Metalib and SFX in the National Library of Spain

Background

The management of electronic resources has become a "great deal" for libraries and it is a cornerstone for the integration attempts. The National Library of Spain started with a very simple system (basically, a webpage that described the use of these resources and provided access to both databases and electronic journals). This system was uncomplicated and appropriated for a first stage, but as the ER were more and more substantive and the internet evolved, it became inadequate, as the A-Z lists were too vast; and it was evident that we needed a new system in order to organise and provide a useful access to these resources.

In this context, the library acquired Metalib and SFX as a technical solution for the integration of licensed and non-licensed products, as well as library catalogues and some local resources. Metalib and SFX are well known among libraries, and they have been implemented in a great number of institutions but as soon as we started to plan the implementation process we realised that there were two big differences in relation with most libraries. First, we have a specific mandate as providers of Spanish and Hispano-American material; this doesn't happen in university and specialized libraries, that are in the need of good academic and research materials, regardless of the origin or the language of the resource. Secondly, we are a general library, so we have a wide range of users, on the contrary of university libraries, which have well defined types of users; this second difference could add new problems in relation with the usability of the system.

Goals

From the beginning, we defined several goals that should lead to an adequate implementation of the applications. We can organise them in two issues:

- Goals related with the resources:

We decided that, in order to make the applications useful for every user, we should make a very detailed and quite restrictive selection of the resources in the Knowledge bases of Metalib and SFX, and complete this with more resources that match our patrons' needs. The selection of the resources of the KB would constitute the main part of the local bases of Metalib and SFX, and the selection of external resources would complete them, so the application could be useful to a wider range of user. We established the following criteria for choosing the external resources:

Languages and countries: The Central databases include few or even no Spanish resources, and very few French, German, Italian, Portuguese resources. We searched the main bibliographic resources of these countries and tried to include the best and most comprehensive ones.

Publishing Entities: We laid a specific emphasis on the entities that are responsible of national bibliographies as well as official research centres, universities, public information systems, etc.

Subject: The National library collections are specially relevant for humanities and social sciences; however, we tried to make a minimum on every thematic area and to include some areas of interest for our users even if they are not usually considered "academic" resources.

- Goals related with usability: The use of Metalib and SFX is not complicated; however, it is important to realize that they quite new applications and most of patrons have never or seldom used a meta-search engine. This problem is probably less important for specialised libraries, where patrons are used, at least, to search databases and electronic resources, but it can be a serious impediment for those patrons that have little knowledge of these resources and find the new applications as a burden, instead of a useful tool.

First, the library decided to establish a unique access to both Metalib and SFX, based on the connections between these applications. Doing so, we

offer a "portal" where the user can browse and he doesn't even know that he's using different tools, just several modules within the same tool.

We also tried to simplify the design in order to make it intuitive. We had seen several Metalib and SFX implementations and we took advantage of this to plan an easy-to-use system. That's why we put the "quick search module" in first place, instead of the "E-resource locator module", as some other libraries have done, and that's also the reason because of which we carefully prepared contextual help texts for every screen, in addition to the user guide that the system provides.

Resources selection

The first goal was to provide the users with Spanish resources in addition to those that are included in the CKB. We consulted other Spanish implementations of Metalib-SFX, mainly those of CSIC and UPV that were the first ones in our country. Both of them have very large and well selected material, and we took them as a reference. We could summarize as follows:

METALIB

 - Spain:

> ➢ **National Library of Spain**: Main catalogue, Digital Library Catalogue
> ➢ **Ministry of Culture**: Spanish ISBN Agency, PARES (Spanish Archives Portal, Catálogo Colectivo del Patrimonio Bibliográfico (Spanish Heritage Union Catalogue), Films Database
> ➢ **CSIC**: Main catalogue, Bibliographic databases, Archives Catalogue, Chemical works in Spanish libraries, Digital Library of Mathematics works.

- **Spanish universities and regional catalogues**: Catalogues of UCM, Carlos III, UNED, CCUC.
- **Digital libraries catalogues**: Archivo Virtual de la Edad de Plata, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico.

- Latin America:

- **National Libraries** of Chile, Mexico, Portugal
- **Databases**: Scielo, Redalyc

- Other institutional and private resources from Spanish or Latin American:
    - **Commercial databases**: Bibliografía de la Literatura Española desde 1980, legal databases (La Ley, Aranzadi, Tirant Online…)
    - **Catalogues of special libraries**: AECI (Spanish Agency for Cooperation) libraries, Biblioteca Real (Royal Library), Boletín Oficial del Estado (Oficial Gazette)

- Foreing institutions: National libraries, national bibliographies, databases.

As a result, we have incorporated about 200 hundred Spanish, Latin American and European resources of all levels and all types, including 165 resources in Spanish language.

SFX

In SFX, the situation was different because there are very few Spanish and Latin American e-journals servers. However, the objectives were the same, with a different performance.

Given the international approach of most of e-journals servers, it was decided to locate the few Spanish ones and to examine in detail the international servers. They found three main e-journal servers in Spanish language, two by Spanish

institutions, RCSIC and Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and one in the Latin American area: Scielo. Every (or nearly) e-journal included in these servers, portfolios in the SFX terminology, have been added to the local database, up to a number of 458 e-journals. Besides that, they examined the international portfolios in order to extract the Spanish journals from them. The process included about twenty portfolios, and they found that two of these portfolios had a relevant amount of Spanish e-journals: Miscellaneous Free E-Journals have 42 e-journals and DOAJ have over 2.200 e-journals.

These are numbers of the work that has been accomplished since April, but a similar or even greater work had been done before the public presentation of Metalib and SFX. Obviously it has been a hard work for the SFX team, but it has produced significant contribution: if we sum the total amount, the SFX local database in the National Library has 8.943 portfolios, and, although the system doesn't provide statistics on this aspect, the staff estimate that the Spanish resources could represent about 20%.

What can we learn of the statistics?

I think that the results are adequate and reasonably, both in number and in quality of the resources. However, when we examine the users statistics, we have to recognise that we have already problems. We could use a los of figures, but the main problem we have is always the same, no matter how we try interpret these figures: we have good result in amount of resources as well as in direct consultations, but these result are much poorer when we look to the services requested by users. What does this mean? We think there are two main reasons: first, both SFX and Metalib are more or less new, that's to say, they have been working for a relatively short period of time. This is normal and every library needs to make a special effort to beat the initial difficulties of users. Second, we have to complete and improve the implementation, and this is a problem that affects not only to libraries but also to the products: The problem is not the access neither the information, but the actions a user needs to make in order to get a piece of information. Maybe we can make some proposals.

Proposals

We need a **better coordination** with Ex Libris in order to make good configurations for our resources; in January we sent a list of resources to Ex Libris and the only resource they have configured is Dialnet, but, in fact, we sent to them the whole configuration. They have recently added one more, but obviously, two resources in eight month is not a good result. On the other hand, we would need a **better training** in order to configure by ourselves, so we can be more autonomous.

Conclusions

We have focused the Spanish resources because we really think that this is the most specific feature of our implementation, but we have obviously included a big amount of Anglo-Saxon resources (in fact, most of the resources are Anglo-Saxon). We expect this to be an added-value feature of our work, because the work of other libraries have also had an added-value that we appreciate, and the contributions of different institutions in different countries will make Metalib and SFX much more useful. But for doing so, we need to improve our users' abilities and, all above everything else, get a better coordination with Ex Libris and a better training, because this will make us capable of improving the flow of information within the applications, and this will make them easy to use.