

Integration of SFX A-Z list into MetaLib 4

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Agenda

- Background
- Design goals
- How it works
- Challenges
- Technical stuff
- How it should be

Background

- Updating MetaLib's database from SFX was resource-consuming in MetaLib 3
 - Without automated tools it would have been impossible for us
 - Even with the tools it took hours and was a heavy task
- So the goal of reducing TCO is good
- But the way it was done in MetaLib 4 was a disappointment
- Separate popup to A-Z list inadequate
 - Popups in general are bad and confusing
 - Degradation of coherency was not a tradeoff our users were willing to pay

Design Goals

- Integration
 - Make it resemble MetaLib 3's Find e-Journal as closely as possible
 - Make it seamless
- Support multiple languages
 - This is a must. We cannot provide monolingual user interfaces.
- Deep linking into A-Z inside MetaLib should be possible
- Avoid the need to do customization in SFX
 - Number of instances
 - Shared SFX instances

How It Works

- Sort of a rewriting proxy with some features of a screen scraping system
- Written in Perl
- Page construction:
 1. Initialize a new MetaLib session if necessary
 2. Fetch A-Z template from MetaLib
 3. Fetch A-Z screen from SFX
 4. Modify the A-Z screen
 5. Embed it into the A-Z template
 6. Send to browser

Challenges

- Multilingual environments need additional hacks in SFX
- Even then it's not possible to translate everything in SFX
- Different login systems may cause trouble
- Adapting A-Z to look good in MetaLib and be configurable with css difficult
- A-Z not up to par regarding accessibility
- JavaScript in A-Z
- Carrying cookies

Technical Stuff

- Uses HTML::TreeBuilder to parse A-Z HTML
- Rewrites
 - Buttons to the ones provided in template
 - Script links from relative to absolute
 - Links from relative to absolute including JavaScript
- Adds
 - Func and language to all forms etc. to carry them through
- Removes
 - Page title
 - Link target from "Push to MetaLib"
- Fixes
 - CSS class cases
- Etc.

How It Should Be

- SFX A-Z API
 - XML as usual
 - Fetch categories
 - Perform a search
 - Fetch results
- MetaLib as the user interface
 - Display search forms
 - Connect to SFX A-Z API
 - Display the results
 - Manage the results
 - Push to e-shelf
- The API could be used by custom UI's too just like X-server

Thank You!



http://www.lib.helsinki.fi/finelib/english/nelli/ml_utils/