

SMUG 4 EU

EUROPEAN NEWSLETTER FOR SFX/METALIB USERS



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- **In Portrait: Portugal**
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On death, Google and karaoke

September 2005, a crowded pub in London's Bloomsbury area, could be *The Lamb, The Swan or The Frog. Lager, Bitter and Guinness are running continuously out of shiny golden taps. The later the evening, the more rosy faces around: among them a group with white name cards awry clipped at their collars. They seem to have just come in from a conference centre nearby.*

A (*loud*): Have you heard? It's dead. They all say it's dead.

B (*startled*): Who's dead?

A (*laughing*): I guess, there won't even be a funeral. Nobody seems to be really sad.

C (*sighing*): Google, Google,

B: How many glasses have you had? What are you talking about?

C and A (*singing in a kind of*

canon): Google, Google, Google.

A: Seriously, don't you agree, that federated search systems

are dead? We can't compete with them, can we?

B: But we just started with MetaLib and SFX, statistics look promising ... Especially after we invested in trainings, special BA courses, introducing MetaLib and SFX. I could show you the numbers.

C (*sighing again*): You need courses, that's for sure.

A: But you won't get those kids back that you have already lost. They will stay with Google ...

B: Please, don't sing.

A (*a little peeved*): Don't you like my voice? (*happy again*) We could go to a karaoke bar afterwards.

B: But what is the alternative? Build big databases like Google does? Harvest data till you drop? (*A pause. Then thinking loud*) Probably we do need both. Big databases as well as federated search. You will never be able to harvest all the worlds data.

C (*mumbling*): Perhaps only a limited number of distributed harvested indexes around the world ...

A: Maybe I mixed it up: not federated search is dead, but the dream, that federated search is the ultimate solution.

C (*again awake*): Yes! That must be it! And then federated search can survive and be used for accessing those indexes!

The bell rings for last orders.

C: Have another beer. It's my round.

A + B: Yeess ... And then the karaoke bar ... (*singing*) Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away ...

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Let's talk

What you have said so far

BY ANDREA KRONEISL, THE AUSTRIAN LIBRARY NETWORK AND SERVICE LTD (VIENNA)

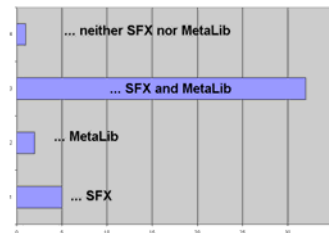
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There was an idea, which a few people really liked, so they started to find other people in other countries to help and after a few months hard work the idea became a reality: the first issue of SMUG-4-EU was born.

Then there was silence in the SFX/ML community, aside from some backslapping from good friends saying 'well done'. So they began to fear: was it really a good idea? Perhaps people had enough other things to read, that they don't want to be overloaded by information. Perhaps we chose the wrong topics.

Two months passed by without any reaction and so another idea began to grow: we have to ask the people whether they knew about the newsletter or not, if they liked it and what they expect from the next issue.

Therefore we decided to bother people once again, maybe for the last time.



My main interest is ...

At the SMUG conference in London we distributed a questionnaire. We wanted to gauge the communities reactions to see if we had the correct focus and what they were interested in.

Here are the results:

A total of 40 completed the questionnaire, 6 from the USA(!) and 34 from Europe.

Most of the readers are interested in both subjects, SFX and MetaLib. More than two thirds thought the newsletter nice to have, whether they had read it, read it partly or had not seen it yet.

The first focus story on the MetaLib interface seemed to be quite informative, at least for two third of the readers.

On 11 of the questionnaires there were comments, on what we should /should not do, in-



In my view SMUG-4-EU is ...

cluding one case where it was the total opposite from what another person suggested.

So what does the future hold?

We will go on, after all, and we will try to fulfill the wishes of our readers, so in future issues you will find more best practice articles, and also how-to's (if we can find people, who want to share information with other users). We also will have strategic debates, user portraits and conference reports, probably not in every issue, but we will try.

Lastly we are always looking for authors and editors, so do come and join us, then you can make your wishes come true!



Photo by: Marco Streefkerk

Editors finally meet face to face

Your Comments:

Go ahead! ☺ Very nice layout ☺

Keep up the informal style, it's very good ☺

Strategic debates via email ☺

guide to london' superfluous, more sfx/ML content instead ☺

Like the tone and style of the Newsletter very (!) much ☺

Our Comments:

Thank you all for your responses ☺

Yes, we would like to go on. ☺

It's fun and creative, sure, work as well ☺

We do miss Lukas a lot ☺

Somebody needs to take his place. Do you want to?



Remains of London

Photo by: Beate Rusch

Pen pals

Postcard from the southern hemisphere

BY NIKKI CROWSTER, CALICO
(CAPE TOWN)

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Greetings from a sunny Cape Town.

It was fitting that the upgrade of ALEPH to v16 happened in January this year at the height of summer. Despite the drought in this province, this version upgrade brought relief to the CALICO community. Like the drought and heat, this upgrade got us rather hot under the collar at times but unlike the rains which came much later, the solutions from Ex Libris largely flowed continuously.

As the season turned, so our hearts darkened with frustration at the conflicting information received about the operational requirements for the

MetaLib and SFX upgrade. Even the systems seminar at Kos attended by 6 Systems Librarians and the magnificent surroundings of the Greek isles did not stave off the sense of foreboding and yet puzzlement – after all, the world had done this before?

But, despite summer being a few months away, there was light in CALICO with the addition of a new ex-Ex Libris distributor employee with vast experience. It was summer in the northern hemisphere as we switched our first line support to Ex Libris Germany. Together with a German appointed project manager, CALICO sailed through the MetaLib and SFX upgrades putting us in good stead for STP in October.

An ARC in a drought, you may ask but CALICO purchased the



CALICO Systems Librarians with A. Edelmann Ex Libris Germany

ALEPH reporting centre and is scheduled to STP in December. We are working through the pre-recorded training package.

So we enter summer with less to worry about and more to look forward to with issues of customisation and interoperability of the CALICO Ex Libris suite of products. In idle moments with an intended ALEPH upgrade to v18 in summer 2006 we wonder – will this be a summer of (dis)content?

Further Info

- ◆ On CALICO: <http://www.calico.ac.za/calico/index.asp>
- ◆ On Cape Town's weather: <http://iafrica.com/weather/capetown/>



Photo by: Google Earth

Postcard from Boston College

BY BOB GERRITY, BOSTON COLLEGE (BOSTON)

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Founded in 1863, Boston College (BC) is a private coeducational university with an enrolment of 9,000 undergraduates and 4,700 graduate and professional students representing every state and more than 99 countries. Boston College confers more than 3,800 degrees in more than 50 fields of

study through 11 schools and colleges. O'Neill Library, the main library on campus, houses a collection of 2.2 million volumes, of which approximately 15% are available in digital format. The Boston College libraries were among the early North American adopters of MetaLib and SFX. BC went live with SFX (branded "find it") in November 2001 and with MetaLib (branded "MetaQuest") in January 2002. BC is currently

running version 3.13 of MetaLib and v3 of SFX. The libraries also use ALEPH (v16.02) and DigiTool (v2.4, with migration to v3.0 underway). Boston College hosted the first official North American SMUG users meeting in July 2002 (<http://www.smugnet.org/2002na/>). Much has changed since then!

Further Info

- ◆ <http://www.bc.edu/>

In Portrait

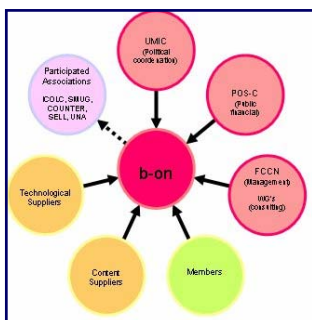
Learn Portuguese – b-on

BY JOÃO MOREIRA AND TERESA COSTA FCCN (LISBON)

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b-on is the acronym for *Biblioteca do Conhecimento Online* (Online Knowledge Library), a virtual library born in March 2004 with the goal of providing the Portuguese Academic, I&D and Hospital communities access to the main international sources of scientific electronic content.

