

ScholarLynk: A Reading List Metaphor for Collaborative Research

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With the widespread proliferation of various digital libraries and specialized search engines, such as Google Scholar, many researchers now manage the bulk of their citation material electronically, thereby organizing their *reading lists* (i.e., organized collections of relevant paper) using some kind of reference management system (e.g., BibTeX, EndNote, Reference Manager, RefWorks, etc.). Recently, support for this type of activity is provided by online systems like CiteULike, Mendeley, Zotero, and Connotea, which exploit the Web to make digital libraries more personal, sociable, integrated, and accessible places. In such systems, communication and sharing are addressed through social networking tools, which are today consolidated ways to connect, meet, and share.

While valuable, these sites offer services through a web paradigm, which somehow “divorces” from the research life-cycle activities carried out from someone’s desktop. The researchers’ workflow encompasses four phases of *survey*, *analysis*, *evaluation* and *creation*, which do not need to occur sequentially. Activities relating to these four phases combine a range of local (i.e., to the researcher’s desktop) and remote (i.e., available on the internet) resources and applications. Scholars acquire digital resources from different sources: from institutional repositories to user-generated content and everything in-between and build vast personal collections of resources, both locally on a hard drive and remotely (e.g., delicious.com). To accomplish their activities, they continuously switch from a “local” vision of resources and applications to a “remote” one, often carrying the burden of merging the two in a consistent way.

We believe suitable research environment systems need to support researchers in collating, managing and sharing with others diverse resources from different locations by accessing their usual desktop tools and applications, thereby blurring/hiding the distinction between “local” and “remote” paradigms. In this poster, we present a demo of *ScholarLynk*, an MSN desktop solution supporting researchers at building and maintaining reading lists of resources in collaboration with other researchers. The novelty of *ScholarLynk* is that it mediates between the desktop environment and web data sources and it establish a collaborative environment with other *ScholarLynk* clients. Researchers will seamless interaction with the “outside” world, to search and fetch new resources or exchange, with other researchers, resources and reading lists together with annotations, tags and ratings over them. To this aim, the prototype integrates with MSN Windows Explorer and MSN compliant applications to offer tools for (i) constructing reading lists by tagging resources, (ii) integrating remote data sources as desktop resources, and (iii) supporting in-context communication, reading list sharing and collaboration with other researchers using the same tool. The prototype is devised to operate in combination with the DRIVER Infrastructure for European Open Access publications. The infrastructure is today gathering 2,500,000 records from beyond 250 repositories from Europe and beyond. The system is operated by the D-NET Software Toolkit, a service-oriented solution realized in the context of the DRIVER and DRIVER-II EC projects. With respect to *ScholarLink* clients, the DRIVER infrastructure plays the twofold role of integrated data source (together with others, such as Google Scholar, Flickr, etc), by delivering search facilities over its information space of bibliographic metadata, and of “overlay network”, by offering the services required to host content published from the personal spaces available from the clients and enable its sharing between clients authorized to do it. In the demo, we shall show how two researchers can in collaboration accomplish their tasks of survey, analysis, evaluation and creation, from their desktops.