

An Evaluation of Review Sources for Collection Development in Libraries

Colleen E. Smith

Dr. Suellen Adams

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The University of Southern Mississippi

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## INTRODUCTION

Due to the immense growing number of book titles, periodicals, and media resources, selecting published material from multiple options is an intimidating undertaking. In addition, selection grows to be more demanding since collection librarians must be progressively more selective. Because of this fact, selection is equally a skill and a discipline; “it results from a combination of knowledge, experience, and intuition” (Johnson, 2009, p. 108). The selector must know the appropriate resources for locating suitable materials, which means the selector needs skills in choosing “between various materials, formats, evaluating materials’ quality, and balancing cost with funds available” (Johnson, 2009, p. 108). Distinguishing potential items requires fundamental, accurate data about titles, authors, publishers, and subject matter. As a result, librarians turn to professional associations and authorities for direction in selecting titles; thus, various resources exist to aid librarians to identify plausible acquisitions. One of these resources is review sources. “Reviews appear in the library-oriented press, popular media, and discipline-based journals” (Johnson, 2009, p. 110). Just as there are vast titles for materials, there are numerous review sources for a librarian choose from to make the best decision for their collection. For this purpose, four review sources, *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Bookwire*, and *The Scout Report*, will be compared and evaluated for the selection process of the collection development in libraries.

## *BOOKLIST*

*Booklist* is a book-review magazine, which is published by the American Library Association. In fact, it has been published for more than 100 years by the American Library Association (*Booklist*, 2013). Furthermore, *Booklist* is extensively reviewed as contributing dependable reviews to assist libraries to select what to purchase and to help library patrons

choose what to read, view, or hear. “It comprises two print magazines, an extensive website and database, e-newsletters, webinars, and other resources that support librarians in collection development and readers’ advisory” (*Booklist*, 2013). *Booklist Online* is “both a free web site and a database” accessible to *Booklist* subscribers (*Booklist*, 2013). The site provides an abundant selection of efficient *Booklist* subject matter, along with review features composed for *Booklist Online*. The database encompasses “more than 135,000 reviews and thousands of features dating back to 1992,” and the content is linked: “review to review, review to feature, and feature to feature” (*Booklist*, 2013). Additionally, a quarterly accompaniment to *Booklist* is *Booklinks*, “a magazine that aids teachers, librarians, school library media specialists, reading special specialists,” and others to connect with children with literature based resources (*Booklist*, 2013).

## **Evaluation**

When going to *Booklist Online*, the web site is well organized. The website home page has Review of the Day, along with Latest Articles sections In addition on the home page, there is a Quick Search and a Advanced Search option, in order for users to find specific resources. Highlighted blogs about reviews and excerpts from Book Links and the educational review for *Booklist* is also available on the home page. At the top of the homepage, for easy access, are the tabs for the web site. The tabs are as follows: Home, About Us, Awards, Great Reads, Blogs, Newsletters, Webniars, My Alerts, My Lists, My Profile, Help, Renew / Subscribe.

Since the home page has already been evaluated, the About Us tab is the next tab. The About Us Tab features FAQ, Contact Us, Advertise, Get Reviewed, *Booklisters*, and Reviewers.

The FAQ answers common questions asked by the public, and the Contact Us provides information to get in touch with *Booklist Online*. The Advertise section aids users who would like to promote *Booklist* on their own web sites. Booklisters introduces the columnists, editorial staff, production staff, business and marketing department, advertising staff, and the advisory board, where the next section, Reviewers, introduces all the reviewers and offers information for anyone who wants to be reviewer.

The next few tabs, Awards, Great Reads, Newsletters, and Webinars are the vital elements to the web site. Awards introduces award-winning resources that *Booklist* feels are most relevant to their audience, even some that are non-ALA awards such as the National Book Award and the Booker Prize. Great Reads is reviews based on the *Booklist Online* editors, this is a great tool to connect authority, the editors, to the user. Newsletters is a way for users to sign-up for free newsletters and announcements from *Booklist Online*. The best feature is the Webinars tab; Webinars introduces conferences and presentations on print and media resources. For example, the upcoming webinar topic is Audiobooks.

The last few tabs, My Alerts, My Lists, My Profile, Help and Renew/Subscribe, are for registers users to organize their findings and profile. My Alerts is to alert a user of reviews based on a topic or on a certain title. Likewise, My Lists organizes their favorite titles and other resources.

