

Webpages of Arcetri Astrophysical Observatory Library: Tools for Users and for Librarians

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Abstract. The present poster has a double aim. First, it wants to illustrate the organization of information resources on the new library webpage. Second, it wants to show a software utility which has simplified the librarian's job in the maintenance of the website.

The great demand for services and for information resources from users was the main reason for changing the webpage. We analyze the development of the new home page to make it user friendly. Then, we present a practical tool. The library website has been developed using a templating tool, called the Perl Template Toolkit.

1. A New Information Context

From 2002 to 2005, the Arcetri Astrophysical Observatory Library has increased and diversified its activities. This has contributed to the creation of a new information context.

During these years, the growth of online resources has become visible: from Astronomical Archivio Collettivo Nazionale Periodici (ACNP, Italian National Serial Catalogue) to the other online resources: IAU circulars, books (ASP Conference series) and to new catalogs (CERN Dissertation Data Base). At the same time, new services for users were also being developed by the library.

Starting from 2002, the Arcetri Library has taken part in the Network Inter Library Document Exchange (NILDE), a national network for document delivery (DD) service, which aims to promote reciprocal exchanges among libraries. One of NILDE's aims is to facilitate the use of homogeneous quality standards in order to develop inter-library cooperation in document delivery services. This system has been carried out by the Central Library of the National Research Council of Bologna in Italy to make use of internet technology, to achieve short turnaround times in satisfying DD requests and to improve sharing of resources.

In addition, the majority of the library's efforts were directed at developing online services for users (for example, digitizing of documents, online reference services, etc.) and at collaborating with the other INAF libraries. The library had also diversified its activities. It created and managed the historical archive and organized some historical exhibitions. "Dal Colle di Arcetri alla California: nascita della collaborazione tra Arcetri e gli Stati Uniti" (From the Arcetri Hills to California: the birth of collaboration between Arcetri and the United States) is the name of one such exhibition organized in 2003 with the collaboration of Regione Toscana. It was an exhibition that showed the scientific relationship between Tuscany and the United States. Another exhibition, "Quando l'Himalaya era più lontano delle stelle: le fotografie della spedizione De Filippi, una spedizione geo-astronomica del 1913-14 nel Caracorum" (When the Himalayas were farther away than the stars: photographs of the geo-astronomical expedition De Filippi from 1913 to 1914 in Caracorum) was created in 2004 with the collaboration of the Astronomy and Space Science Department of the University of Florence.

Finally, the Arcetri Library also became involved in assisting with the popularization of astronomy.

