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Stacklife
https://stacklife-dpla.law.harvard.edu/#, Accessed on April 8, 2014
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StackLife is a browsing interface prototype created by the Harvard Library Innovation Lab in order to visualize a library collection's bibliographic and circulation data. The development of StackLife was funded through support from the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), although it was developed independently. Because the DPLA is an open web source, StackLife seeks to demonstrate one possible way of interfacing with its metadata. It is currently free and available to any users; users can register to create and save shelves of titles as well as review titles, but registration is not required to use StackLife. Harvard University users can access StackLife Harvard, a different version that connects StackLife to the circulation and bibliographic metadata available in the Harvard University Library System, providing access to the entire collection, including copyright materials and analog resources.

The StackLife homepage displays a vertical bookshelf (for better readability of titles) populated with the most recently read titles, each shown as a book spine. Users can search via keyword, title, author, and subject to create a new shelf and registered users can save shelves and titles. The bookshelf serves as an interactive infographic whose visual components demonstrate the metadata associated with titles. For example, a search for "Jane Austen" yields a shelf of 110 items.

The book spines are displayed in one of ten possible shades of blue denoting the popularity of the item based on the percentile of use within the item's own collection as determined by the number of times an item has been downloaded. As a result, two books of equal popularity on the StackLife shelf may have a huge disparity in number of downloads, as one title is popular in a larger collection, while the other is popular in a smaller collection. It is important for users to keep this information in mind as they browse the shelves, because the infographic itself can be misleading without the context of these color calculations. Additionally, there is no usage data for titles from the Biodiversity Heritage Library, so these were assigned random StackScores.

The thickness of each spine is determined by its page number, and its horizontal length is determined by its publication date, so that thicker spines reflect a higher number of pages and a longer spine reflects an older title. This visual component could be especially helpful when browsing multiple editions of the same title, as the desired resource would be immediately differentiated from its neighbors. Once a title is selected, StackLife displays standard bibliographic data including title, author, pages, and its source with a link. The "Read Book" link immediately opens the digitized resources. Currently the resources in StackLife are provided by the Biodiversity

Heritage Library from the DPLA Collection, the HathiTrust, and the Internet Archive's Open Library. It is important to note that StackLife does not host any of these resources, but instead provides the metadata, search interface, and links to access them. This demonstrates its applicability to other collections of digitized collections, including archival collections, although the infographics would have to be adjusted to account for differences in metadata, such as length in linear feet instead of page number. Currently, manuscript collections available in StackLife are described with exactly the same metadata and infographics as the book titles, and no differentiation is made between the resource types.

Currently, StackLife is a web-based application accessible via any web browser free of charge. This reviewer tested the application through Google Chrome, Internet Explorer (IE), and Mozilla Firefox, and found that different browsers yielded very different experiences. In the case of IE, some of the selections to display additional information regarding subjects, reviews, and related DPLA items did not display correctly or at all, so IE users miss a major component of the available metadata. Additionally, the shelf infographic viewed through IE was less visually appealing, lacking the polish and precision of design that made StackLife so visually pleasing when viewed through other browsers. However, IE was the only browser to open the digitized resources. Several resources failed to open in both Chrome and Firefox; although the HathiTrust or Biodiversity Heritage Library windows opened immediately, the user was presented with an empty white box where the content should have appeared.

StackLife successfully demonstrates a user interface for metadata, and its infographic displays and strong visual components make it highly intuitive and usable. While it does not currently differentiate between monographs and manuscript collections, the metadata could be adjusted to make it an equally compelling and useful tool for archival repositories.