These features aids in the overall experience of *Booklist*. There is a reason why *Booklist* remains at the top of list for review sources, not only because the ALA publishes their work, but because it is accessible with *Booklist Online*, user friendly, and well organized.

### ***KIRKUS REVIEWS***

*Kirkus* has been a trustworthy and an authority in book discover since 1993 (*Kirkus Reviews*, 2013). *Kirkus Reviews* is distributed to more than 5,000 industry influencers, including bookstore buyers, librarians, publishers, agents, film executives and foreign publishers. In 2011, after the company was acquired by its current owners, Herb Simon and Marc Winkelman, *Kirkus* began expanding its audience in other ways. First, *Kirkus* launched a consumer-facing website, growing its audience beyond the industry insiders who subscribe to *Kirkus Reviews* magazine. Meanwhile, *Kirkus* grew its coverage of traditionally published books and enhanced *Kirkus Reviews* magazine. *Kirkus* Indie program was started when the editors wanted to expand their coverage to include self-publishing, “one of the fastest growing segment in the book industry” (*Kirkus Reviews*, 2013). Today, *Kirkus Reviews* more than 7,000 books published by traditional houses and more than 3,000 self-published books every year. The magazine is published on the 1st and 15th of every month, and because of the scope of our coverage, our authoritative voice and the timeliness of our reviews, *Kirkus Reviews* is revered by many as the first indicator of a book’s potential (*Kirkus Reviews*, 2013).

#### **Evaluation**

Just as with *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews* has a well-organized website for patrons to research sources. The home page consists of Critics’ Takes on This Week’s Bestsellers, which is perfect for librarians to search for new materials. There is also a section properly titled Book Lovers, which features the day’s fiction and nonfiction books review. To continue, the section titled For Authors aids published users on how get theory work reviewed and how to get their book edited.

Additionally, just like *Booklist*, the home page lists their tabs for the web site: Book Reviews, Articles and Blogs, For Authors, For Publishers, Contest and Giveaways, and Pro Connect.

The Book Reviews tab offer Best Book Recommendations, which enlists certain categories: *Kirkus* Stars and Recommendations, Critics Takes on Bestsellers, Hot Lists, Vintage Reviews, and Best of 2012. Moreover, there is section of books recommended by *Kirkus Reviews* critics. Finally, this tab has book reviews divided into categories: science fiction, mystery, fiction and literature, ages 0-2, ages 3-5, middle school, high school, and much more.

The next tab, Articles and Blogs, offers interviews and profiles of authors of different genres. It also has a list of blogs for added reviews. Just like the Book Reviews tab, there are a list of categories of articles and blogs: children, fiction, history memoir, pop culture, young adult, writing/publishing, just to name a few. This tab is an essential tool for librarians and users to view others' reviews, besides the professional critics, on resources; it offers another level to see what would be used in a library.

The next two tabs, For Authors and For Publishers, provide information for individuals who write and for ones who publish materials. The For Authors tab supply's quick links on how to get one's book reviewed, how to learn about book editing services, and how to promote a book. The For Publishers tab supply's submission requirements and book promotion opportunities; additionally, it offers the selection process.

The Pro Connect tab provides librarians and users a way to discover authors with content available for acquisition. Moreover, it offers an option to review sample chapters, author's bio, awards, press reviews on an author and their work. Finally is presents a way to connect directly with the author through *Kirkus*' pro network. A good section on this tab is titled Word on the

Street. In this section, publishers, agents, and booksellers contribute insights on emerging trends, what is working for them, and what is not working for them.

*Kirkus Reviews* is close competitor of *Booklist*, which is fairly obvious. Both websites are well organized and provide abundant offerings to librarians and users. However, even though *Booklist* offers an over abundance of features, *Kirkus* offers a more direct search for sources. *Kirkus Reviews* offers a simple design, while offering almost the same features. With that said, *Kirkus Reviews* is a hair easier to maneuver around on their web site, which is beneficial to a broader spectrum of users in general.

### ***BOOKWIRE***

*Bookwire* offers a way for people “to discover, to evaluate, to order, and to experience books” (*Bookwire*, 2013). It is powered by Bowker’s Books in Print database, which makes it accessible to explore “over 20 million book titles, including print, ebooks, audio books and other resources” (*Bookwire*, 2013). Additionally, *Bookwire* has popular category pages that users can access to obtain data about bestsellers and new releases. *Bookwire* Author Pages and *Bookwire* Author Index contains author biographies and links to titles presented on *Bookwire.com*. SEO Title Cards are for patrons to share titles with others on social networks, and links titles to several online retailers, so the user can purchase books they locate (*Bookwire*, 2013). Moreover, Bowker introduced *Bookwire* free mobile app that streamlines the search for books by consumers, librarians, and booksellers. By means of Bowker’s new *Bookwire* app, “iPhone or Ipad users can scan the barcode of any book” to collect a search, which “results in the title and format, view a list of the lowest retail prices, and make a purchase through multiple retailers” (*Bookwire*, 2013).