B-on's political coordination is



Participating Entities

guaranteed by the Ministry of Science, Technology and High Education (MCTES) and the Knowledge Society Agency (UMIC).

The public financial support is provided by Operation Program for Knowledge Society (POS-C), which contributes 50% of the total amount. The other 50% is provided by its members. B-on's management (administrative, technical and financial) is done in the National Foundation for Scientific Computing (FCCN) which among other things manages the Academic and Research Portuguese network (NREN), Schools Network and ccTLD PT.

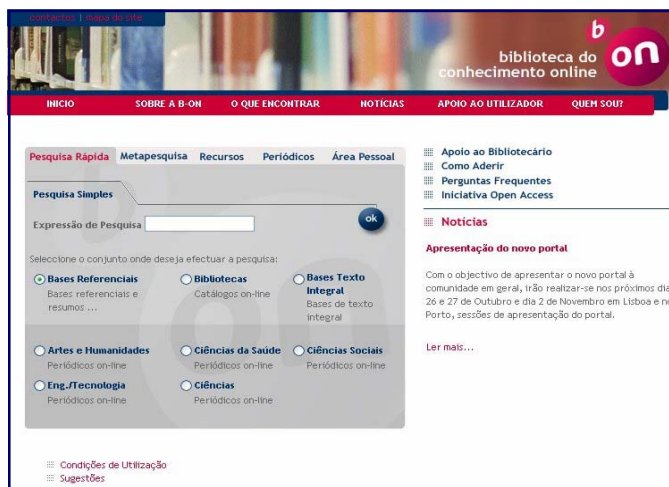
The b-on team consists of 3 full time staff (front and back office, librarian and technician) plus 2 part time staff (director and operational manager). Besides FCCN's representatives, b-on team also meets with a board of specialists (mainly librarians) from member's institutions that integrate, depending in their specialty field, into several working groups focusing on content, evaluation, negotiation, communication & training and dissemination & technical questions.

Members

B-on began with 48 members in 2004, but in 2005 this number has grown to 69, now serving more than 300.000 users. Currently we have 18 universities, 22 polytechnics, 13 research institutes, 3 non-profit institutions, 7 governmental institutions and 6 hospitals as b-on members.

Content suppliers

In 2004, b-on began with six content providers: Elsevier, Wiley Interscience, IEEE, Springer Link, Kluwer Online and Sage CSA. In 2005 b-on increased its content and licensed material with the following content providers: Association for Computing Machinery, American Chemical Society, American Institute of Physics, Annual Reviews, Institute of Physics, Royal Society of Chemistry, Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, Taylor & Francis and Zentralblatt. B-on provides two different types of packages: one for academic institutions, research institutes, non-profit institutions and governmental institutions; and another for hospitals. Within each package the members have access to the same content.



b-on's homepage at <http://www.b-on.pt>

Model

The costs are distributed by the members according to their FTE (full time equivalent user). This FTE is determined according to the type of user (students, professor, researcher or doctor) which, depending on the package, is their unit cost. Although b-on is e-only, DDP (Deeply Discount Prices) for print with the content providers are also negotiated so that members can have access to them at fair price.

Portal

In order to help the users access content, b-on provides an alternative tool – the b-on portal – based on MetaLib and SFX. The portal has one instance of each of the products (although we have customized it to serve both packages/communities) and is managed centrally at FCCN. B-on's portal was upgraded to 3.13 at the end of September becoming more flexible and functional and providing better and easier access.

Further Info

◆ <http://www.b-on.pt/>

In Portrait

The art of negotiation

By JOÃO MOREIRA FCCN (LISBON)

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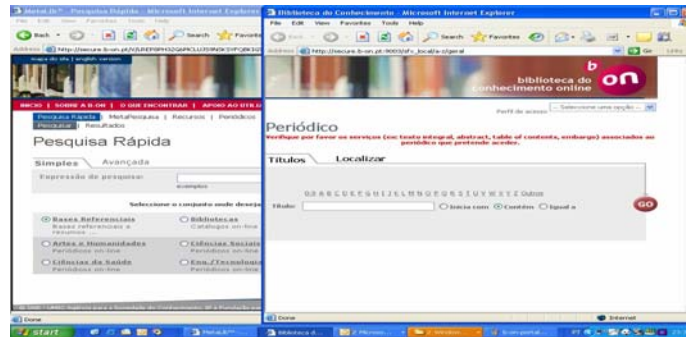
As in many other consortia, b-on's content life cycle is composed of several steps, in particular discovery, trial, selection and negotiation. At b-on these steps are undertaken by the content user group and negotiation user group which are composed of b-on team members and a board of specialists (librarians from the member institutions).

The negotiation process is based on a guide in which the negotiation user group specifies the consortia requirements. This guide, which has several sections including a technical one, is provided to every content provider.

When we talk to the content provider about technical issues, their answer is always yes (we have or we will have), but we know that this is not always true.

To assure that they listen to our needs, we developed a negotiation strategy:

- ask for the requirements,
- give them time to meet the requirements,



Quick Search and Find E-journals at b-on.pt

- claim for penalties if requirements are not met.

We start by asking them to meet our technical requirements and if they cannot we give them the opportunity to implement them within a specified timeframe. If they do not have the requirements completed by a specified date we can then apply the penalties. For example if we have a two year contract we can allow the publisher to become compliant in the first year and decide to apply the penalties at the renewal date if they do not. Our requirements include OpenURL compliance, structured search protocol, and counter compliance. Although 1% penalty in case of not meeting one of our requirements is not significant, it can place pressure on the publisher to implement the missing features.

There is one mandatory clause in the contract with content providers that don't have structured protocols gateways expressing our demand to make federated searching available.

As a final note we would like to concur that the inclusion of penalties in contracts is not easy (especially in renewals) but, just by the simple fact of raising them until the end of the negotiation process creates awareness of our requirements within the content provider organization (from the commercial structure to the technical and some times to the management). Once you sign everything becomes more difficult!

“Although 1% penalty in case of not meeting one of our requirements is not significant, it can place pressure on the publisher to implement the missing features.”

When everything else fails

By RUI FRANCISCO FCCN (LISBON)

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When everything else fails and structured search protocols aren't available, it's time for internal development, it's time for MetaLib external programs. The configuration starts with a simulation of the search in the publisher website to understand what type of searches are available and how they work.

In this simulation a network sniffer (Ethereal) is used to

obtain the search fields used, the URL addresses for HTTP POST or HTTP GET and the most important thing, session variables and web pages redirections.

One important thing to verify is the possibility to retrieve in only one fetch 30 records, from the publisher, in order to obtain faster performance and less traffic, using the MetaLib cache.

Another thing that we do differently from Ex Libris, is the programming language used. We use PHP rather than Perl, a pow-

erful script language that can be used to create dynamic web pages and scripts in different operating systems (Linux and Windows).

The rest of the development is done according to the Ex Libris documentation on external programs specifications.

In Focus

Cannot be without you – why metadata sharing is a must

BY ANDRES IMHOF, KOBV
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For the KOBV-consortia metadata sharing is a must and this is probably the case for you too. Let me explain why.

KOBV runs the regional information portal – named “KOBV-Portal”. Its orientation is universal: the content comprises not only of cross-searchable resources (e.g. online catalogs) but also of scientifically relevant, freely accessible internet sources such as link to resources and last but not least of all those resources which are licensed by the libraries in the region Berlin-Brandenburg. The cataloguing, development and maintenance of all these resources is time-consuming and expensive, raising the question why should the same resource be catalogued more than once.

Surely it would be better if the regional KOBV-Portal automatically inherited license information from the libraries which already have it. In return, why shouldn't other portals profit from the KOBV-Portal by re-using the resource descriptions made by the „editorial board for free resources“? Although the cost savings of integrating available resources from other repositories into a local environment such as a portal are clear, it is also important to take into consideration other reasons, which are explained below.

