarce. Blair Benjamin was the first to write about the ability to access the academic catalog online.[7] He describes Digital Architecture's Acalog ACMS, a vendor-hosted solution for developing and maintaining an electronic version of the catalog. There is no literature about providing online access to entire runs of catalogs.

## Project Background

In 1995, OSU Libraries (OSUL) joined many academic libraries when it subscribed to CollegeSource, a commercial academic catalog service catering to

5. Michael Radock, "The College Catalog," *College Public Relations Quarterly* (April 1953).

6. Millard E. Gladfelter, "An Evaluation of Several College Catalogs," *Journal of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars*, no. 13 (1938): 335-345; *Catalogues Are for Students Too*.

7. Blair Benjamin, "Streamlining Maintenance and Access to a University's Academic Catalog." Paper presented at the Association of Small Computer Users in Education, Myrtle Beach, SC, June 1, 2005.

institutions of higher education. This service, which includes a database of more than 40,000 catalogs, bills itself as "a comprehensive, archival PDF college catalog collection from 1994 to the present."[8] In 2006, in light of escalating prices of journal and database subscriptions, OSU's Collection Development Department canceled the subscription to CollegeSource in an in effort to reduce costs.

At the same time, the OSU Registrar's Office, which is responsible for producing the catalog, was facing budgetary concerns of its own. Several years earlier, the Business Solutions Group, an OSU College of Business "experiential learning program," created a workflow and hosting solution for online versions of the catalog.[9] Each year, after receiving descriptive and academic information from the campus community, the catalog coordinator would log in to the online editing software and update the catalog. In 2008, the Business Solutions Group contacted the Registrar's Office about the growing inventory of past catalogs. Because the catalogs were taking up too much server space, the Business Solutions Group had to begin charging for use of the space.

During this same time period, OSUL installed and began using dSPACE, an open-source institutional repository (IR) platform used to collect, preserve, and provide online access to university research and historical records. Realizing a critical mass of content was essential for success, and recognizing the difficulties other academic libraries faced when depending on faculty to fill IRs, OSUL initiated a digitization program focused on content already held by the library. The Digital Production Unit (DPU) was formed, and DPU staff and students were responsible for digitizing OSUL analog collections and submitting them to ScholarsArchive@OSU (OSUL's name for its IR).

The cancellation of CollegeSource, the dilemma of a growing inventory of electronic catalogs at the Registrar's Office, and the implementation of ScholarsArchive@OSU provided the impetus for discussions between the Registrar's Office and University Archives about placing the electronic versions of the catalogs in ScholarsArchive@OSU. Bringing the recently hired digital production librarian into the conversation was the final piece of the puzzle and the project began in earnest.

## Digitization Workflow

The DPU has an established digitization workflow, which was followed (with some modifications) for this project. Rather than start with the earliest catalogs and work forward, the senior staff archivist recommended that DPU scan the most recent

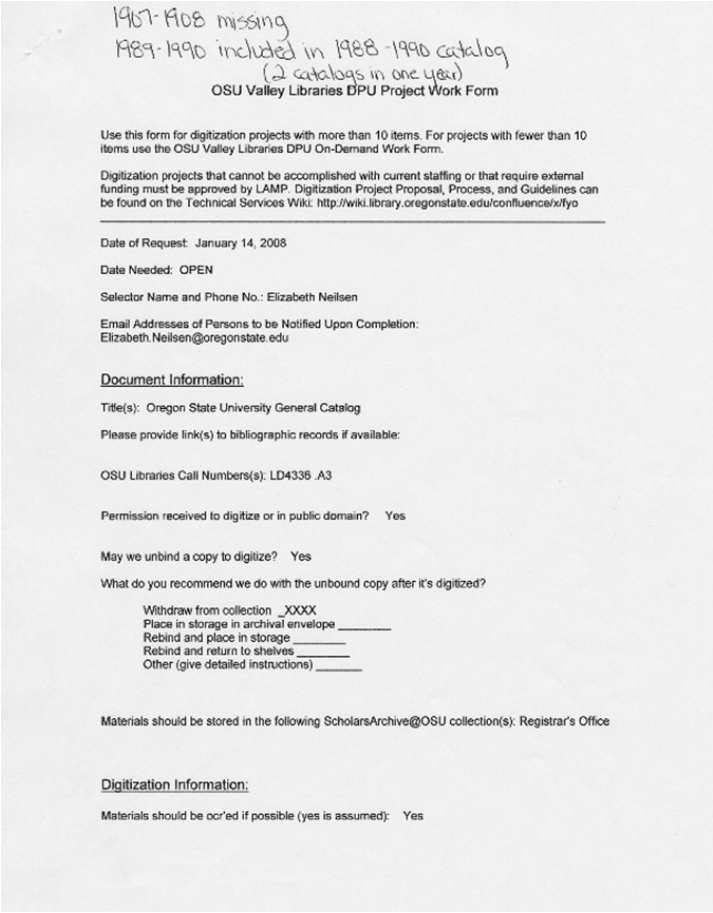
8. CollegeSource Online, "CollegeSource Online," CollegeSource, Inc., http://www.collegesource.org/ (accessed June 10, 2009).