## Evaluation

Compared to *Booklist* and *Kirkus Reviews*, *Bookwire* has a website that does not offer as many features; however, the website is easy to search. On the home page, *Bookwire* does not offer tabs. However a user can click on any section for a broader view of that topic. On the home page, a user can use the simple query to search for more specific topics. Yet, the bulk of the home page, is divided into sections: Featured books for the Month, New Books, Forthcoming Books, Recommended Books, Browse Vook Subjects, Best Selling Books, and promotion for the Bowker *Bookwire* App.

Even through that *Bookwire* does not offer has many features has *Booklist* and *Kirkus*, it does offer the vital tools for librarians to search for topic to add to their collection. It is a simple design, which is great for fast access. However, it is far from competition from the previous review sources.

## ***THE SCOUT REPORT***

*The Scout Report* is “the flagship publication of the Internet Scout Research Group” (*The Scout Report*, 2013). Published every Friday on the Web and by email subscription, it presents a way to stay educated on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and humanities sources on the internet. There is a team of librarians and subject authorities, who choose, examine, and explicate resources (*The Scout Report*, 2013). *The Scout Report* gathers and catalogs annotated resources included in the weekly Scout Report and special issues. Users can attain “particular resources in a keyword search, an advanced search, or by browsing by Library of Congress subject headings” (*The Scout Report*, 2013). In each issue, *The Scout Report* includes the “In the Section” that talks about a latest news experience and joins the summary

with consisely-annotated links; it is intended to be particularly beneficial to instructors searching for immediately vital materials. Furthermore, the editors of *The Scout Report* work in partnership on theme issues: Best of *The Scout Report*, NSDL, Scout Reports for STEM, Scout Reports for Business and Economics, Science and Engineering, and Social Sciences and Humanities (*The Scout Report*, 2013).

## **Evaluation**

*The Scout Report* website is equal combination of the *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Bookwire*. Like *Booklist* and Kikus Reviews, *The Scout Report* overs more features than *Bookwire*; however, like *Bookwire*, *The Scout Report* is made in a simple design for easy access. On the home pade, it offers the featured review for the web site. Additionally, *The Scout Report* offers a simple search engine for quick research on a specific topic. Instead on tabs, *The Scout Report* has a navigation tab; when clicked, it brings down specific sections to bring the user to another page. The sections are as follows: Projects, Publications, and Archives.

The section titles Projects provides information on current project that *The Scout Report* is affiliated. Currently, there are three projects: Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Central, Collection Workflow Integration System (CWIS), and Applied Math and Science Education Repository (AMSER). The ATE Central is a free online portal and collection of materials and assistance committed to emphasizing their projects in technology. The portal accumulates data about the materials and organizes them using subject classification, context keywords (tags), and other cataloging techniques (*The Scout Report*, 2013). The CWIS is an open-source software created to compile, systematize, and share collections about resources; it adheres to the academic principles for metadata and helps construct collections for STEM

research (*The Scout Report*, 2013). The AMSER is a free of charge portal of educational resources and services constructed for community and technical colleges; however, all users can access the portal (*The Scout Report*, 2013). These allied projects aid in librarians accessing specific portals to find useful resources to build their collections.

## CONCLUSION

When comparing and evaluating *Booklist*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Bookwire*, and *The Scout Report*, it is evident that all of the sources are viable reviews in the selection process for collection development for a library. All of the web sites are very well organized. Nevertheless, by offering more abundant resources, *Booklist* and *Kirkus Reviews* are the leaders in this evaluation, with *Kirkus Reviews* in a slight lead for better maneuvering throughout the site. *The Scout Report* would be in the middle of the pack; it offers great resources and reviews for STEM research on the academic level; however, it does not offer much, if any, reviews on other genres. *Bookwire* comes in last place in the evaluation only due to not offering as many features as the other review sources; it is very easy to search on the web site. The final conclusion is that all of the review sources in this evaluation are great for all libraries to utilize in the building of their collections.