

THE INFORMATION CENTER FOR ROPEWAY STUDIES  
ARTHUR LAKES LIBRARY, COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES  
NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The Information Center for Ropeway Studies, established in 1991 at the Arthur Lakes Library on the Colorado School of Mines campus, continues in its original role of collection development in the theory, design, and operation of ropeway systems. The Library is also responsible for the development of the ROPEWAY Database, a bibliographic database for this specific subject area. The ROPEWAY Database is available on the Web and serves a population of remote users as well as Arthur Lakes Library clients. Financial assistance from OITAF-NACS has supported both the collection and the database. In 1996, a Five-Year Strategic Plan was implemented to guide development of the Center in four directions: marketing, collection development, improvements to access, and improvements to services. In the past three years, new partnerships have formed that have expanded the scope of the database and the Center, providing more comprehensive coverage of the subject and increasing the breadth of coverage in the database. These partnerships include: the addition of ropeway-related materials from Jenlynn International, Inc., a division of Kimley Horn, into the ROPEWAY Database, and cooperative database-building efforts with the International Rope Data Base (IRDB), currently supported by OIPEEC (International Organization for the Study of the Endurance of Wire Rope).

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Introduction

The Information Center for Ropeway Studies was established in 1991 at the Arthur Lakes Library on the Colorado School of Mines campus in Golden, Colorado. It began with the gift of the working library of Charles Dwyer, a Colorado ropeway engineer with considerable experience in designing, building, testing, and regulating ropeway systems. From its beginning, the Ropeway Center has been guided by an Advisory Board to ensure its applicability and serviceability to those interested in this subject. The Board determined the collection development areas of the Center to include information on the history, theory, design, and operation of ropeway systems. The Center now has approximately 250 monographs, seven journal and newsletter titles, a manufacturers' catalog file, a reprint file, videos, 35 mm slides, lantern slides, and photographs. The Center is physically accessible during Library hours (58 hours per week in the summer, 95 hours per week during the academic year). As part of the Colorado School of Mines Library, the monograph and serial titles are available through the computerized public access catalog, CARL, on site or via telnet at [pac.coalliance.org](http://pac.coalliance.org) or via World Wide Web at <http://www.carl.org/>. The tables of contents of journals are included in UnCover, a table of contents document delivery database available at <http://uncweb.carl.org/>.

The Advisory Board desired to have ropeway information available at greater depth than that provided by a general online catalog or table of contents database. As a consequence of that concern, the Library was made responsible for the development of the ROPEWAY Database, a bibliographic database for this specific subject area. This database contains citations of information found not only at the Information Center for Ropeway Studies but also citations of information found elsewhere pertaining to the theory, design, history, and operation of ropeway systems.

Clients include engineers, students, scholars, other libraries, winter sports specialists, legal representatives, and the public. Materials may be examined in person, or copies may be provided through worldwide interlibrary loan. Original projections indicated that visiting individuals would be the primary clientele of the Center, but electronic access to the ROPEWAY Database has outstripped the visitor count.

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OITAF-NACS (The International Organization for Transportation by Rope – North American Continental Section) financially supports the Information Center for Ropeway Studies and the database. Since the original donation of materials by Charles Dwyer, several individuals have donated items such as books, manufacturers' catalogs, videos, and design drawings. These individuals include Robert Diener, Vernon Kelsey, Robert Heron, and William Meals on behalf of his father Casper D. Meals. In 1997, the Robert Ficker family designated the Information Center for Ropeway Studies to receive memorials for Robert "Bob" Ficker. The Colorado School of Mines, the Arthur Lakes Library, and the Information Center for Ropeway Studies are deeply honored to be the recipients of the generous gifts given in honor of this very special man.

The Information Center for Ropeway Studies continues to be unique, as there are no other specialized information centers in this subject area in the United States. Individual engineering libraries may retain some journal subscriptions or individual volumes of interest, but research-level collection development in the United States is only done for this Information Center. The Center has the longest journal run of *ISR (Internationale Seilbahn Rundschau)* of any library in the United States, including the Library of Congress. Other unique sub-collections in the Center include early shop drawings of material tramways from the A. Leschen & Sons Rope Company and a selection of lantern slides of photographs of ropeways from the turn of the century. Perhaps most importantly, no other library has facilitated access to such a collection with a database for in-depth coverage.

