

**Selected Members of the CCL-EAR Committee Review of  
*The Columbia Granger's World of Poetry*  
May, 2003**

During spring 2003, selected members of the California Community Colleges Electronic Access and Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of the *Columbia Granger's World of Poetry* database.

*Granger's World of Poetry* is a large comprehensive database of poetry that has been the definitive print source in libraries for locating poems in anthologies. In 1999, *Granger's* went online and as of spring of 2003 has holdings of nearly 400,000 poem citations and over 40,000 full-text poems. The database is updated quarterly with the addition of approximately 3,000 new poems in full-text, added commentaries, biographies, newsletters, and various outside links.

A product fact sheet for *Granger's* is available at <http://www.columbiagrangers.org/>.

The database was reviewed in *Library Journal*, June 1, 2000 v125 i10 p213; *Booklist*, July 2002 v98 i21 p1873; *Choice*, 2002 v40 i2 p255.

### Review Process

Selected members of the CCL-EAR Committee, independently or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staffs, reviewed and evaluated *Columbia Granger's World of Poetry*. Assessments were submitted on a Review Reply Form specifically designed by the committee for this purpose.

Though other staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member(s) only and not transferred to others. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the proposal to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

Attributes of the information resources were assessed on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 representing the "least value" and 4 representing the "most value."

The following attributes were examined:

#### INFORMATION DATABASE

Consider its functionality, the appropriateness of format (bibliographic/full-text), the content of the information, the adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and its value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

#### SEARCH INTERFACE

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

#### USER SUPPORT SERVICES

If documentation is required for successful use of product, is it available, comprehensive, and well written? Is online help adequate and user friendly? Does vendor supply training if it is needed? Is a telephone help line available?

## COST

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

## ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate?

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT

#1 ---- No Support

#2 ---- No Support at this time. Future support conditional upon enhancements noted below in Comments Section.

#3 ---- Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College libraries for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below in Comments Section.

#4 ---- Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campus libraries or their acceptance or rejection.

Following are the results of the CCL-EAR Committee's review as well as comments taken from the individual Review Reply Forms.

## INFORMATION DATABASE: 3, 3, 3

*Granger's World of Poetry* is an enormously expanded and enhanced resource that contains not only the indices to poetry in anthologies and collections published by Granger's but also contains brief biographies of poets, a dictionary of poetry quotations, and thousands of full-text poems.

Librarians and students using the online version can make short work of searching for poetry works and citations in a well regarded and authoritarian source that could often have taken a great deal of time. One also has the benefit of many biographies, definitions and quite a few full-text poems.

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*Granger's* has a clean, clearly laid out web page. This seems like a valuable tool for California community colleges.

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*Granger's* includes the contents of the 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> print editions of *Columbia Granger's Index to Poetry in Anthologies*, plus selections from classic and the most anthologized poems, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> editions of *Columbia Granger's Index to Poetry in Collected and Selected Works*, and the *Columbia Granger's Index to African-American Poetry*. Specific statements of currency are not to be found, nor is there a complete list of anthologies that are included in the database.

Compared to *Poem Finder*, a similar online poetry database, *Granger's* has fewer citations and full-text poems (400,000 vs. Poem Finder's 800,000 citations and 40,000 vs. 100,000 full-text). However, *Granger's* seems to be adding to the database at a constant rate.

## SEARCH INTERFACE: 4, 4, 3

The interface is very well designed and the search options are easy to read and to follow. The screens are well designed and easy to use with a convenient help link that really is helpful. There are two ways to search. Simple search offers choices of all the familiar *Granger's* categories plus

the added advantage of choosing keyword, alphabetic searching, full-text poems, and excerpts only. Advanced searching offers the added choices of search terms and indices.

An added very useful feature is the icons that are on each record and link to information about the author, the poems, and the anthologies. The bibliographic information and the reviews about the anthologies would be a possible useful tool in collection building.

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*Granger's* has a clean, clearly laid out web page. Search options from the home page include Quick Search, Advanced Search, Biographies (can either type in poet's name or scan entries in box listed alphabetically by poet's last name that cite birth/death dates). The database does not include portraits as in *Poem Finder*. One useful addition to biographical entries is a bibliography that includes the poet's major anthology, his/her standard biography, and citations to critiques of the poet's works. Within each biography are blue-highlighted links to terms and poems. In *Poem Finder*, there are references but no links.

Within Quick Search, users will appreciate being able to do either an alphabetic or keyword search and then to select an index (Author; Subject; Title, First line, Last line) as well as to choose a filter (complete poems only or all entries). These same options are available from Advanced Search plus more index options and the use of and/or/not operators. On some screens there are useful search tips; however, there is not a tip on the first search page stating that the author's name must be listed last name first, followed by first name. In *Poem Finder*, one may get results regardless.

Advanced Search provides many search strategies beginning with index terms (author, title, subject, words in poem, anywhere) plus search term followed by 4 different entries for and/or/not operators and the ability to filter to all entries or complete poems only. Within the listing of Advanced Search Results, it's helpful to read the first line and sometimes the last line before actually going to the full-text poem itself.