9. OSU College of Business, "OSU College of Business," OSU College of Business, http://www.bus.oregonstate.edu/programs/bsg.htm (accessed October 16, 2009).

catalogs first and work backward in batches of twenty to thirty years. The reasons for this were threefold:

1. Demand was highest for the most recent years' catalogs.
2. Scanning in batches would allow the student scanner to use the same digitization procedures throughout the process.
3. The OSU college catalog went through several name changes, and it would be easier for the student scanner to remember the correct title when scanning in batches.

After consulting with the digital production librarian on the scope and timeline for the project, the University Archives completed a digitization project work form (see fig. 1), which includes bibliographic information as well as licensing and processing information.



1967-1968 missing
1989-1990 included in 1988-1990 catalog
(2 catalogs in one year)

OSU Valley Libraries DPU Project Work Form

Use this form for digitization projects with more than 10 items. For projects with fewer than 10 items use the OSU Valley Libraries DPU On-Demand Work Form.

Digitization projects that cannot be accomplished with current staffing or that require external funding must be approved by LAMP. Digitization Project Proposal, Process, and Guidelines can be found on the Technical Services Wiki: http://wiki.library.oregonstate.edu/confluence/x/fyo

Date of Request: January 14, 2008

Date Needed: OPEN

Selector Name and Phone No.: Elizabeth Neilsen

Email Addresses of Persons to be Notified Upon Completion:
Elizabeth.Neilsen@oregonstate.edu

Document Information:

Title(s): Oregon State University General Catalog

Please provide link(s) to bibliographic records if available:

OSU Libraries Call Numbers(s): LD4336 .A3

Permission received to digitize or in public domain? Yes

May we unbind a copy to digitize? Yes

What do you recommend we do with the unbound copy after it's digitized?

Withdraw from collection _XXXX
Place in storage in archival envelope _____
Rebind and place in storage _____
Rebind and return to shelves _____
Other (give detailed instructions) _____

Materials should be stored in the following ScholarsArchive@OSU collection(s): Registrar's Office

Digitization Information:

Materials should be ocr'ed if possible (yes is assumed): Yes

Figure 1. OSU College Catalogs Digitization Project work form

The digital production librarian set up a "General Catalog" collection under the "Registrar's Office" community in ScholarsArchive@OSU, while a metadata technician created a metadata worksheet for the student scanner. This worksheet, which is essentially the same as the data dictionary (see fig. 2), outlines which Dublin Core elements will be used and how they will be formatted. It also documents scanning specifications, file-naming conventions, and locations for the processed digital files.

