

The Ministry Exchange (MX) creates an online environment, accessible to anyone, for easily sharing ministry resources. It is designed to lower the barriers that can make it challenging for people — from students and faculty to staff, donors, and the general public — to {1} publish, {2} find, and {3} acquire resources they may need to grow spiritually and to lead effective ministries.

The MX highly participatory, and so it takes advantage of the Internet's power to distribute the creation and publication of content. Because the publication of ministry content can now be undertaken by any friend of InterVarsity, that work is distributed among a geometrically increased field of partners, multiplying the power and reach of InterVarsity's communications.

Features and Functions

Accessibility is the touchstone of the MX. It is designed to make it not just possible but positively easy:

- To upload nearly any kind of document, from Bible studies, posters, and training handouts to spreadsheets, slide presentations, and graphics (to name a few examples).
- To create sets of MX items for almost any purpose, akin to academic "course packs," whether from content you yourself uploaded or from items found throughout the MX. These sets are created with "labels" that any user can create.
- To find items in the MX by browsing. A densely branching information architecture enables visitors to browse by subject, genre, audience, original uploader, label, or reviewer, among others.
- To find items in the MX by searching. Users can use a simple "quick search" tool located on every page site-wide, or they can focus their search within any of a dozen specific fields with an advanced search query. (The MX is designed also to make sure that external search engines like Google find and rank highly items published in the MX.)

How does it work? The **publishing** process takes just a few steps:

- A web visitor registers with the MX (a one-time requirement) and
- fills out a form on a web page to identify, categorize, and upload their content item.
- Any one of a team of designated staff moderators approves the item for publication with the click of a button.

That's all — the item immediately goes live, appearing on the MX site. If instead a period of time elapses without a moderator's approval (or if it receives a certain number of "no" votes), the item is rejected, the uploader is informed by email, and the item never appears in the MX.

This process is designed to maximize the publishing power of the MX while using an absolute minimum of editorial intervention.

What then? Once an item is published, it becomes available to the general public through browsing or search for **viewing or download** (which does not require user registration), for **labeling** for inclusion in a list defined by any user, for **emailing** to anyone, and for users to give it a **rating and review**. Only registered users can submit item reviews and ratings, which are averaged to give a quick snapshot of how an item has been received by other users.

The MX displays the following information about each item:

- a title, subtitle, and brief description
- the downloadable document's file type and size
- a list of all the item's subjects, genres, and audiences
- the author's full name and uploader's username
- the upload date
- how long the item is available
- how many times the item has been downloaded
- the item's average rating (out of "five stars")
- a complete list of individual ratings and reviews
- links to related content

Other **special features** of the MX include:

- The ability of any InterVarsity staff (all of whom are already pre-registered for the MX) to restrict access for any item they publish to other staff only
- The ability of any user to customize (in several ways) their own "user page"
- The ability to "subscribe" (using RSS-reader software) to innumerable sets of MX updates, ranging from the newest or most-often-emailed items to fresh reviews made about a specific item
- And, without exaggeration, countless other features

Path-Breaking Technologies

The MX takes full advantage of InterVarsity's existing web-publishing technologies, developed over the past four years, including such features as item management, dynamic indexing, user commenting, XHTML- and CSS-valid code, and caching for server performance. But what's more, it deploys numerous technical features never before seen on any public InterVarsity website, including:

- global InterVarsity metadata (including global subjects and sub-subjects, audiences, etc.)
- database-driven advanced search
- site-wide RSS syndication feeds
- industry-standard intellectual-property licensing

- global user registration
- dynamic, live download counts, user ratings, and page views
- site-wide security permissions

Further Info

Please address any questions about the MX to [help\[at\]ministryexchange\[dot\]org](mailto:help[at]ministryexchange[dot]org).