Repurposing Existing Digital Resources and Smoothing Interdisciplinary Communication: Environmental Policy Collection Development

ASIS&T 2012 — 75TH Annual Meeting — October 26-30, Baltimore, MD — INFORMATION, INTERACTION, INNOVATION: CELEBRATING THE PAST, CONSTRUCTING THE PRESENT AND CREATING THE FUTURE

UNT Libraries

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Introduction

The digital environment has now introduced new resource types, new partners, and new user expectations into the current information landscape. Given the proliferation of scholarly digital contents, researchers increasingly need ways to facilitate their research while at the same time promoting scholarly communication within and beyond their own domains. The University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries are working to identify, collect, organize, and manage digital resources in various disciplines.

Figure 1. The Environmental Policy Collection Page
http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/ESDC/

UNT Environmental Policy Collection

In 2008, the University of North Texas Libraries began moving towards the development of an environmental policy digital library collection. The goal of the project was to identify, collect, organize, and manage digital resources relevant to environmental policy in order to provide access and enhanced services to a curated collection of content.
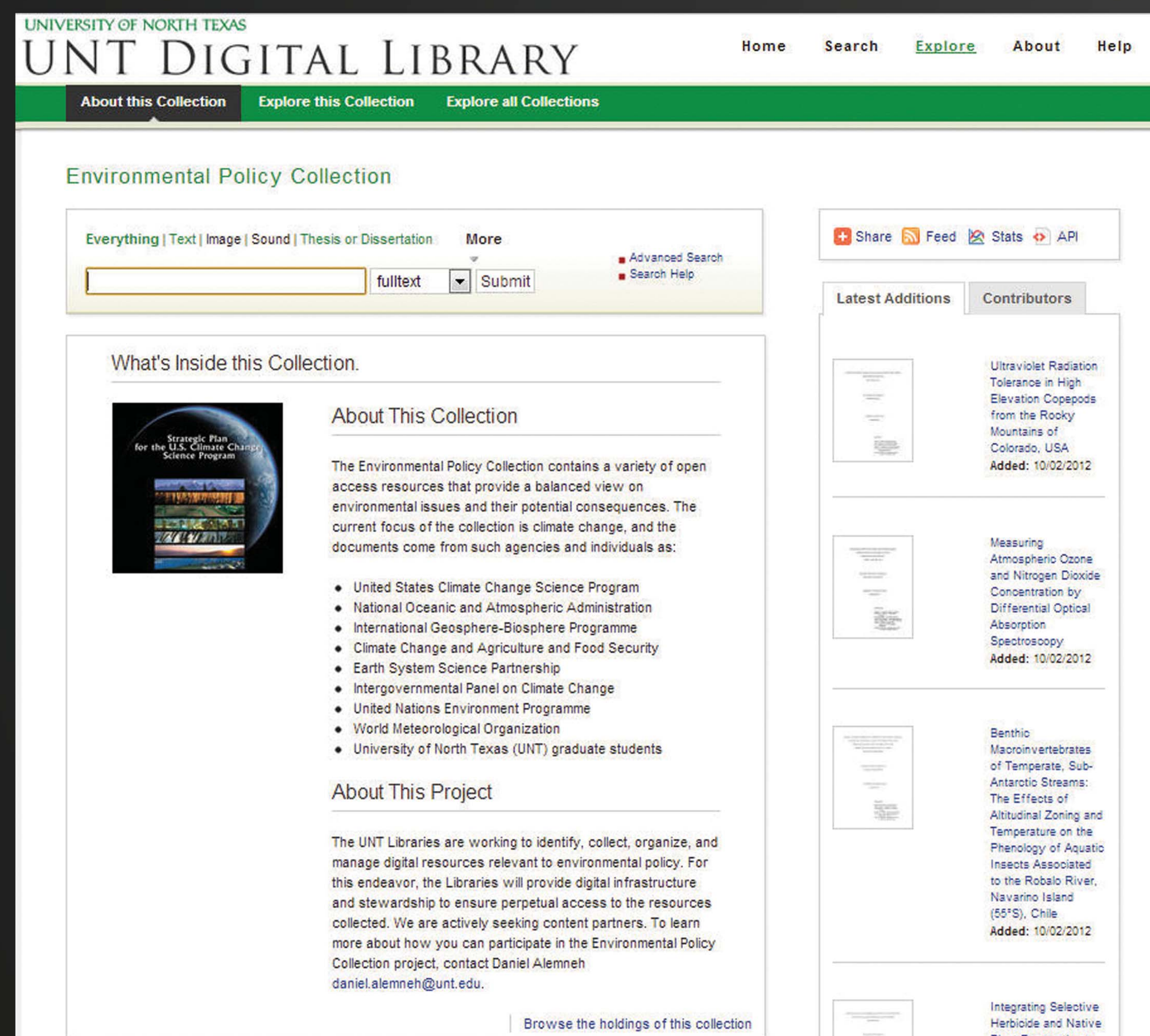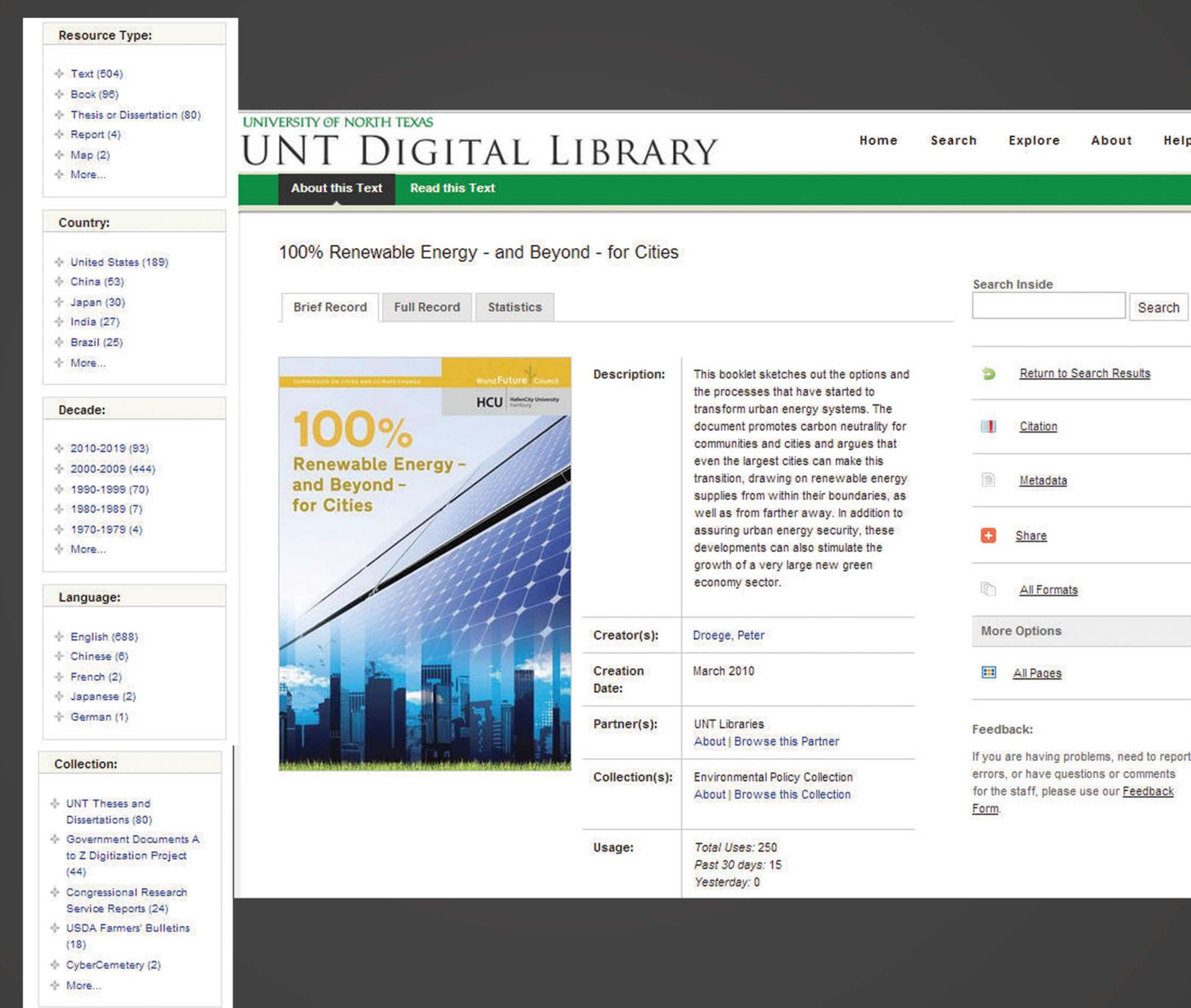

Figure 2. The Environmental Policy Collection Sample Page
http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/ESDC/