**OSU General Catalogs Data Dictionary**

| DC Field | Label | Description |
|---|---|---|
| dc.creator | Author | Corvallis College (1866/1867--1884/1885)<br>Oregon State Agricultural College (1885/1886--1936/1937)<br>Oregon State College (1937/1938--1960/1961)<br>Oregon State University (1961/1962 to present) |
| dc.title | Title | General catalog <date> |
| dc.title.alternative | Alternative Title | <date> General catalog |
| dc.title.alternative | Alternative Title | Oregon State University general catalog <date> |
| dc.publisher | Publisher | Corvallis, Or. : Oregon State System of Higher Education (pre 1994/1995)<br>Corvallis, Or. : Oregon State Board of Higher Education (1994/1995 to present) |
| dc.date.issued | Publication Date | Use date on back of front cover; usually Apr and the year |
| dc.relation.ispartofseries | Series | template |
| dc.type | Type | Book; same for all items; added globally with DSpace template |
| dc.language.iso | Language | English (United States); same for all items; added globally with DSpace template |
| dc.subject.lcsh | Library of Congress Subject Headings | Oregon State -- Curricula -- Catalogs; same for all items; added globally with DSpace template |
| dc.description.digitization | Digitization Description | Use appropriate digitization specifications.<br>**Black and White** Master files scanned at 600 ppi (Black & White) using Capture Perfect 3.0 on a Canon DR-9080C in TIF format. PDF derivative scanned at 300 ppi (Black & White), using Capture Perfect 3.0, on a Canon DR-9080C. CVista PdfCompressor 4.0 was used for pdf compression and textual OCR.<br>**Grayscale** -- Master files scanned at 600 ppi (256 Grayscale) using Capture Perfect 3.0 on a Canon DR-9080C in TIF format. PDF derivative scanned at 300 ppi (256 Grayscale), using Capture Perfect 3.0, on a Canon DR-9080C. CVista PdfCompressor 4.0 was used for pdf compression and textual OCR.<br>**Color** -- Master files scanned at 600 ppi (24-bit Color) using Capture Perfect 3.0 on a Canon DR-9080C in TIF format. PDF derivative scanned at 300 ppi (24-bit Color), using Capture Perfect 3.0, on a Canon DR-9080C. CVista PdfCompressor 4.0 was used for pdf compression and textual OCR. |

Figure 2. OSU General Catalogs data dictionary

The metadata technician reviewed the metadata work form with the student scanner, pointing out various bibliographic oddities, such as title changes, catalogs consisting of two years, etc. The digital production librarian and student scanner also discussed debinding and scanning procedures to settle on best practices for these documents. The University Archives provided duplicate copies of most catalogs, allowing the DPU to debind and then scan those items on a Canon DR–9080C sheetfed scanner. Catalogs with only one copy available could not be debound, however, and would have to be scanned on a planetary scanner in a different department. OSUL scanning standards require master TIFF files of 600 DPI and

access PDF files of 300 DPI. Access files are compressed and OCR'd using CVISION's PDF Compressor 4.0.

In January 2008, the senior staff archivist delivered the first batch of catalogs (1965/1966-2002/2003) to the DPU for scanning. Catalogs from the 1990s to the early 2000s were scanned and uploaded to ScholarsArchive@OSU first, as most questions from former students centered on those years. After scanning the catalogs, the student scanner copied and pasted metadata information from the library catalog into the dSPACE submission form, attached the associated PDF file, and submitted it to ScholarsArchive@OSU. A metadata technician then pulled the submission from the ScholarsArchive@OSU workspace, reviewed the student-created metadata, and did the final upload.

dSPACE automatically generates structural and administrative metadata and attaches a "handle" (permanent URL) to the item. The metadata technician added this handle information to the library's catalog and the WorldCat union catalog so that patrons searching for OSU general catalogs in either system can find a direct link to the online versions of the catalog (see figs. 3 and 4).