### The ROPEWAY Database

The ROPEWAY Database is a bibliographic database pertaining to the theory, design, history, and operation of ropeway systems, covering journal articles, symposia and conference proceedings, books, reports, handbooks, manufacturers' catalogs, and any print or media information publicly available. Identification of citations, abstracting and indexing assignments, data entry, quality control, loading of files, and design of the database are accomplished by Library staff and student assistants. The Colorado School of Mines Computing Center staff handles storage and hardware and software maintenance. ROPEWAY can be accessed via the World Wide Web from anywhere at any time at the address <http://www.mines.edu/plweb/>.

Each record contains the following fields: author, title, source, meeting, publisher, publication year, keywords, abstract, location, call number, and language. ROPEWAY is considered a value-added database because subject specialists supply the abstract (if an author abstract is not provided) and keyword fields to assist in retrieval. Abstracts provide additional terms for retrieval for those choosing to search using natural language rather than specific keywords. All the fields are searchable. (Figure 1)

The ROPEWAY Database uses PLWEB Software from Personal Library Software, Inc., of Rockville, Maryland. Upon connection to PLWEB, a search screen is displayed, allowing the searcher to choose the ROPEWAY Database, input the search, and make

special adjustments to the search if desired. The search engine is very flexible, allowing the novice as well as the advanced researcher to be comfortable. The search results appear as a list of documents, ranked by relevance to the search terms. By highlighting a document on the list, the full record can be displayed.

### Five-Year Strategic Plan

In 1996, the Advisory Board determined that it was time to provide structured longer-range planning for the Center and began formal determinations surrounding a five-year plan. The Five-Year Plan provides the following mission statement and goals:

#### **Mission statement**

The Information Center for Ropeway Studies provides access to a comprehensive collection on information relative to the history, theory, design, and operation of ropeway systems including recreational and materials ropeways.

#### **Goals**

The Information Center for Ropeway Studies continues to:

- Provide an accessible location for materials on ropeways including monographs, journal and newsletter titles, manufacturers' catalogs, reprints, slides and lantern slides, photographs, videos, and drawings.
- Provide information on the location of materials on ropeways wherever they are housed.
- Provide electronic bibliographic access to records regarding materials on ropeways in the Information Center and elsewhere.
- Collect information relative to the history, theory, design, and operation of ropeway systems including recreational and materials ropeways, incorporating significant drawings, photographs and personal memoirs.

(Information Center for Ropeway Studies, Arthur Lakes Library, Colorado School of Mines, Five-year Plan, 6/20/96)

The Board chose four strategic directions for development: marketing, collection development, improvements to access, and improvements to services. In order to pursue these directions, certain strategies have been used. A brochure describing the Information Center and ROPEWAY database is available. Additionally, efforts to ensure the effective and efficient use of the Center and database are extended by the Library

staff to the visitors of the Center and those inquiring by telephone and e-mail. The placement of the ROPEWAY Database on the World Wide Web offers easy and economic access to the world. The investment in PLWEB software was a sound decision, as use of the ROPEWAY database is greater than expected. Figure 2 shows the number of accesses per week in 1998, as determined by counting software.

### New Partnerships

From its inception, the Information Center for Ropeway Studies has received particular attention from OITAF-NACS. It is probable that without this financial support for the collection, the database, and even the furniture, the Ropeway Center would have been incorporated into the larger library collection. The Center is on much firmer footing because of gifts of materials and memorials. It is exciting to note that the Center is using cooperative ventures to further its contribution to scholastic endeavors and service to the profession by providing more comprehensive coverage of the subject and expanding the breadth of coverage in the ROPEWAY Database.

Jenlynn International, Inc., a division of Kimley Horn, in Boulder, Colorado, allowed the Library to examine their entire corporate library for items appropriate for inclusion into the ROPEWAY Database. Items appropriate for the Database were identified by using Library staff and student assistants. A subject specialist abstracted and indexed those selected items on site. The entire file was reviewed for appropriateness, as only materials that are non-proprietary are part of the database.