The global knowledge base Ex Libris offers to its customers, focuses mainly on searchable resources and their configurations. While this service is very helpful, it is not enough for all the different kinds of portals. Portals have different profiles, targeting different user groups which are developing their own



Grand ideas are coming

Photo by: Fisserman

collection profiles and services. A library portal predominantly addresses its library users, while thematically aligned subject portals have a broader and at the same time more specialized user group. On the other hand, each scientific community has its own gateway for research. ‘The one and only’ information portal will never exist because interests differ too much. Not every content, or every database is of great interest to everybody. Thus, each information portal needs its own perspective on the information world.

Local portals need both a variety of repositories to obtain metadata on resources as well as flexible export and import tools. No institution, that is willing to offer a comprehensive overview of all resources relevant to its profile, will be able to catalogue and configure all the resources alone, there simply aren't that many cataloguers. Ex Libris will also hardly be able to meet everybody's needs, therefore a workflow for the exchange of resource metadata is essential. This workflow should also include data from other vendor's portal systems. Ideally, a portal operator would be able to select the relevant resources out of the cooperative total. This does not allow only adding high-quality resources to their own portfolio but also

increases the quality and the number of the descriptive metadata. The more cooperation the more metadata. Also, through such a workflow metadata could be enriched continuously with multilingual descriptions. As explained there are a number of reasons for the need to provide a MetaLib environment which allows metadata sharing among customers, in addition to the CKB of Ex Libris.

The next question is how can a cooperative metadata sharing process including data enrichment be organized? Limiting it to a few standards makes life easier: such as the exchange interface (export and import), the format, the classification and nomenclature of resources types. In this context the NISO Metasearch Initiative is a step forward.

With the present MetaLib version (3.13, SP 69) the resource exchange between two partners is already possible. The basis is the active identifier (001) and the second identifier, which indicates the origin source (035). However, in a cooperative network with more than one exchange partner an internationally valid system of unified identifiers for electronic resources would be needed. Furthermore, MetaLib should be actually able to store and represent multilingual information, ideally on each individual element level according to the language selected by the user.

In conclusion all these efforts are worthwhile. No institution alone will ever be able to describe all available electronic resources, to describe them in all the appropriate languages and furthermore to monitor the accessibility of the URLs. Last but not least, the quality of the resource itself also has to be reviewed continuously.

“No institution, that is willing to offer a comprehensive overview of all resources relevant to its profile, will be able to catalogue and configure all resources alone.”



Photo by: Fisserman

Ideas becoming reality

In Focus

Questions and answers: an interview with Chris Roberts

CHRIS ROBERTS IS EX LIBRIS PRODUCT MANAGER FOR THE METALIB CENTRAL KNOWLEDGE BASE (CKB). SHE ANSWERED THE QUESTIONS FROM ARI ROUVARI, BEATE RUSCH AND ERE MAIJALA. BY E-MAIL.



Photo: privat

Chris Roberts

Which resources are an important addition to the central MetaLib knowledge base? What is your policy?

We concentrate on resources requested by our customers, focusing on resources that are globally used. Several specialized or regional user groups have provided us with prioritized lists of resources. We also prioritize resources that have “standard” (Z39.50 or XML) gateways and the resources that we can get access to from the information vendor. We have 100+ requests on our list currently, and most of those are in some stage of negotiation with the information vendor. This is something that MetaLib user groups can help with, by requesting that information vendors develop standard technologies and provide Ex Libris with access.

Our plans for 2006 include introducing technology and processes to allow our regional offices/distributors to add resources to the CKB and to allow us to create more stable configurations for resources that do not have standard technologies, thus expanding the scope of our “collection policy” for the CKB.

How do you manage to guarantee that a configuration is up-to-date?

Our development system has semi-automatic procedures in place. We continue to develop these and do hope to release them to MetaLib sites.

Who actually writes the configurations?

We have a team of staff members who concentrate on the CKB, including the configurations and the software tools used to write configurations and maintain them. There are some configurations in the CKB that were contributed by customers; the current percentage is low, but we are eager to accept contributions!

Which is more time consuming talking politics (selecting most wanted databases, having permission to do configurations) or working with technical issues (Z39.50, authentication and so on)? Do you have any idea what is the ratio between politics and technical work?

In many cases, once we have access to standard Metasearch technology, the technical work is straight-forward. The up-front work of educating information vendors, working out the details of session management in the Metasearch environment, getting access to the resources, etc. is certainly the more time-intensive part of adding resources to the MetaLib CKB. The good news is that the “political” work is getting better. Initiatives such as the NISO Metasearch Initiative and your efforts in requesting that your information vendors develop standard Metasearch technologies and provide Ex Libris with access have definitely helped. There are some information vendors that I’ve been working with for many years without success, but there are many more that have started contacting me, asking what they need to do to

become MetaLib- or standards-compliant.

MetaLib 3.14 will come also with regional knowledge base sections. What is the concept behind this service?

The software in 3.14 will contain the tools needed to push resources to the CKB from places other than our “central” office. That will allow our regional offices and distributors to more easily add regionally-relevant resources to the CKB.

Ex Libris is quite actively participating in the Metasearch Initiative. What will be the impact of these activities for the future development of the MetaLib knowledge base?

Information vendors are watching the developments and planning for implementation of the MXG (the NISO Metasearch XML Gateway) in their systems. In fact, we just added our first NISO MXG-compliant resource to the CKB – ResearchPort from BEPress. MetaLib does also support the Z39.50 and SRU/W standards, which are also recommended by the NISO Metasearch Initiative (MI). We expect to support the authentication methods recommended by the NISO MI and are also participating in discussions on the Collection Description issues.

Which major qualities does a MetaLib knowledge base Manager need? Patience like a Buddhist monk? Stamina like a marathon runner? Or ...?

One must be as clever as Einstein, of course! Truly, negotiation and communication skills, technical aptitude, and the ability to manage many simultaneous projects are the qualities I find myself using the most.

Thank you for this interview.

In Focus

Finished configuring all your Z39.50 resources ? What happens next?

BY SUSAN LIEPA, AARLIN (LA TROBE UNIVERSITY, MELBOURNE)

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Ex Libris has advised its customers that the MetaLib 3.14 Revision will come with changes in the structure of the knowledge base. Instead of a single knowledge base containing all Ex Libris approved resource configurations, there will be a large "international" CKB supplemented by Regional CKB's which will be maintained by Ex Libris staff based in those regions.

This development raises two issues for consideration:

Will the staff in regional Ex Libris offices have the time available to focus on creating and maintaining local regional resource configurations?

Are there additional co-operative opportunities possible which could result in more extensive Regional CKB's maintained as the customer need arises rather than when time permits for Ex Libris staff in regional offices?

In regard to the first of these issues, this may vary across the regional offices, within Australia we have access to one very busy, competent and dedicated Ex Libris staff member to support the Australian Regional CKB. Rather than debate whether she has time to develop and maintain regional configurations, I would like to suggest an alternative approach around the second scenario above.

AARLIN has created new configurations for over 200 Australian and other regional resources for which there were no configurations in the CKB (i.e. non-CKB resources). In the spirit of co-operation for which libraries are noted, AARLIN has offered to share these configu-

rations with all MetaLib customers by releasing them for inclusion in the Ex Libris knowledge base pool. Ex Libris has accepted the majority and we look forward to seeing them in the CKB or Regional knowledge bases with MetaLib 3.14.

These new resource configurations have been created by a small team of people from some AARLIN institutions and funded by the AARLIN Consortium specifically to develop resource configurations which are not in the Ex Libris CKB. This team is the AARLIN "Quality Team".

The XML challenge

Recently the AARLIN Quality Team has reached the point where the majority of non-CKB resources required by members and needing new configurations require more than the recently released web-simple configuration to enable effective connectivity.

The challenge to have a greater number of configurations for xml-based resources could be substantially assisted by training appropriately experienced staff from the Ex Libris customer base to create these complex resource configurations.

In essence this is similar to the existing process employed to expand the number of new configurations for Z39.50 resources beyond those being created by Ex Libris staff.