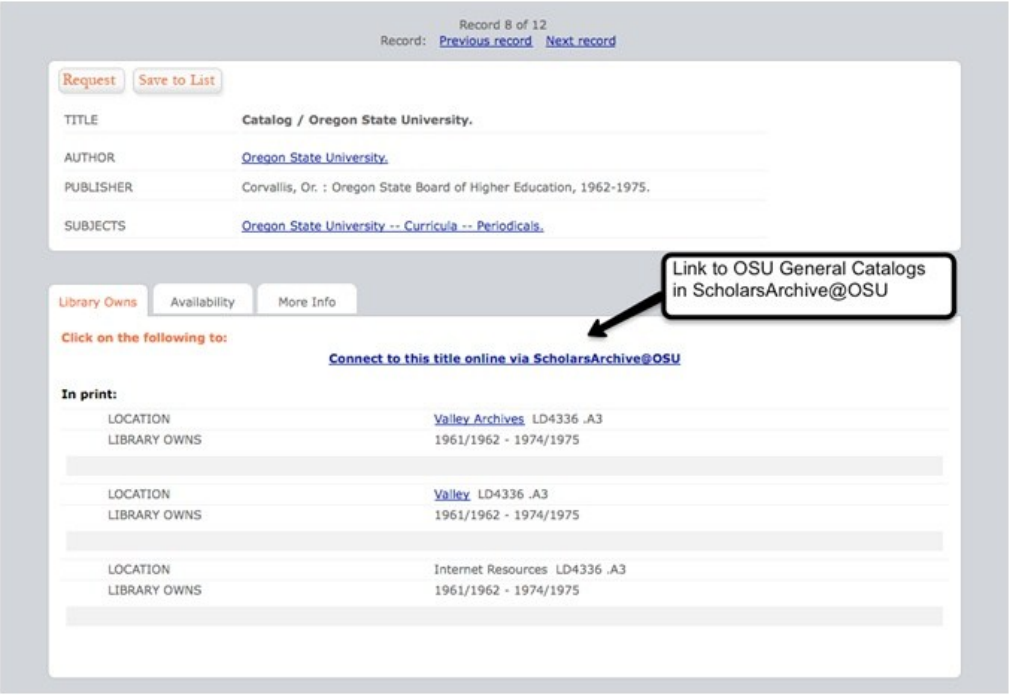



Figure 3. OSU general catalogs link in OSU Libraries online catalog

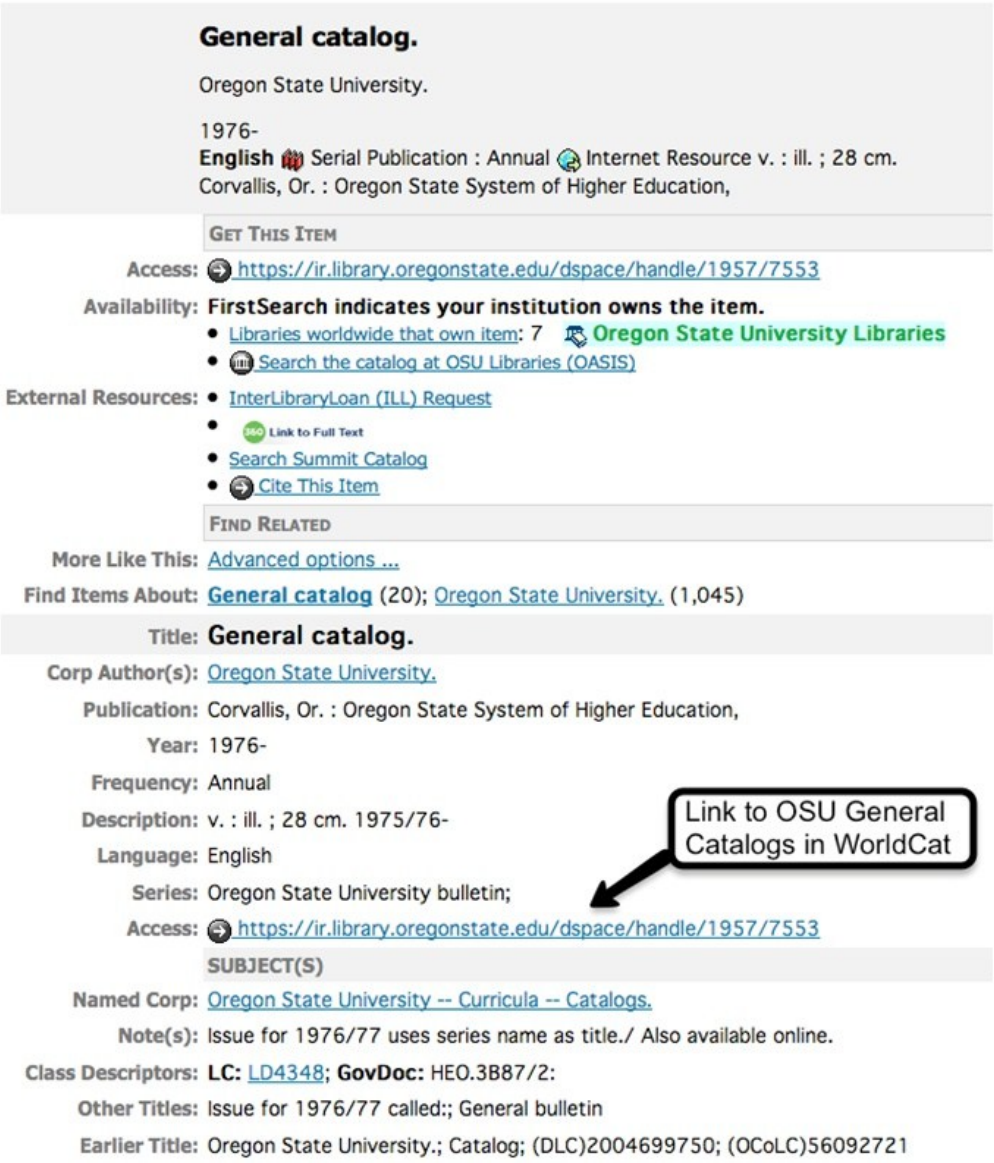



Figure 4. OSU general catalogs link in WorldCat

By July 2008, all catalogs in the first batch were available online via ScholarsArchive@OSU. The Registrar's Office then uploaded the born-digital files for the 2003/2004-2008/2009 catalogs, giving OSUL a complete run of catalogs from 1965/1966-2008/2009 in ScholarsArchive@OSU. University Archives delivered the second batch of catalogs (1900/1901-1963/1964) to DPU; by October 2008, those catalogs were also added to ScholarsArchive@OSU. Three months later, the catalogs

from the 1890s were added, and the remainder of the catalogs was uploaded by June 2009 (see fig. 5).

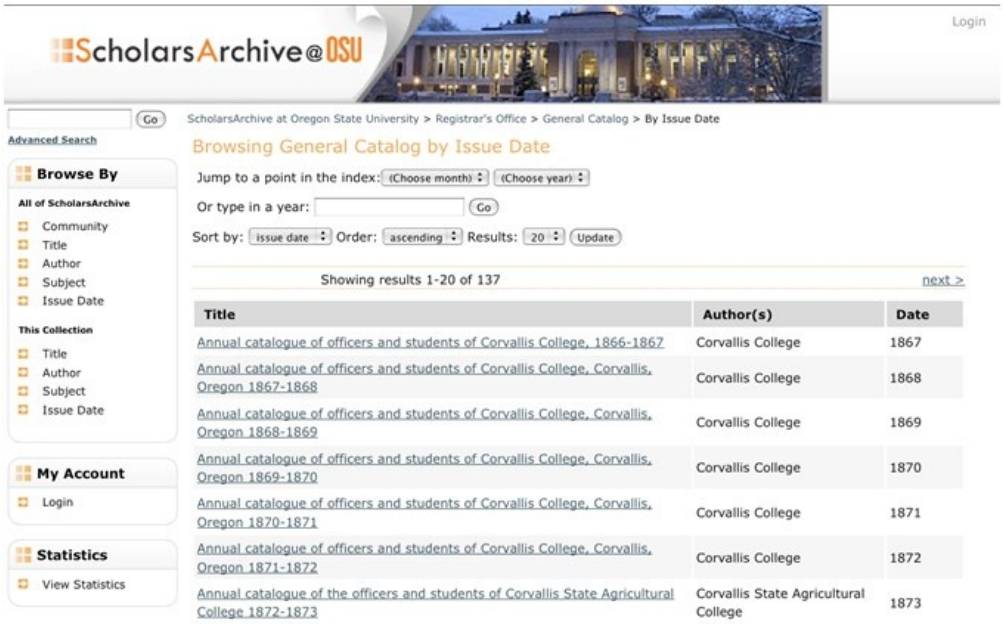



Figure 5. OSU general catalogs in ScholarsArchive@OSU

## Project Successes

OSUL provides numerous services for its primary patrons—OSU staff, faculty, and students. The digitization of the general catalogs allowed OSUL to reach out to a different patron, a valuable academic support unit. When asked about the value of providing access to the catalogs via ScholarsArchive@OSU, OSU Registrar Kuo stated,

> "The catalogs and schedule of classes stored in the ScholarsArchive@OSU are irreplaceable records that provide a texture to our history and role as an institution of higher education over the past century in Oregon. Having those records readily available with just a few keystrokes helps our staff and public find answers to questions that come up daily. Using technology to quickly find what we need in those records enables us to be more effective in finding answers and respond to questions with direct links that often allows inquiries to be more fully answered than ever before."[10]

10. Kent Kuo, e-mail message to author, August 5, 2009.

Kuo's statement documents one aspect of the project's success. Other indicators of success include the following:

- For the five years prior to July 2008, the University Archives completed 3.6-5.4 requests per month for copies of course descriptions from the general catalog. For the 12-month period beginning in July 2008, the number of requests dropped to only 3 for the full year (for an average of less than 0.3 per month). This is a consequence of two accomplishments: First, by July 2008, most of the catalogs for 1970-2002 were available online through ScholarsArchive@OSU. Second, during the summer of 2008, the Registrar's Office placed a link on their site to the ScholarsArchive@OSU collection for the OSU Archives.