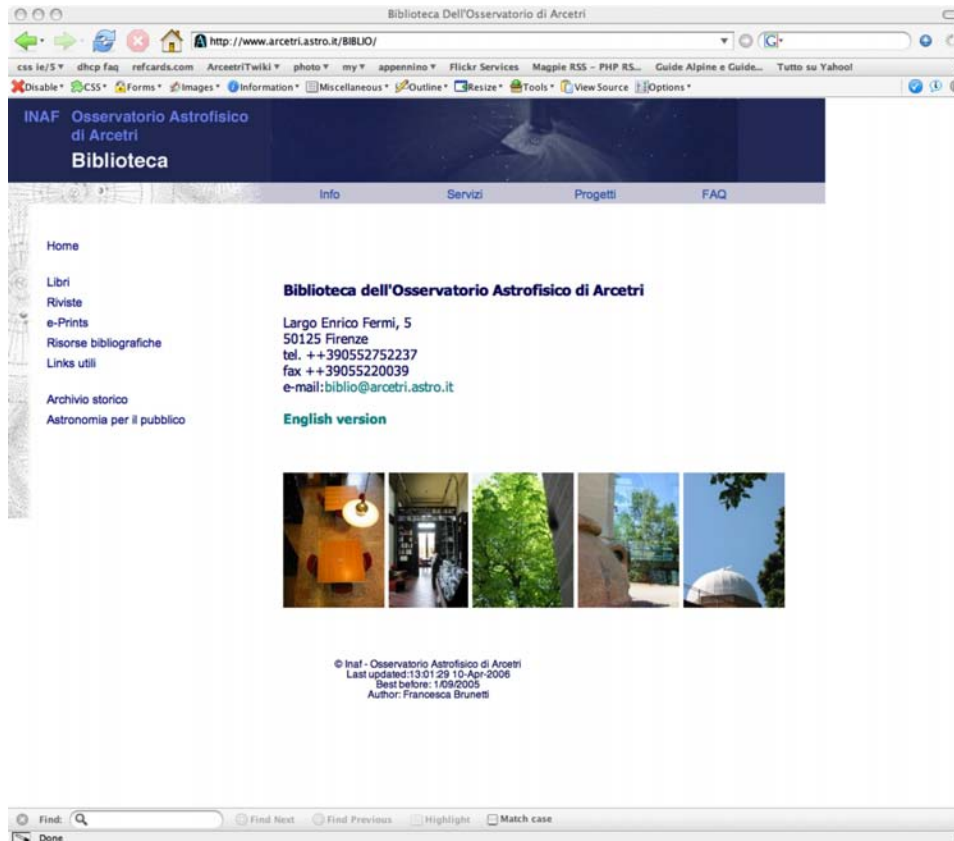


Figure 1. Library home page at <http://www.arcetri.astro.it/BIBLIO/>

Since 2004, it has published the *Bibliography of Italian Astronomical Books for Children* and other information materials that support public outreach activities like children's book reviews. Every three months an astronomer is invited to review a book selected by the library staff.

2. New Library Webpage

Due to the development of many resources and activities, the library decided to create new webpages (see Figure 1). The old webpages did not communicate the new information contents.

Usability, accessibility and simplicity were the criteria that guided the construction of webpages, based on the Web Accessibility Guidelines 1.0.¹ Explaining how to make webpages accessible to people with disabilities, the Guidelines also promote accessibility to all users.

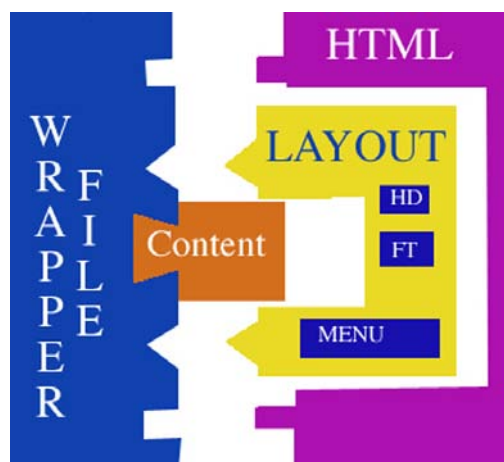


Figure 2. Perl Template Toolkit

The library webpages represent the main tool for accessing the library's information services – from the catalog to document delivery, from reference to the library's projects. Thus they must act as the library's business card.

3. Perl Template Toolkit

The library website has been created and is maintained with the Perl Template Toolkit² (PTT, see Figure 2).

Perl: The toolkit is written in Perl, generating intermediate Perl code, and can be used directly from a Perl script.

¹<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG10/wai-pageauth.html>

²<http://www.template-toolkit.org>

Template: It is a “Templating” tool which produces a final text mixing static content (the template) with variable content. The tool simplifies the task of adding new pages and modifying existing ones. This provides nontechnical people with a framework which takes care of the presentation and navigation layers of the site. The librarian can then focus more on the contents of the pages with a knowledge of a small subset of HTML keywords. In other words, the web programmer prepares the templates for the web author who is then free to focus on the content, instead of the layout of the page, the position of the elements and visual attributes of the pages. The author can generate complex pages with a very minimal set of HTML tags.

With PTT, the pages have the same look and feel since they share the same templates. It is easy to keep the site uniform. The entire site can be radically modified simply by applying a different template. No technical skills are required to fill the templates with contents. We can say that this experience has been very useful and beneficial for webpage maintenance.