From the AARLIN experience

The AARLIN experience has found that for a co-operative process such as proposed to create xml configurations it would be advisable to have an agreed process which includes:

- Agreed benchmarks to be achieved for a configuration to be accepted as suitable for re-use by other customers.
- Training in the use of an 'xml

tool'.

- A continuing skill acquisition and enhancement process.
- A prioritisation of resources to be configured.
- Strategies to address testing.
- Agreed timeframes and workloads.

Ex Libris internal configuration creation practices would already be considering such issues, and customers sharing configuration responsibilities would also need to similarly make a commitment to agreed standards and practices.

Customers would need to be prepared to fund the training of staff in the use of xml tools and creation of configurations to agreed standards.

The pursuit of shared configuration efforts for xml resources between Ex Libris and customers might be of benefit in many respects.

Not at least, configuration of more xml-based resources in both the Regional knowledge bases and the CKB make the Ex Libris knowledge bases more competitive.



Office attacks (I)



Office attacks (II)



Office attacks (III)

Photos by Ze Frank „office attacks“
<http://www.zefrank.com>

In Focus

Feeding the knowledge base – how to

BY NICHOLAS LEWIS, UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGELICA
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Over the last couple of years, the SFX and MetaLib User group for UK and Ireland (SMUG-UKI) has had considerable success in getting databases added to the Metalib's central knowledge base. We are not claiming they are using the best techniques but many of them have worked for us and so may be helpful to you as well.

At our national user group meetings (usually once or twice a year) we identify our top 5 resources for adding to the Metalib central knowledge base. This is done by an informal voting system at the meeting (although if institutions are not present, they can send their votes in tool.)

We then work closely with Ex Libris to identify the key contact from the publisher/provider concerned; that is, the person with the authority to make decisions about opening up their databases. This can take some time. For example, we attended Online 2004 in London and approached companies like Dialog, Ovid and Proquest. Understandably, vendors tend to be more receptive to approaches from their direct customers rather than Ex Libris (with whom they may be competing in other aspects of their service).

Once those key contacts have been identified, we follow up with a detailed letter that they can use to persuade their colleagues!

These are the key points we

emphasise in the letter: We write on behalf of SMUG-UKI. We even list all the institutions in the UK and Ireland that have MetaLib/SFX (even if they don't actually have the database concerned!). This emphasises just how many institutions might benefit.

We ask for the provider to open up their database(s) for metasearching – the preference is to allow access via an XML gateway although Z39.50 is also an option. We explain why HTTP access is insufficient because HTTP configurations tend to fail when any changes are made to the original interface.

We state that the request should not be misunderstood as a special request for Ex Libris customers only. We refer to other third party and publisher-provided library portal products too and explain how compliance with open standards would benefit those customers too. This helps to strengthen our case.

We then emphasise some of the key benefits of meta-searching such as:

- discovering databases patrons might not have used before
- racking down elusive articles where patrons only have partial information
- researching a general topic.

We then address some of the concerns that vendors and publishers have expressed to us in the past and provide answers for each one:

“Patrons will avoid using our original interface”. To answer this we provide statistics to show that usage of the databases tends to go up both

within the portal AND in the original interface as well. There are published findings on this in Loughborough University's case study (see “Further Info box”). It is important to have this kind of evidence to back up the points you make.

“Cross searching is a ‘dumbing-down’ of the search process and is inaccurate”. We agree that metasearching can be less accurate than using the original interfaces, but we explain that we let our patrons know this and emphasise the importance of using the original interface for systematic reviews, etc. Then we point out that all resources have the prominent ‘Link to’ option in MetaLib, so it is very easy to get back to the original interface at any time. In future we will also mention the NISO Metasearch Initiative - TG3 - Search/Retrieve standard and Ex Libris's involvement with this (see “Further Info box”).

We then provide details of how vendors should go about opening up their databases for metasearching. You can provide them with a copy of the ‘Metalib interoperability Guide for database vendors’ which is on the Ex Libris Documentation Portal. You can also provide links to other online articles such as Andy Powell's article ‘5 step guide to becoming a content provider in the JISC Information Environment’ (see “Further Info box”) which give a broader perspective (and show how complying with open standards will have other benefits too).

If Open URL compliance is also an issue for the publisher concerned, either as a source or a

(to be continued on page 10)



Photo by: Forschungszentrum Jülich

Not all of our users search in quite as exemplary a manner as these ones...

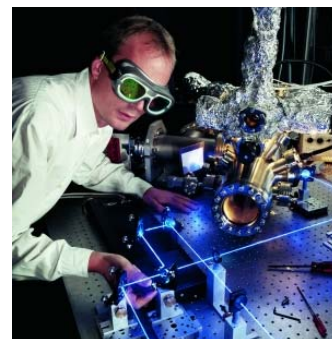


Photo by: Forschungszentrum Jülich





Have you discovered our library portal already?

Further Info

- ◆ NISO Metasearch Initiative: http://www.niso.org/creating/creating_process.html
- ◆ Loughborough University's findings: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/lisu/downloads/Metalibcasestudy.pdf>
- ◆ Andy Powell's article: <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue33/info-environment/intro.html>

In Focus

My top five – what we miss in CKB

Université Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle Muriel.Hoareau(@)univ-paris3.fr	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Base internationale de lettres électroniques du Moyen âge au XXe siècle : Littérature narrative Champion 2. Gallica : la bibliothèque numérique Bibliothèque nationale de France 3. Thèses en ligne CNRS 4. Legifrance 5. Encyclopedia Universalis 	
b-on – Portugal rui.francisco(@)fccn.pt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IEEE 2. Scopus 3. ScienceDirect (Elsevier) 	
LIBRIS consortia – Sweden kristin.olofsson(@)libris.kb.se	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cambridge Journals online (Cambridge University Press) 2. IEEE Xplore (IEEE, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) 3. Nature journals (Nature Publishing Group) 4. Oxford Scholarship online (Oxford University Press) 5. Elsevier products from the ScienceDirect interface instead of Scirus 	
University of York, Sue Cumberpatch sc17(@)york.ac.uk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IEEE Xplore 2. International Medieval Bibliography 3. FIAF Film via Ovid ARC (SilverPlatter) 4. ISI Proceedings (Science, + Social Sciences and Humanities) 5. International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS) 	
National Library of Czech Republic martin.ledinsky(@)ruk.cuni.cz	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wikipedia – a free encyclopedia 2. Die Deutsche Bibliothek 3. Open Directory 4. Information Science & Technology Abstracts (ISTA) 5. Bibliothèque nationale de France 	
Bavarian Library Network Kratzer(@)bsb-muenchen.de	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. French Union Catalogue (CCFr = Catalogue Collectif de France) 2. Spanish Union Catalogue (REBIUN) 3. Biblioteca Nacional de Espana 4. Danish Union Catalogue (DanBib) 5. Russian State Library [ALEPH catalogue!] 	
Max Planck Society, Munich e.altmann(@)zim.mpg.de	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inspec 2. HeinOnline 3. Energy (STN) 4. JurisWeb 5. Westlaw Westlaw International 	
SMUG-UKI Nicholas.Lewis@uea.ac.uk	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Westlaw 2. Wiley XML 3. IEEE Explore 4. LexisNexis—Professional, Executive, and individual databases 5. Springer XML 	

(Continued from page 9)

target, we take the opportunity to mention that too!

We then give contact details for Chris Roberts (Manager of the CKB) and our UK office and explain how giving Ex Libris ongoing test access to an XML or Z39.50 gateway is the best way to ensure the configurations are kept up-to-date for all institutions. This saves the database provider time by avoiding lots of individual support calls whenever a minor change is made. If the database provider is unhappy with

this direct arrangement with Ex Libris, we will pair them up with an existing customer who then feeds back the revised configuration to the CKB.

Finally, just in case they're not yet persuaded, we remind them of the benefits not just to the UK market but to Europe, the US and the rest of the world too. You could provide a link to a list of Ex Libris customers worldwide as well.