One test user found several pluses to *Granger's* over *Poem Finder*: "Emily Dickinson's poem "The Chariot" is listed as 'untitled' in *Granger's*, which seems to match documentation when he studied it in a 19<sup>th</sup> century literature grad course; but he also notes, "There's no cross referencing at all even to the often numbered poem the untitled poem usually gets from Dickinson scholars." One of the biggest pluses is that pseudonyms are more properly attributed in *Granger's*. In *Poem Finder*, for example, poet Lewis Carroll is listed as Charles Lutwidge Dodgson as a main entry with the notation that Lewis Carroll is a pseudonym. A search for Mark Twain will lead to listings by Samuel Langhorne Clemens and although both names are cited in the author information box, only Mark Twain entries are red-highlighted in the Results listings. This may confuse students.

In *Granger's* Glossary section, there are blue-colored links to poets and poems in addition to a short definition of each term. In *Poem Finder*, there are references but no direct links, making *Granger's* a more efficient tool.

I felt the links to poetry-related sites were useful and would quickly lead a student to sources of support, poetry readings, poetry-friendly bookstores, etc. (poetry.org).

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*Columbia Granger's* uses an uncluttered opening screen. The search function is prominent and easily visible on the screen, with quick or advanced searching available. I found myself needing to use "Help" a great deal, but it was readily available. There are some limitations to searching,

e.g. Boolean nesting is not allowed. The advanced search screen allows only one term per line. There is no way to use proximity indicators or truncation or wildcards, and no limiting by dates. Nevertheless, searching was relatively straightforward and successful if the poem was included in the database. The search methods provided were sufficient to narrow results to reasonable numbers.

Customization features are minimal. It is possible to optimize the screen resolution, but I found no way to change the default search mode or any other default options. There does not appear to be an e-mail output option, a feature that our students seem to like in order to avoid our on-campus printing costs.

### **USER SUPPORT SERVICES: 4, 4 3**

*Granger's* has excellent support service. The customer service and technical service are quick and efficient.

The online help is easy to use and well written with very detailed and complete information and often well designed examples. There would seem to be little need for vendor supplied training.

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There is a e-mail address given within the "Getting the Most Out of *Granger's*" section so users may send in comments and suggestions. In addition, under the "Contact Us" section, separate e-mail and phone listings were given for customer service (account help) and editorial suggestions and comments.

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The Help feature can be accessed from a tab at the top of the page. The resulting help is not context-sensitive, but rather brings up a comprehensive menu on the left side of the screen. E-mail addresses and 800 phone numbers for tech support and customer service are available.

### **COST: 2, 3, 3**

The paper copy of the latest edition is \$275. It is primarily an index and therefore remote users will not be able to make full use of the online edition. It has potential strong use in a college library that supports a strong poetry collection and use.

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The cost seems reasonable and both our English and forensics faculty are interested in creating assignments to encourage students to use this database. It definitely would be a useful resource for distance learners.

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The cost for this database is not exorbitant, given that some full-text poetry is being made available to remote users.

### **ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 4, 4, 4**

The database was available at every attempted use and had very usable interactivity speeds with no discernible problems with using it, even at peak hours. The response time was above average and no downtime was ever experienced.

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Both phone and e-mail response times were acceptable.

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Both speed and reliability of connections were excellent. The opening screen also provides a link to “Optimizing Your View of *Granger’s*” that takes the user to an explanation of how to set optimal screen resolution for this database.

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT: 3, 4, 3**

This is a very valuable resource for in-house library use. If the price is right, it would be a fantastic purchase for community colleges and for my own campus. Poetry in anthologies is much more accessible and informative through a search of this database than working through the print indices.

This would be a no-brainer for every community college if the database had a full-text content to match the quality of the rest of the product. Many of the community colleges offer remote access both on and off campus, and for that clientele one really needs to offer full-text. One hopes that *Granger’s* will continue to expand the full-text of the poetry database and make this a more valuable and indispensable addition to a library.

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I felt the search process was more intuitive and produced richer results than in *Poem Finder*. The Commentary and links within such essays would be particularly helpful to students. Although the quantity of results was generally higher in *Poem Finder*, many were citations only and thus students might feel content in *Granger’s* is more useful. In the “About *Granger’s*/History of *Granger’s*” section there is a statement that the product has been online since 1999 and includes “Classic 100 Poems” and “Top 500 Poems” that are most frequently anthologized in *Granger’s*. It would be helpful to click directly to those sources.

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*Columbia Granger’s* is a standard source for poetry text, and remains a classic in its online form. It does not contain as much full-text as *Poem Finder*, but searching protocols are easy for keyword searches or if you know the author, title or keywords in a poem. More sophisticated searches are awkward, and more easily accomplished in *Poem Finder* because of the more extensive field searching available.

**RATING FOR HOME CAMPUS USE ONLY: 3, 4, 3**

If the price is right versus the print version we would want to subscribe. We could really use this database if there were lots more full-text and we would be willing to pay more.

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We would select this because our local county library has *Lit Finder*.

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If money is available, this would be an acceptable choice to improve coverage of poetry for our remote users. Additional full-text content would make it even more valuable.