# Virtual Libraries – Conceptual Considerations

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The „Virtual Library of Veterinary Medicine and General Parasitology" has been developed within the framework of several virtual libraries, sponsored by the German Research Society. In the planning of it principal questions arose:
1. Which contents?
   Internet resources – topical selection
2. How to select?
   Criteria for assessment
3. Data Filing

Possible answers :
1. Contents to consider for inclusion in a virtual library
   - Databases
   - Fulltext documents
   - (original and ditigitized by the project)
   - Graphics, photographs
   - Animations
   - Congress calendars
   - Catalogues
   - (individual and union catalogues)
   - URLs of tools essential for some special computerised resources
   - (Real Player, CHIME etc.)

2. Selection of resources
Given the wealth of available resources the developer may face the same situation, as if an internet search engine were used. Therefore it is necessary to
   - concentrate on quality instead of quantity employing standards for the selection adapted or derived from sources like:
        http://biome.ac.uk/guidelines/eval/howto.html
        http://hitiweb.mitretek.org/docs/criteria.html
   - systematise resources (subject classifications)

3. Data Filing
For better retrieval, even with search engines outside the virtual library
   - the use of metadata (Dublin Core)
   - the installation of a subject specific internet search machine for all subject related resources, including the resources not selected , but on the WWW are essential.

A virtual library is a dynamically developing collection. Short lived URLs would let it become outdated in a short time, if it were not continuously worked upon. Some technical precautions like the installation of
   - Link Checkers
   - Persistent URLs

may limit the workload.
Future scope is for broadening of contacts with libraries in related fields around the world and establishing a network of a universal virtual library with national gateways.