

# Genealogists ask “Where do I look next?”

*A special library serves researchers with more ways to access and search genealogy subjects*



## Situation

The Fiske Genealogical Library in Seattle was founded in 1971 by Arthur D. Fiske, a professional genealogist. As Fiske’s research collection grew he realized the need to publish a list of his holdings. The collection now includes more than 7,000 books, over 600 serials and hundreds of cataloged articles that are all represented in the WorldCat database, making it a substantial regional resource of genealogical materials. More than 30 years after Fiske began his research, a group of volunteers is carrying on the legacy in a new, innovative way.

The Fiske collection contains unique and rare items, many out-of-print works and original prepublication sources. Fiske Library volunteers wanted a cost effective way to preserve their rare collection, and make it more searchable and widely available. They identified a need to have a Web-based catalog that offered consistent indexing and cataloging that would provide genealogy researchers broader subject coverage. It was a significant commitment to expand the reach of Arthur Fiske’s genealogical work.

## Solution

The Fiske Library joined OCLC in 2007 to share information about its collection through WorldCat, the world’s largest bibliographic database. This allowed information seekers to find Fiske Library resources through WorldCat.org and the WorldCat database on FirstSearch. Through WorldCat, genealogists could identify unique resources in the Fiske collection in addition to genealogical materials in other libraries around the world.

When OCLC released WorldCat Local “quick start” in April 2009, David Brazier, Technology Director at the Fiske

## AT A GLANCE

### [www.fiskelibrary.org](http://www.fiskelibrary.org)

- A collection of genealogy materials containing an index of over 1 million entries
- 30 percent of the collection is available in fewer than 12 WorldCat libraries
- 4 percent of the collection is unique to the Fiske Library

***“Now Web searchers can more easily identify and gain access to materials in our unique collection.”***

***David Brazier  
Technical Director  
Fiske Genealogical Library***

Genealogical Library, took the next step in expanding Web access to the rich resources at the library. He registered for WorldCat Local “quick start,” and quickly configured a custom site that linked to the library’s locally developed library system. “The initial configuration was complete in less than two hours,” says Brazier. “Once I received some additional information from OCLC I had links to our local system fully set up and tested within about 24 hours.”

The locally branded WorldCat Local “quick start” search box is positioned in the center of the library’s home page at [www.fiskelibrary.org](http://www.fiskelibrary.org).

“Our users love it,” exclaims Brazier. “Our commitment to cataloging the entire library collection into WorldCat has now made these one-of-a-kind genealogical resources available to anyone, no matter where they are located. And, with the direct link into our local system, they can find out where the item is located in the library and connect with

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library volunteers through [WorldCat Local's] *Ask a Librarian* link to request access to the material.”

A team of volunteers has worked for three years to catalog all monographs in the collection, complete with bar codes and Local Holdings Records where appropriate. The volunteers use OCLC's Connexion service due to the original cataloging that is required by the unique items in their collection. As the volunteer catalogers add more records to the WorldCat database, they enjoy personally updating the collection numbers that display just above the search box on the library's Web site.

The Web visibility that WorldCat provides to Fiske has drawn many new users to the collection. In fact, most people who connect with volunteer library staff through links from WorldCat are users who have never used the collection before. The increased visibility has also resulted in increased donations of genealogical materials to the collection, which is growing at the rate of about 200 items per month.

## Results

Locating very specific items is easier with WorldCat Local “quick start.” It is advantageous for smaller libraries with rare and unique materials to share their resources, and WorldCat Local “quick start” offers the Fiske Genealogical Library more visibility and a stronger identity among genealogy groups.

Additionally, with access to the same social networking tools found on WorldCat.org, genealogists can create lists of important materials they'd like to share with others. WorldCat Local “quick start” also helps researchers source and document a work that is trustworthy. “WorldCat is an easier way to index consistently, and it allows us to put more information into the record, which gives researchers more access points when they perform searches,” says Brazier. “This is a better way to discover our materials, track them and share them.”

Considering how frequently they access online sources, genealogists are among the most Internet savvy computer users. Regardless of where their searches begin, having the Fiske Library's collection searchable through WorldCat Local “quick start” makes it one more valuable resource available for their research.