Integration of SFX A-Z list into MetaLib 4

IGeLU 2007
Brno
Ere Maijala
The National Library of Finland
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/