This cooperation proved a unique opportunity for improving comprehensive coverage for the database, as this is a current working collection of a company. It is true that most private corporations do not feel a scholarly responsibility toward the provision of information for the larger public; Jenlynn is to be commended for their public service ethic. This was the first partnership of this type that had been attempted by the Information Center for Ropeway Studies. It did not go as efficiently as anticipated, but Jenlynn was very tolerant as the Center moved through the learning curve of selecting, abstracting, and indexing at a remote site. The Information Center for Ropeway Studies hopes that similar opportunities will become available in the future.

The second cooperative venture is in the early stages of development. On September 4, 1997, Richard Chaplin of the University of Reading communicated that a meeting had been held to discuss the OIPEEC (International Organization for the Study of the Endurance of Wire Rope) Management Committee proposal for the development of a database on wire rope technology. The International Rope Data Base (IRDB) would benefit members of participating organizations and perhaps include access for the general public. The support for IRDB would come from OIPEEC but might also include OITAF and the Arthur Lakes Library, among others. If OITAF or other organizations become involved, the IRDB would include coverage on ropeways in general, but its initial thrust concerned the endurance of wire rope as is appropriate for its organization's focus.

It was agreed that IRDB must be based on commercially available software, which would permit long-term development. Filemaker Pro, currently used at Reading (England), Aachen (Germany), and Zurich (Switzerland), was chosen. This software allows searches based on keywords and other parameters. Fields to be included in each record are: IRDB reference number, authors, title (original language), title (English), language of original document, year of publication, journal title or publisher, number of references, keywords, and a summary. A keyword system is under discussion and development (Richard Chaplin, personal communication, September 4, 1997). Costs for data entry are currently being assessed. A test of how different specialists apply keywords will be undertaken in the next few months (Richard Chaplin, personal communication, April 2, 1998). At this point in time, no formal document delivery service is planned by OIPEEC.

Another form of cooperative venture involves virtual space. The ROPEWAY Database has gained further exposure via hot links through the Internet. SIMON, Ski Industry Maintenance and Operations Network, provides the ski industry with a forum for exchanging information and ideas. Some selected areas of their services are open to the public and their homepage includes a hot link to the ROPEWAY Database. The address for SIMON is <http://radius.com/welcome.cfm>. The homepage for *Ski Area Management (SAM)* also has a hot link to the ROPEWAY Database. Their address is <http://saminfo.com>. It is gratifying that other organizations recognize the value of the ROPEWAY Database and provide additional exposure.

## Conclusion

The Information Center for Ropeway Studies continues to be responsive to the clientele interested in this subject area, investing in those strategies that are of benefit to remote users. Careful effort is invested in the ROPEWAY Database, as this is the representation of the Center and its services to the world. The placement of the ROPEWAY database on the Web has improved access for remote users as well as those physically visiting the Arthur Lakes Library.

Materials received at the Center by purchase and donation continue to be incorporated into the ROPEWAY Database. The decision to improve comprehensive coverage through a cooperative venture with Jenlynn International, Inc., provided access to additional material for clients and also provided experience to the Library for other similar cooperative ventures. Cooperative efforts with OIPEEC on the development of a database on the endurance of wire rope are promising, even though this project is in a very preliminary stage of development.

The Arthur Lakes Library looks forward to further developments of the Center and the ROPEWAY Database, with the continuing support of OITAF-NACS.

## REFERENCES CITED

Chaplin, Richard. 1998. Personal communication via e-mail from the University of Reading, Reading, United Kingdom, April 2, 1998, and September 16, 1998.

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Information Center for Ropeway Studies, Arthur Lakes Library, Colorado School of Mines. 1996. Five-year Plan, June 20, 1996. Unpaginated.

-Author- Prof. G. Oplatka, P. Vaclavik  
-Title- Slippage resistance in ropeway grips  
-Source- Internationale Seilbahn Rundschau (ISR), 3/97, April 1997, p. 33-36.  
-Meeting-  
-Publisher-  
-PubYear- 1997  
-Keywords- Ropeways; Component, Grips; Slippage tests; Regulations  
-Abstract- Article describes test requirements and procedures for grip slippage tests required by manufacturers and authorities. Illustrative graphs and photograph.  
Bibliography. (CFD)  
-Location- Colorado School of Mines, Arthur Lakes Library  
-CallNumber-  
-Language- English

Figure 1. Sample record of the ROPEWAY Database showing fields.