Another technique we have used is mailing the interna-

tional 'sfx-metalib-discuss-l' discussion list to lobby for support.

It may not be appropriate or relevant to use all of these techniques in your country but we hope you've found something here that will help you with publisher liaison in the future.

Special Effects

On the incompleteness of the SFX knowledge base

By Mathias Kratzer, Bavarian State Library / Bavarian Library Network (Munich)

Contact:
kratzer@bsb-muenchen.de

There is absolutely no doubt that the SFX knowledge base is a huge, a very complex and last but not least a most impressive piece of work. However, it is also for sure that the SFX knowledge base (as any database) is a strictly formal system. And according to one of the main theorems founded by the famous Austrian logician Kurt Gödel in the early 1930s the SFX knowledge base (as any sufficiently complex formal system) is *incomplete*.

Of course, Gödel didn't mean incomplete in the trivial and obvious sense saying there will always exist an SFX user missing another certain object or object portfolio, so `sfx-changes@exlibris-usa.com` will never run out of incoming mail. No, Gödel's notion of incompleteness went far deeper and meant the necessary existence of system-inherent anomalies, i.e. strange truths about the system which can neither be derived from nor prevented by the rules of the system but are just there and bother us ...

How many invalid ISSN's?

The *APLAR Journal of Rheumatology* is an object in the SFX knowledge base for quite a long time. In fact, it is a special object because you can find it by searching for the ISSN 0219-4810. Now what is so remarkable about that? Well, this ISSN is numerically invalid (check digit should be '3', not '0') and therefore the journal's object portfolios for the `getFullTxt`-services of the targets SYNERGY and SYNERGY_BLACKWELL_STM are invisible to Data Loader and any other tool which validates ISSN's before it processes them!

While you definitely have to admit that this *is* something special I honestly have to admit that I don't know *how* special it is. At least 0219-4810 shows that it is possible for an invalid ISSN to enter the SFX knowledge base and – believe it or simply search for it in your own SFX Admin Centre – 0000-0001 shows that 0219-4810 was no singular incident. Somehow disturbing, isn't it?

Bulk: BULK implementing getFullTxt?

In volume 47, no. 6 of the *Canadian Journal of Surgery* [0008-428X] A.J. Graham, G. Gelfand, S.D. McFadden and S.C. Gronin published an article named "Levels of evidence and grades of recommendations in general thoracic surgery". It starts at page 461 and is freely accessible at <http://www.cma.ca/staticContent/HTML/NO/12/cjs/vol-47/issue-6/pdf/pg461.pdf>. However, if I enter all the available metadata into the OpenURL Generator of my local SFX instance the links "Full Text via DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals" and "Full Text via Free E-Journals" only lead to the journal homepage – as will every link constructed by the `Bulk::BULK` parser! Please don't get me wrong: I completely understand that it is not feasible for Ex Libris to write and maintain proper `getFullTxt`-parsers for every single free e-journal, even if it supports a nice linking syntax like the *Canadian Journal of Surgery*. But I don't understand why `Bulk::BULK`'s results are generally glossed over by the service type `getFullTxt` – and, by the way, our end users do not either.

KB-Updates: Monthly, weekly, daily, ...?

The Bavarian Library Network runs a (mainly) centrally administered SFX consortia installation consisting of 29 productive instances: one for the Bavarian State Library, ten for

Bavarian university libraries, 17 Bavarian polytechnic libraries, and one shared instance which also serves as a fallback instance for the guest users of our library network information portal *Gateway Bayern* (based on MetaLib 2.17; please feel free to visit us at <http://gateway-bayern.bib-bvb.de>). Taking these numbers into account you might be able to relate to me being almost shocked at the recent SMUG conference in London when Nettie Lagace announced that Ex Libris is going to shorten the release cycle for SFX revision updates; in a first step from "every month" to "every two weeks"! Though it is true that the SFX-knowledge base updates for version 3.0 are strictly incremental and therefore much smaller than they used to be for version 2.0 we still spend lots of time on applying the latest revision package to each of our 32 instances (including global, local and test). Interestingly, the most time-consuming part of the update procedure seems to be the `mysqldump` of each instance's localized copy of the knowledge base. But let's just stop and think a moment: Isn't it recommended to perform a full backup right *before* starting rev-up? So, why does rev-up back up???

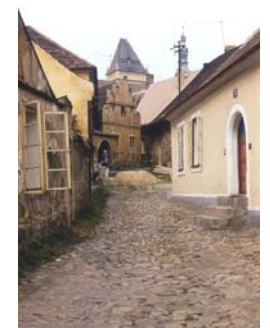
And while we are talking of release cycles: Why not shortening them to "every hour" by means of time-stamp controlled harvesting of ONIX records? Just an idea.



Is the knowledge base as rotten as Krumlov Street in Prague...



...or just a little bit incomplete ...



...or like the way up a hill, every step gets better?

Special Effects

Handling SFX update reports

BY RUTH LEWIS, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY (ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI)

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Here at Washington University in St. Louis (Missouri), we were spending more time than expected on SFX update reports. The consensus, from personal responses I received from an October SFX-METALIB-DISCUSS-L post was that libraries with lots of e-journal access from many suppliers spend an average of 4-6 hours a month processing SFX updates after they are loaded.

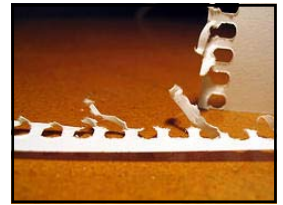
Some of this time is inevitable and appropriate. All folks who deal with electronic journals know that titles, URLs, holdings and publishers change. It is convenient to have the SFX reports to correct information in our catalog, etc.

The work that surprised me was related to the poor quality of some of the information in the updates. For example:

- many deleted active portfolios were in fact still working
- many threshold changes were inaccurate
- occasionally revised parsers did not work properly.

I was also annoyed in July when many active portfolios were essentially inactivated by SFX when they were deleted and re-established under slightly different targets, that is, publisher names changed in Metapress.

Nettie Lagace (SFX Product Manager) discussed some of this on the phone with me and assured me these complaints are being considered at SFX. HTML versions of the text reports are promised in the future and this may make checking a bit easier.



Home Safari (I)



Home Safari (II)

SFX update reports – life is easier with SFXDiff

BY ANDREAS SABISCH, FREE UNIVERSITY BERLIN (BERLIN)

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SFXDiff was written to analyse the differences between two portfolio files. This tool may help answer frequently asked questions (such as: how many E-Journals does your library subscribe to or how many E-Journals did your library have access to last year?), but also to provide some control over the SFX update and to document changes in the portfolios in general.

At the moment, the program is at the beta stage. This means, that it is quite slow (it needs 3 minutes to calculate 5000 holdings). It might be a good idea to start it before a coffee break :-). SFXDiff is programmed in Java, thus platform independent, a Java Runtime Environment 1.4 is required.

Program use

The program requires two SFX-export files with all active portfolios, however it is important that these two files are created on two different dates. You might wish to exclude certain targets from the statistics for example Free E-Journals portfolio. For this reason we have included a separate exclude list.

As a result the program creates one file with an overview (Differenz-SFX.txt) and two files providing more detailed analysis (PortfoliosWeg.txt and PortfoliosNeu.txt). All files are tab delimited ASCII files.

Calculated data

In the file, Differenz-SFX.txt you will find two groups of results: first all the characteristic data from the two input files with the differences. The second group is a list of all targets with the number of active portfolios and the differences. For an updated analysis you can ignore all the differences with

zero – as nothing happened in those portfolios. Details of new and lost portfolios are provided in two separate files.

The following characteristic data are calculated (sorry: the column names are all German):

Gesamtzahl : number of portfolios

Volltextservice: number of all Full Text Portfolios

Freie Port.: all portfolios from targets listed in the excluded list

Abonnements : number of subscribed holdings. Calculated as the differences between *Freie Port.* and *Volltextservice*.

Calculated on the basis of licensed holdings with local or global thresholds with a sequence `<=,'<actual year>`.

Lauf. Abos: only current holdings, calculated as the difference between *Abonnements* and *Archivzugang*.

