Don’t panic ...! Are all library systems dying?

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• Single campus in south west England.
• Providing degree level education for more than 40 years, become a university in 1992.
• 22,000 students plus 10,000 at partner colleges.
The Library

• 400,000 titles in purpose built library. Extended by a third to 7,500 sq m in 2004.
• Various sorts of online catalogues since 1979.
• Voyager customer since 2003.
Preamble

- Consider in general terms the functions of the OPAC.
- List a few thoughts about the back office functions.
- Pose questions not provide solutions.
- Development team/ project based/ planning days/membership on focus groups.
Why question the need for an OPAC?

- WebVoyage and Voyager are entering the final phase.
- Need to consider what we really need, not just what the suppliers are offering.
- The range of resources has increased.
- The learning environment and the systems that support that environment have evolved.
The library catalogue

• Originally a single file held within the library.
• Computer Output Microform provided multiple access points and multiple copies.
• Early OPACs required specialist protocols (telnet)
• Today’s OPAC is available through IE some other browsers. (Several clicks from the desktop).
Today’s OPAC

- Voyager 7 revamp is only skin deep.
- Updating with e-resources is time consuming and open to matching errors.
- More resources without MARC records.
- Is it efficient to provide both an A-Z e-journals list and put MARC records in the catalogue?
Do we still need an OPAC?
Alternatives

- Primo, Encore, Aquabrowser, etc
- Embed the basic search in the student portal. Taking the search and delivery direct to the desktop.
  - The majority of our ILL requests are satisfied by SED. (Reducing the need to visit the library)
  - Reading lists such as Aspire which, as well as providing availability information, also provide web2 features such as ranking and in-line views.
- Front-ends to resources outside the OPAC.
My WebVoyage

- Using Keystone from Talis we have created webparts to provide due dates and fines data from the OPAC to Sharepoint, our VLE. We are introducing web payment for library fines.
- This is another example of taking the data to the user and providing functions on the desktop.
  - more immediate than emails or login to OPAC.
But…

• Reading lists are not universal.
• External users may not have access to the VLE.
• Does the library catalogue require a web presence?
• Will lack of an OPAC detract from marketing the library service?
Back office

- We have been buying metadata for years
  - Bib records from suppliers (shelf-ready)
  - MARCit records for e-journals
  - Authority records
  - Author-provided metadata for repository resources
- MMS extends this principle
- Shelf-ready – straight to shelves
Patron data

• Student record systems, HR systems, payroll systems, finance systems hold data about almost all our patrons.

• For many years the library provided the only ID card on campus, now it is centrally administered and multifunctional, linked to car parking, sports facilities and security.

• There should be no need for the library to maintain a separate patron database. Link to the true source of data.
Acquisitions

• MMS and supplier databases should continue to provide metadata about what we buy.
• The university finance system is the true source for financial data.
  – The finance department writes the cheques or authorizes the bank transfers.
• Why do we mimic a lot of those functions with the library system? And spend much time mapping or re-keying data from one system to another?
• Welcome many of the concepts.
• Provides an opportunity to review workflow and acquisitions staff deployment (currently divided by format).
• Is it radical enough?
• Recognise that different institutions may require different solutions.
• We are having the debate internally now about our requirements so that we can evaluate what is being offered.
Are all “library” systems dying?

- Not dying but ailing.
- Major step on the evolutionary path.
- More integration.
- More interoperability.
- Doing more with less.
- Data held once but used many times.
  - “Make the data work harder”.
Further reading


- Tamar Sadeh Extending the Openness of Aleph and Voyager, in The Ex Librarian Newsletter, August 2009
Thank you

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