

Single Search? The promises and pitfalls of web-scale discovery

By Carol Elder.

Speakers:

John Durno (University of Victoria), Corey Davis (Royal Roads), Natalie Gick (SFU), Dana McFarland (VIU), Elizabeth Wright (VIRL)

Convenor:

Maryann Kempthorne (VSB)

The look and feel of library catalogues is changing, as libraries implement web-scale discovery services such as Summon or BiblioCommons, with their Google-like federated search capabilities. This pre-conference session provided a broad overview of available products in today's market, looked at implementation options and challenges, and provided a chance to do a test drive, comparing features and presentation.

To start, John Durno gave an excellent overview of the evolution of discovery layers, from their initial appearance in about 2008 as primarily a visual layer on top of the catalogue (fondly referred to as 'lipstick on a pig'), to the discovery services being used today. The main feature of these services is the Google-like search of both the library catalogue and serials databases using pre-built indexes, providing quick searches and relevance-ranked displays.

Corey Davis then walked the group through some of the most common services available:

- OCLC World Cat Local
- Summon from Serials Solutions
- EBSCO Discovery Service
- Ex Libris Primo Central
- BiblioCommons
- VuFind (open source)

For each product, Corey commented upon unique features, databases indexed, fee structures and customer base, providing a thorough overview of what's out there today. Working in small groups, we then had an opportunity to test drive the products. Our group took a look at the open source VuFind installation at [Villanova University](http://villanova.edu), where a search brings up results in two columns, one for books and the other for articles, which gives students a clear distinction between the two types of materials.

Panelists then discussed why their institutions chose the discovery service they did. Within this group, it seems Summon is the product of choice for academic libraries, while public libraries are working more with BiblioCommons. When discussing the BiblioCommons installation at VIRL, Elizabeth Wright mentioned features like:

- RSS feeds
- Fuzzy logic and spell check
- No dead ends
- Access via the Internet for mobile devices
- Social networking aspects, such as customer reviews, tagging and comments, which are shared amongst all BiblioCommons users
- Automated awards and new title lists

Everyone else on the panel represented an academic library using Summon. Reasons for this choice included:

- Access to books and articles with one search engine
- Effective use of facets
- Compatibility with mobile devices
- Relatively quick installation due to little customization (as long the library already subscribes to the Serials Solutions knowledgebase - libraries not using the Serials Solutions knowledgebase found the implementation of Summon was more complicated)

A couple of challenges to be aware of are the quality of fixed fields in the MARC record, especially the Leader 06-07, which may require a clean-up of records, and the fact that authority records are not mapped or accessed.

This was an extremely well organized and informative look at discovery services. These fast-evolving products are changing the nature of library searching in a big way, creating different standards and expectations that all library workers need to be involved with.

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