Doppelabos : journals, which are licensed at different targets. The rule is: two objects are identical, if they have the same ISSN.



Home Safari (III)



Home Safari (IV)



Home Safari (V)

Further Info:

- ◆ *SFXDiff* is available as a ZIP-File including the source, the class-file, an example of the exclude file and a *Readme* in German and English. Please contact the author.

Special Effects

Playing hard to get – SFX local targets

BY LUKAS KOSTER, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE NETHERLANDS (THE HAGUE)

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Apart from the SFX knowledge base, which gives you monthly updated ready-to-use configurations for a large number of targets to link to, one of the most appealing features of SFX is the possibility of creating your own eccentric but very useful target services. There may be a local website with biographical information and full text books organized by author, that you like to use. However, there is a price you have to pay for this pleasure: heavy monitoring and maintenance.

Target parsers

For a local target you need a local target parser, a script (mostly in Perl) that transforms the OpenURL into the correct syntax of the target web service. Actually this a misleading name, because you need a parser for every target service. It would be better to speak of “target service parsers”. Basically there are two ways to use a parser: using the *Generic Target Parser*, included in SFX, or writing your own. With the *Generic Target Parser* you can enter formal syntax lines in the *Parse Param* box in the *Edit Target service* window in the SFX Admin interface. This can be very simple, like:

```
IF("http://www.kb.nl/hpd/qp/qp-en.html"
```

which just sends the url after “IF()”, or more complicated, like:

```
IF
(bookTi-
```

```
tle,@authLast,@authFirst)"http://dbnl.org/cgi-bin/htsearch?method=and&words="@authLast[0]","@authFirst[0]";"bookTitle
...
IF(bookTitle)"http://dbnl.org/cgi-bin/htsearch?method=and&words="bookTitle
IF
(@authLast,@authFirst)"http://dbnl.org/cgi-bin/htsearch?method=and&words="@authLast[0]","@authFirst[0]
...

```

which creates different urls based on the available OpenURL fields.

However, writing your own parser in Perl is much more flexible and efficient.

Plug-in thresholds

A local target service will be much more powerful, if it only shows up if there is actually anything to link to. In SFX this can be achieved by using the *plug-in threshold* mechanism. A *plug-in* is a script, written in a programming language like Perl, that checks if the url that is used in the target service parser, actually gives results. If there is a result, the plug-in must return a value of “1”, in which case the service is shown in the menu. If there is no result, it returns “0”, and the service is suppressed.

Drawbacks

Although this parser and plug-in mechanism is very powerful, there are a number of drawbacks with it.

1. You have to write and maintain the target yourself.
2. Constant monitoring needed to accommodate for changes in the search syntax of the target website.
3. Both parser and plug-in use the same url, so if the search syntax of the target website

changes, you have to update two scripts.

4. The plug-in only tells the parser if there is a result, not for which field there is a result. For instance, if you have both an ISBN and a book Title field, the plug-in might not find a result for the ISBN, but there might be a result for the book Title. The target service parser only knows that there is a result. It will then send the url containing the ISBN, if it is the first one in the program, resulting in a “No results found” page on the target website.

Solutions

There are of course solutions to the problems. In case of the monitoring and maintenance problems (1+2), libraries can work together exchanging parsers and checking syntaxes, maybe using automated link checkers. In the case of multiple OpenURL fields or combinations of fields (4), you could create target service parsers and plug-ins for every individual field. This would of course increase the maintenance and monitoring problems enormously.

To avoid the mismatch between parser and plug-in and the use of the same url twice in separate scripts (3+4), you could incorporate the plug-in mechanism into the parser itself. Unfortunately this is not possible with the *Generic Target Parser*.

The best solution (1+2+3+4) would of course be, that the target service parsing and plug-in mechanisms are configurable via the admin interface, much like the WebConfigSimple protocol in MetaLib, that uses the same url for checking and linking.



Office attacks (IV)



Office attacks (V)

Inside

PIVOTAL, the new CRM – what does it stand for?

BY MARCUS ZERBST,
ZENTRALBIBLIOTHEK ZÜRICH
(ZÜRICH) AND
BEATE RUSCH, KOBV (BERLIN)

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ZB.UNIZH.CH
RUSCH(@)ZIB.DE

Usually, if a product or any other object evokes lots of reactions, people love to play with its name and give its acronym an own meaning. Suddenly ARC stands for “**A**PLIED **R**ELIEF FOR **C**USTOMERS” and SFX is read as “**S**TUNNING **F**EATURES **X**HIBITED”.

The new kid on the block is PIVOTAL (3rd party though), but this one is different: When switched to production in August, it created such strong reactions from various customers. It is worth mapping out each letter not to a single word, but a full paragraph! While Ex Libris intended to present a powerful and integrative management system for customer relation, here's how some amongst us might have understood the term:

Poor searching capabilities are annoying, especially to a community of librarians and information specialists.

What about Boolean operators? Where's the phrase search? Imagine the SFX knowledge base without good search facilities.

Inserting all values from scratch in empty fields whenever you perform a search or create a new incident is bad usability. If they haven't given us all these nice “save as default” buttons in Aleph perhaps we wouldn't miss this function in PIVOTAL.

Of course we would, it's standard!

Viewing the status mails doesn't satisfy our natural and well-trained desire for information. The incident's subject line plus status is far too small, we need full text. In the e-mail all information - should be visible at once, whereas logging in and starting a search for the support incident to see the original request and additional activities is time-consuming. It worked just fine in the old PRB system!



Our time is precious, so is the Ex Libris employees' time. The new system was established only for the best: If you either find a solution already entered in the knowledge base or someone sharing your problem, you don't necessarily need to bother support staff. But if you hardly can find anything or if you don't know whom to address because of slim contact information, good intentions don't mean a thing. Not to mention hours of frustrated tries to work with the current state or to express ones dissatisfaction in dozens of e-mails in various lists.



Tested, debugged and reviewed? Nope. Bugs like suppressed special characters (i.e. German umlaut) in search, not migrated PRBs, repeated “no hits” answer after unsuccessful search etc. shouldn't exist in an international CRM system. They can do better!



Asksed too much, if you wanted more than one e-mail address as a contact?



Last comfort but not for everybody. The consortial view may comfort you, if you are a beginner, or you are lost in the middle of a revision process. You will learn, that you are not alone, that others do suffer as well. Actually, this comfort is not given to you, when you licensed only SFX and you live in Germany.



Surely, the PIVOTAL software functions are fine for other communities, we don't mean to bash it in general. It's just that Ex Libris as a global leader in its market should act more carefully in instituting a new generation of a customer relationship management system by using an out-of-the-box 3rd party product. We see the advantages of an international knowledge base. Also for Ex Libris' and the customers' benefit, an integrated system for external and internal incident communication is expected to speed up the whole process. A similar effect should result from the central contact database. But all these aspects only work out if they are not dwarfed by obstructive problems.

We are confident that our concerns will be heard and that PIVOTAL lives up to its promise: Becoming a pivotal tool in Ex Libris' customer relationship of mutual satisfaction.

From the mailing lists

The crow and the jewel

BY REPKE DE VRIES, NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF THE NETHERLANDS
(THE HAGUE)

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REPKE.DEVRIES(@)KB.NL

Your crow flew south – like so many birds do to survive winter. In Spain, on November the 8th, at 11.21 a.m., Laura Sanchez Alvarez at her school in Valencia sat down behind the keyboard and thought of her best English to phrase a question to the Dlib email list. Studying information science she had this assignment on free access to full text but was running out of time. The crow looked over her shoulder as she wrote: “Dear colleagues, I would like to know your opinion about free access to full-text documents. Thanks. Laura” [Dlib archive at <http://infoserv.inist.fr/wsympa.fcgi/arc/diglib>]
As a bird I appreciate going straight from A to B (human language has an expression on that featuring a crow) and considering the global Internet as a terrain for information food picking. On the ninth a witty first answer comes (“It’s a good thing. Next question?”)