In addition to repurposed items from existing digital collections, materials added to the collection were harvested from the websites of U.S. federal agencies, state governments, foreign governments, and international non-government organizations and research bodies. Most of the materials were under a creative commons license or in the public domain. Providing access in such ways will have important implications not just for future researchers in climate change per se, but for stakeholders engaged in collaborative collection development efforts.
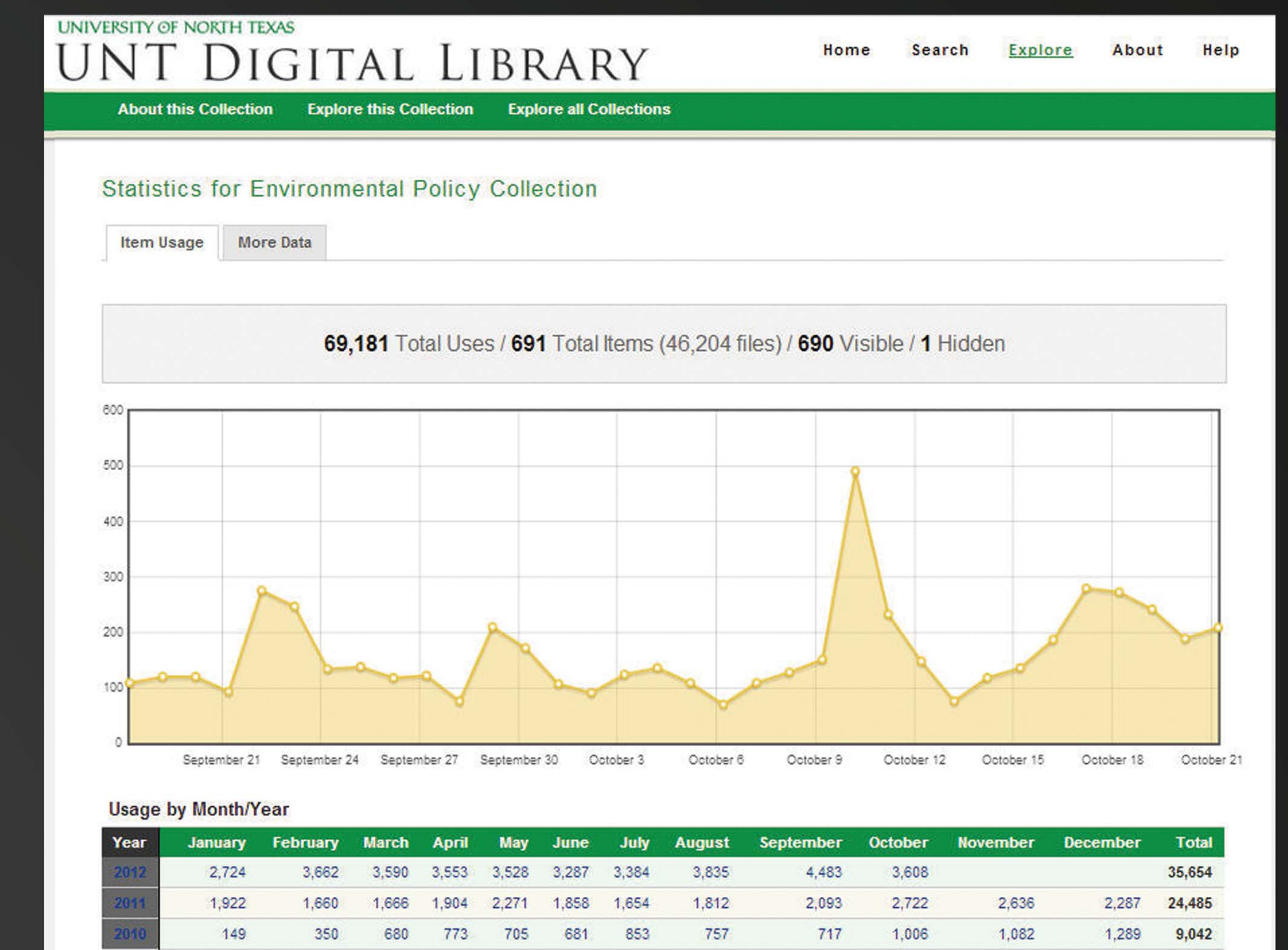

Figure 3. Usage Statistics for Environmental Policy Collection
http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/ESDC/stats

Summary

As research and scientific inquiry depend on both the availability of heterogeneous resources and their openness to easy and continued access, enabling knowledge creation and facilitating access to information resources become critical. To deliver a rich user experience and maintain the consistency of search results and high recall of available resources, it is critical to ensure the quality of the keywords and taxonomies used to describe heterogeneous digital resources within digital libraries. Based on the UNT Libraries' experience in integrating heterogeneous digital resources from diverse sources, the authors speculate that letting subject specialists and liaison librarians curate digital collections in their own fields could lead to even more useful digital collections, as well as better integration of goals and values between various stakeholders. By doing so, we can facilitate repurposing of existing digital resources and smoothing interdisciplinary communication.