- Items in the collection have been viewed 11,276 times and downloaded 25,203 times in the past twenty-one months, averaging 88 views and 188 downloads per item. Usage spikes in January and September, demonstrating the natural ebb and flow of activity during the school year.

- Recognizing the value of providing access to the general catalogs through ScholarsArchive@OSU, the Registrar's Office contacted University Archives about also placing electronic versions of class schedules into ScholarsArchive@OSU. A new collection was set up, and, after receiving the electronic files from the catalog coordinator, a library technician submitted and uploaded the OSU 2007-2008 fall, winter, spring, and summer class schedules. After creating the 2009 schedules, the catalog coordinator sent the files directly to the library technician responsible for ensuring their deposition into ScholarsArchive@OSU, a practice that continues today. The Registrar's Office now also ensures access to the Registration Information Handbook via the same process.

## Project Obstacles

Digitizing and making available online 134 OSU general catalogs was a collaborative project involving three OSU academic units: the Registrar's Office, OSUL's University Archives, and the Digital Production Unit. Five OSU employees (two from the Registrar's Office and three from OSUL) and one student scanner worked together to complete the eighteen-month project. With this many people, the extended time period, and differences in physical materials and metadata, there were bound to be obstacles along the way, including the following:

- University Archives did not have duplicate copies of the earliest catalogs (1866/1867-1889/1890); therefore, they could not be debound for digitization. The Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Department had a planetary scanner that could accommodate these items, but the scanner was often out of order, and ILL requests took precedence over other scanning activities. After months of waiting for access to the ILL scanner, the senior staff archivist suggested

photocopying and scanning the photocopies, which could then be uploaded to ScholarsArchive@OSU. Sixteen of the 134 catalogs (about 12 percent) were scanned this way. Not having access to the planetary scanner also prevented OSUL from producing a master (TIFF) file for those catalogs.

- Catalogs from the late 1980s to the present contained many more photographs than previous editions. This made the scanned electronic files extremely large, even after compression. Because OSUL standards require files submitted to ScholarsArchive@OSU to be less than 10 MB in order to meet the computing capabilities of its patrons, the student scanner split the PDFs into separate pieces, attempting to use the same breaking points as the general catalog itself. The procedure was not difficult, but breaking the catalog into as many as twenty sections and attaching them to the ScholarsArchive@OSU record was time-consuming.
- The OSUL instance of dSPACE does not allow ordering of multiple files on a single record; therefore, catalogs with more than one file often do not follow the logical order of the catalog, possibly making those catalogs more difficult to use.
- The DPU often manages more than one digitization project at a time, and priorities are shifted depending on project funding, value, size, and deadline. At times, student workers were pulled from the digitization of the general catalogs to work on higher-priority projects, resulting in a much longer time frame for completion than expected.

## Conclusion

Like most higher-education institutions, the OSU Registrar's Office places current and recent years' academic catalogs online to make them more accessible to users. Digitizing the entire run of OSU general catalogs, depositing them into ScholarsArchive@OSU, and establishing a workflow for future catalogs to be archived in ScholarsArchive@OSU provides the Registrar's Office and users with an even greater accessibility to these valuable documents.

Unlike the Registrar's Office's online versions of the catalogs, the full text of catalogs in ScholarsArchive@OSU is exposed to Google, Google Scholar, and other search engines. In addition, ScholarsArchive@OSU provides access to all OSU catalogs, while the Registrar's Office can maintain only the most recent versions, and contrary to our supposition about the more recent catalogs receiving the most use, usage statistics reveal just the opposite. None of the past five years' catalogs are included in the top 100 downloads for the general catalog collection, suggesting that the academic catalog has more far-reaching value than conventional wisdom would infer.

Another unanticipated benefit to placing the OSU general catalogs in ScholarsArchive@OSU was the Registrar's Office's recognition that the institutional

repository provides value beyond its own website's capabilities. This generated further discussions between the Registrar's Office and OSUL, which resulted in the addition of both the class schedules and the Registration Information Handbook into ScholarsArchive@OSU.