Photo by: Chris Tigernuts

Crows have their own view

but the real gemstone comes on November the 10th from the “Bryar Family”: “...All historical documents, all cultural artefacts, should be put online as soon as possible. Every painting or print held in a public library should be available online. This should be an educational and cultural priority for all nations that consider themselves civilized. ...” This is looking at access from a content perspective not from the perspective of search or linking tools. Interesting. Would this family be the voice of the people and how did your crow spot Laura at that school in Spain? The answer is frightening enough: search any Internet search engine on Laura’s full name and it even reveals some of her social life. School location follows from the email address. Search “Bryar Family” and

“Vermont” (the email provider) and you learn about Jack Bryar.

Jack is right of course. Focus on content. Free. Laura is right by asking people on free access issues and not ask a search engine. In his answer he also writes “...The pathway to making the Internet revolution pay off for the world’s citizens is to put the world’s body of knowledge in front of them...” In front of them! That is: where the citizen already searches, learns, plays. What they both hardly realize but is easier to see from a bird’s perspective: our lives have become the Internet. Add Jack’s content to the Net and someone will be able to trace Laura in her interests beyond “Dear colleagues, I would like to know ...”

One last jewel: anyone interested in methodically finding out how the “Bryar Family” as one of our users can help us design portal and web services: read about CREE: <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/october05/awre/10awre.html> (no: CREE, not CROW).

Telegram from IGELU – the smiley disappeared

BY BEATE RUSCH, KOBV (BERLIN)
CONTACT: RUSCH(@)ZIB.DE

London September 2005,
British Library: the SMUG assembly approved the draft constitution of IGELU * Stop * Only small modifications: the smiley disappeared from the name * Stop * Please note: IGELU stands for International

Group of Ex Libris Users * Stop * That is the end of SMUG conferences * Stop * SMUG will live on under the roof of IGELU * Stop * First IGELU conference will be held in 2006 in Stockholm * Stop * Still a lot of work * Stop * Organizing the Stockholm conference * Stop * Organizing

SMUG as a group within IGELU * Thinking about an enhancement procedure for SFX and MetaLib * Stop * All voluntary * Stop * IGELU needs you * Stop *

Further Info

◆ <http://nt-server.unisi.it:8083/ICAU>



Photo by: Repke de Vries

The crow takes a rest

Lost and Found

The unknown module – copy cataloguing with MetaLib

BY MARTIN LEDÍNSKÝ, CHARLES UNIVERSITY, (PRAGUE)

CONTACT:

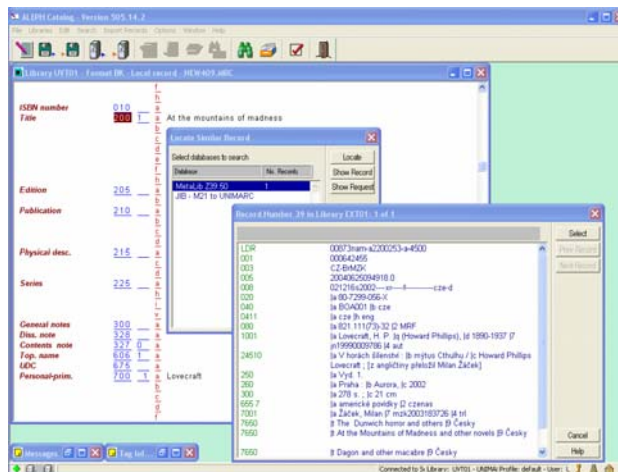
MARTIN.LEDINSKY(@)RUK.CUNI.CZ

Believe it or not – there are countries in the world without big union catalogues, where bibliographic records differ from library to library and each library maintains its own single catalogue without much help from outside. There are countries, where shared cataloguing is still a to-do on the agenda.

Wouldn't it be great to create "virtual catalogues" not only for end users but for librarians as well? Why not use MetaLib? Why not make use of all the existing Z39.50 configurations? Shouldn't it be possible to access all these targets by an ILS? Technically speaking, MetaLib must then act as a Z39.50 server.

With the copy cataloguing module (CoCa), an add-on, all searchable Z39.50 resources within MetaLib can be accessed via Z39.50. You can either define a single resource as a database or a group of resources as a "virtual database". A virtual database consists of a list of resources, which are searched sequentially not in parallel.

This means the request is sent to the first resource in your list, if a result is retrieved, the search does not continue and the Z39.50 client (the librarian sitting at his ILS) receives results only from the first resource. If nothing is found the search will continue to the second resource, then to the third etc. until a result is found or it reaches the end of the list. Therefore the most relevant resource to the cata-



Cataloguing with Aleph and CoCa

loguer stays on the top of the list.

CoCa handles both the character conversion of incoming queries and of the search results as desired, but Z39.50 clients supporting UTF-8 are recommended. CoCa together with a special converter can handle conversions of bibliographic formats (UNIMARC, MARC 21 etc.) and is able to convert records on the fly. At the National Library of the Czech Republic (NLCR) the conversion is done with the help of a third party product: MarcMan (Multidata Praha).

NLCR has been using MetaLib since 2002 (Charles University takes care of the technical part of the project). The CoCa module was launched in experimental operation in 2002 (conversions were not supported yet) and since May 2005 full functionality has been provided. We have configured approximately 70 local resources into MetaLib (including important free foreign resources) as Z39.50 searchable resources.

Approximately 60 Czech librar-

ies access the MetaLib Z39.50 server for their everyday cataloguing routine. Each library has 2 - 3 separate Z39.50 database profiles with desired resources. Theoretically each librarian can have one or more individual "virtual catalogues". Part of the local resources in the Czech Republic have records in MARC 21, part in UNIMARC, so the CoCa module with integrated converter is of vital importance for the librarians. Each working day our MetaLib Z39.50 server receives more than 1.500 requests of which the majority runs on the fly conversion from MARC 21 to UNIMARC. Of course the vast majority of librarians who use CoCa know nothing about the technical details behind it.

For them it is an ordinary Z39.50 target connected to their Integrated Library System and an easy and effective way to share and save the cataloguing work.

Further Info

- ◆ <http://www.jib.cz>
- ◆ More details on the converter: http://www.multidata.cz/marcman_about.html

Lost and Found

The European Library and MetaLib - an experiment

BY LUKAS KOSTER, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF THE NETHERLANDS (THE HAGUE) AND JILL COUSINS, THE EUROPEAN LIBRARY (THE HAGUE)

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THEEUROPEANLIBRARY.ORG

MetaLib is not the only library portal software package, as you may know. There are other commercial library portals. But there are also other flavours. The European Library is one example of a non-commercial portal solution especially developed for only one implementation.

The European Library is a portal that offers access to the combined resources of the 45 national libraries of Europe. In this sense the portal software as such is linked to the content, although the software could be used in other implementations.

This article describes an experiment using MetaLib for accessing a number of The European Library resources.

The European Library infrastructure

The European Library portal software is completely built using XML and XSLT, with SRU as access protocol and Dublin Core as record schema of retrieved search results.

The resources are either directly accessible via SRU, or through a SRU-Z39.50 gateway located at the British Library, or via an OAI centrally harvested index.

Some of the national libraries participating in The European Library (for instance the National Library of Finland) expressed their wish to be able to use their library portal built with MetaLib to access the

resources using the mechanisms that were especially developed for the purpose of being used by The European Library portal only.

The experiment

The European Library office and the National Library of The Netherlands cooperated in creating a demo implementation in order to investigate the use of MetaLib as an access service to The European Library resources with SRU, while maintaining a certain level of branding, assuring that The European Library would be recognizable in a general portal environment.

For the sake of speed we decided to concentrate on accessing resources, in other words on extending the MetaLib Knowledge Base. We configured six resources, three using the SRU-Z39.50 Gateway (the British Library Integrated Catalogue, the catalogue of the Swiss National Library HELVETICAT, the Italian Union Catalogue SBN OPAC), one using the central index (the National Library of France digital collection Gallica) and two native SRU resources (the Union catalogue of Helsinki University HELKA, The Memory of The Netherlands).