### ACCESS OF ROPEWAY DATABASE BY WEEK 1998

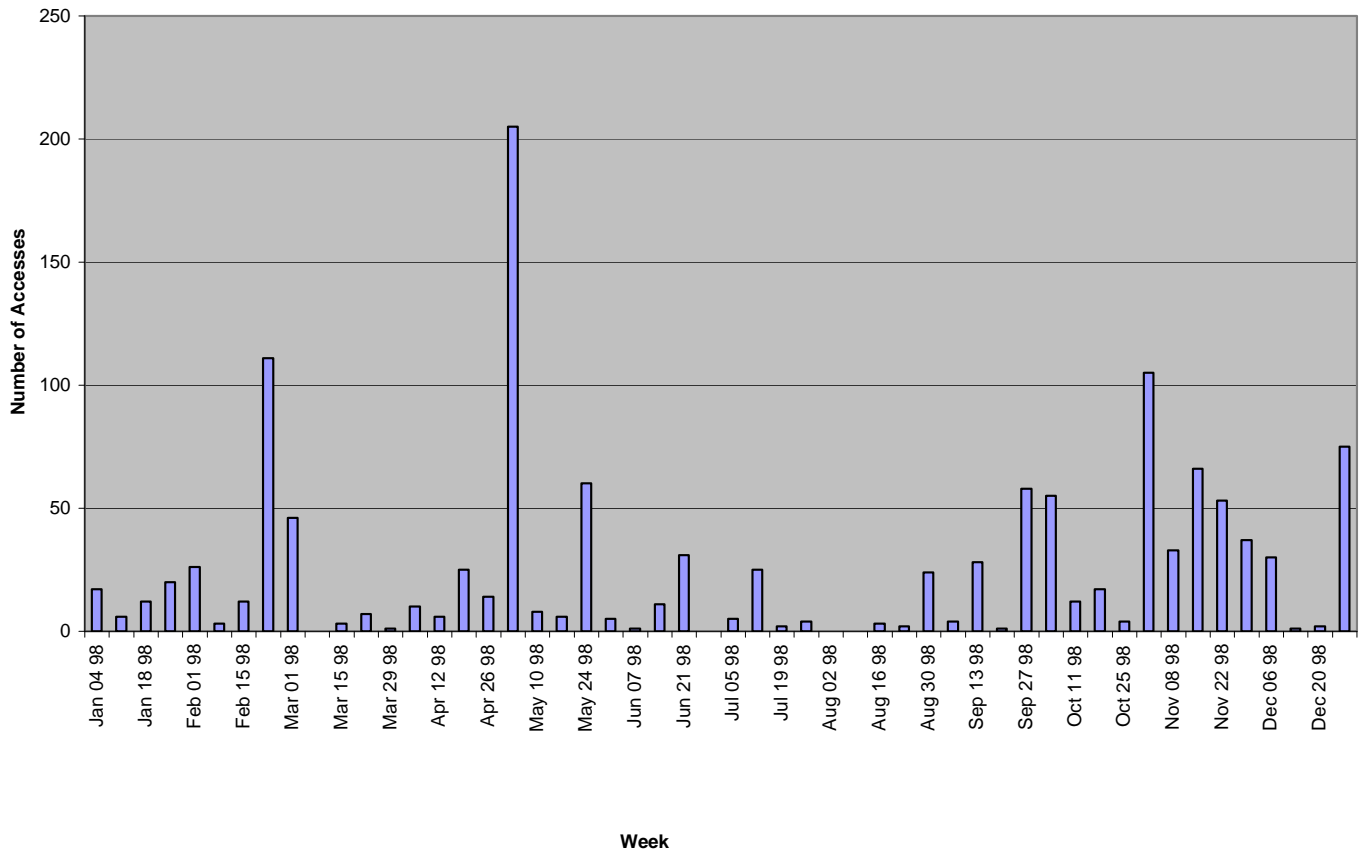


Figure 2. Table showing number of accesses of ROPEWAY Database by week of 1998.