When the new APS website debuted at the end of November, the American Philatelic Research Library’s catalogue got an upgrade. The first change regular users will probably notice is the new banner, identifying the online catalogue as the Philatelic Union Catalog. The catalogue also got a new, simpler search interface, and we added help screens to guide you through the search process.

In addition to providing information about the APRL’s holdings, the online catalogue allows users to search the holdings of five other libraries:

- Collectors Club (New York)
- Harry Sutherland Philatelic Library at the Greene Foundation
- Slusser Memorial Library at the Postal History Foundation
- Rocky Mountain Philatelic Library
- Western Philatelic Library

The Collectors Club of Chicago and the Royal Philatelic Society of London also have joined the Union Catalog and their holdings should be available soon.

The Union Catalog also provides access to a database of article references. The majority of these were contributed by library staff. The Postal History Foundation is using the Union Catalog to index its journal, The Heliograph.

**Requesting Books & Articles**

When you find something that interests you in the catalogue, click the “Add to Cart” link. The cart will save your records while you continue to search. (It times out after 90 minutes of inactivity, so if you have to step away from your computer, you may want to e-mail the contents of your cart to yourself to avoid losing items.)

You can use the cart to send a request to the library. Look for the bookcart icon near the top of your screen and click the link to review your cart contents. You can remove items, or click on “catalog search” to search for more items to add.

When you have all the items you want in your cart, select “Request from the APRL” from the drop-down box and click “Go.” The next screen prompts you to enter your information. In addition to your name and address, include any special instructions or messages for library staff. For example, if you are requesting copies of articles, you can use this space to specify whether you want photocopies mailed to you or scans sent to you by e-mail. Or, if you were not able to find everything you were looking for, you can use this space to ask library staff a question.

**Where’s That Book?**

As you search the catalogue, you may notice library codes like APRL, RMPL, and CCNY in book and journal records. These codes tell you which library owns the item. In some cases, you may see more than one record for a particular book or journal. This is because each library in the Union Catalog that owns an item will have their own record — with their own notes and call numbers — for that item.

The power of the Union Catalog lies in being able to discover, with one search, the existence of philatelic publications even if they are not owned by the library you use. The APRL may have the largest and most accessible collection of the current Union Catalog libraries, but...
each library has its own strengths and special collections. This was demonstrated recently by Brian Birch, who had been looking all over the world for a thesis titled *A Librarian’s Guide to the Literature of Philately*. The APRL did not have a copy of the thesis, but a quick search of the Union Catalog revealed a copy in the Collectors Club library. Brian described his quest for the thesis in the second and fourth quarter 2011 issues of the APRL’s journal, *Philatelic Literature Review*.

Keep in mind that the APRL can only fill requests for items in our collections, and each library has its own access policies. When you are searching for books to borrow, you may find it useful to limit your search to the holdings of the APRL. To do this, use the dropdown box on the search screen to select “APRL” from the list of library codes.

Article references do not have library codes, because it would be too time-consuming to track which libraries own the journal issue containing each article in the database of nearly 200,000 references. To search for articles, select “All libraries and indexes” from the drop-down box, and enter “article” in the record type box. To find out if the APRL owns the journal issue containing the article you want to read, do a second search on the journal title and then click “Full display” to view holding information — or simply add the reference to your cart and request it, and library staff will let you know if the article is available.

Whenever you have research questions, please feel free to contact library staff for assistance. You will usually work with your librarian (me) or our reference assistant, Neil Coker. You can reach us by phone at 814-933-3803 (press 3 for the library), by e-mail at aprl@stamps.org, or by mail at APRL, 100 Match Factory Place, Bellefonte, PA 16823.