We used the generic SRU external programs developed by the National Library of Finland, which were fairly easy to implement. We encountered a small number of minor bugs, which were subsequently repaired by Ere Maijala of the Finnish National Library.

The only branding we implemented was the use of The European Library logo with all individual resources and in the Quickset that was created for this experiment.

With the new MetaLib 3.13



The European Library Quickset with branding

portal functionality it should be easy to create an individual entry point with a different user interface design for a dedicated implementation like this.

Testing showed no difference in results between The European Library portal and the MetaLib SRU implementation.

The future

The policy of The European Library is to initially pilot access with the national libraries only, before possibly extending it out to other institutions. To do this all the collection descriptions of The European Library participant libraries need to be written into MetaLib. The European Library is looking at ways, using the NISO draft standard for Collection Descriptions, to do this automatically. The pilot will also insist that all of the collections of The European Library are included in any MetaLib version and there will be third party license agreements on permitted use and branding. If Ex Libris wants to incorporate the resources in the MetaLib Knowledge Base, they should come to an agreement with The European Library.

Further Info:

- ◆ The European Library portal: <http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org>
- ◆ The SRU externals at the National Library of Finland: http://www.lib.helsinki.fi/finelib/english/nelli/ml_externals/

Events

Eye on SMUG

BY DAMYANTI PATEL, ROYAL HOLLOWAY (LONDON)

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Mid-September on a rainy Thursday morning I walked through the impressive British Library gates for the start of the two day SMUG conference. I had been helping plan this event for a year and the day had finally arrived. It seemed most people had managed to navigate the public transport without too many problems. It was great to see so many people, here in London looking forward to an interesting line up of talks from both the company and the user community. (I am also glad to see so many came prepared with umbrellas).

The first day started with a talk from Ex Libris looking to the future and tantalising us with snippets of information about their new product. Ex Libris provided a number of talks informing us of their development work with SFX and MetaLib with regards to usability and accessibility.

Inspiration was provided by some interesting presentations on what other people are doing with their SFX and MetaLib instances. Creating a custom build interface of MetaLib, integration of MetaLib with a content management systems and use of local attributes in SFX to provide a customer focused SFX menu.

After such an eventful first day entertainment was provided in the shape of a soiree on the HMS Belfast on the Thames. (Our title story clearly shows how the evening progressed). Food and drinks were provided and we could wander around the boat scaring ourselves with the realistic mannequins depicting life on the sea. We got to share ideas and experiences and I was able to put my knowledge to the underground to good use when the evening ended. (I was also able to put my knowledge of pubs to visit to good use too).

The next day started early (perhaps a little too early for those looking for Karaoke bars in the early hours of the morning) with feedback from the user groups as well as a plug

for the newsletter. Lively debate was provided in the form of a presentation on Google Scholar and our eyes were opened up to the wonders of Shibboleth. Jenny had the hard task of keeping us entertained after lunch and keeping us distracted from the Ashes (cricket) scores on her work with NISO. The day ended with an enlightening exchange of experience from across Europe on both SFX & MetaLib. The conference was really enjoyable not only because of the interesting and useful talks but also the opportunity to meet those people whose email boxes I have been filling up. It was also lovely to welcome so many people to London.



Photo by: Lukas Koster

We laughed a lot in London



Photo by: Lukas Koster

View from the HMS Belfast at London in the evening

Further Info

- ◆ Presentations: <http://smugnet.org/2005intl>
- ◆ Blog by Owen Stephens: http://www.meanboyfriend.com/overdue_ideas/icau_and_smug_2005/index.html

Events

Is twice a tradition? Report from the SMUG consortia group

BY JØRGEN MADSEN
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During the ICAU/SMUG meetings in London in September the Consortia Working Group seized the opportunity to hold its second meeting on September 14. The University of Westminster kindly provided a conference room for us. The Consortia Working Group reflects the truly international scope of the library community with participants coming from a wide range of countries such as Germany, Sweden, Czech Republic, Norway, Australia, Finland, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland and with the presence of several staff members from the Ex Libris USA office.

Whereas the first meeting in Finland was a preliminary

meeting to find common ground, get to know one another, figure out common problems and concerns, the London meeting was from the offset very focused on quite specific issues – many of which had initially surfaced during the Helsinki meeting. The main objective of the London meeting was to produce a priority list of development issues for Ex Libris. This very work oriented approach is also the reason why the subsequent list for Ex Libris (which we are working on at the moment) is titled ‘flesh on the bones’ – a phrase coined by Ari Rouvari.

The meeting confirmed what already became obvious in Helsinki: consortia do have specific issues compared to ‘single site’ solutions. Since it makes quite a bit of sense to

run SFX and MetaLib as a consortium solution, we are pleased that Ex Libris showed up and listened to our concerns.

The main issues specific for consortia in many ways seem to be of “inheritance”. A consortium environment is a sharing environment, and it can be very cumbersome for instance in SFX that it is not possible to automatically copy everything related to a target or a service. In MetaLib, for example, a selective copying of presentation data between IRD’s is in high demand.

It is our hope that Ex Libris will have consortia needs in their thoughts for the future developments of SFX and MetaLib.



First consortia meeting in Helsinki

Photo by: Martin Ledinsky

Further Info:

◆ http://www.lib.helsinki.fi/finelib/english/nelli/smug_consortia_wg.html

Credits

Thanks to all authors, all photographers and all people in the photos for their permission to publish

Special thanks to:

- Ze Frank (<http://zefrank.com>) for permission to use photos from the project "office attacks".
- Chris Tigernuts for his wonderful blue crow photo
- Volker Stock for his "Home Safari " which looks so much like the home of an SFX implementor
- Ard Hesselink for his realistic view of Prague which reminds so much on the incompleteness of SFX knowledge base
- Claude Covo-Farchi for the numbers
- Leo Reynolds for the letters
- Fisserman for making ideas visible
- Monika Hotze from Forschungszentrum Jülich for sharing photos with us, that get an extra meaning with her subtitles
- Duccio di Blasi and the University of Siena (<http://www.unisi.it>) for hosting our website <http://smug-4-eu.org>
- The people which invented Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/> which is a „trouvaille“ if you have time and look for pictures.

Each issue should be edited by a new board of editors. This principle of rotation may help to reflect the cultural diversity in Europe and to make SMUG 4 EU a success.

If you want to become an editor or a helping hand, please don't hesitate to contact:

[editors\(@\)smug-4-eu.org](mailto:editors(@)smug-4-eu.org)



Photo by: Forschungszentrum Jülich

Would our QuickSearch help you out?

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[HTTP://SMUG-4-EU.ORG](http://smug-4-eu.org)

What we skipped or missed

What we missed:

- Everything you haven't yet told us.
- To say again, how much we miss Lukas, because it would have sounded like an obituary. On his last days at KB, he did not have the time for editing work. Hopefully, he will find a new position in the SMUG-community, which allows him to continue.
- An interview with Nettie Lagace from Ex Libris on the perspectives of the SFX knowledge base. Who is taking care of the data quality? How is a revision reviewed? We are keeping these questions for a great start to the next issue for a new author or a new editor. Surely nobody want to miss this opportunity?
- Repke's grep commands and his attempts to follow the user through the MetaLib. If you also are grepping your way through log files, keep us informed. Why not share questions and experiences?
- Section such as "good to read". Otherwise we would have listed the article of Chen, Xiaotian. "Assessment of Full-Text Sources Used by Serials Management Systems, OpenURL Link Resolvers, and Imported E-journal MARC Records," *Online Information Review*, V.28, No.6. Its abstract can be viewed at <http://oberon.emeraldinsight.com/Insight/viewContentItem.do?contentType=Article&contentId=862274>
- Preview of the next issue, including a deadline. Nothing is fixed yet. Maybe we will focus on user studies and the art of statistics. Heard, there are lot of interesting projects around.

Before we say good-bye Andrea's joke:

Oh, statistics. But which statistic is right? If you believe statistics, one of four people is Chinese, but here is no Chinese writing!