

Association of ALEPH users in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (SUAleph)

2011 Annual Report

Introduction

Association of ALEPH users in the Czech Republic and Slovakia was established in spring 1996. It is an informal and open association with free admission. Recently, it unites 24 institutions. The sole distributor for ExLibris products is Multidata Praha Ltd.

Collectively updated web page of SUAleph can be found at <http://www.sualeph.cz>

Meetings

SUAleph group organizes two meetings every year, in spring and in autumn. The later comes after IGeLU Conference, therefore ideas and conclusions from international conference are presented to local colleagues. The autumn meeting is traditionally held by Brno University of Technology, the spring meeting is hosted by some other institution. This year (April 2011) we met in Prague at Czech University of Life Sciences.

News

2010 autumn meeting in Brno became a(nother) milestone in the history of SUAleph in terms of representation. Mr. Tomáš Prachař of Moravian Library resigned from the chairmanship and new chairman - Mr. Antonín Vaishar from Brno University of Technology - was elected.

v20

During the past year the adoption of version 20 continued. The big libraries were followed by others, mainly scientific and university libraries. The upgrade can be generally regarded as successful and fluent as many problematical issues were solved during early stages of nationwide transition. However the adoption of ISO ILL was not a big success - the complex and automatic approach to ILL workflow does not go together well with local experience and practise which still involves a lot of paper and hand work in many institutions.

IGeLU conference insights

As this report comes after the IGeLU Conference & Systems Seminar (September 2011, Haifa), some general insights and feelings shared between Czech attendees can be expressed here. We all like Alma - it is a huge leap forward in terms of functionality and UI design. However we are stressed by several concerns:

1. **price** - even if the licencing policy changes to more transparent subscription model, the fee for URM may become crippling (not to mention the necessity of obtaining some kind of discovery solution)

2. **integrations** - many institutions integrates their Ex Libris systems instances with other systems, which provides often vital functionality. How will such integrations be supported, if ever?
3. **customization** - similar point to no. 2 - many custom (often non-standard) changes and functions were implemented into local instances. As in cloud-hosted Alma non-standard interventions will no long be an option - will be Alma equipped with adequately powerful standard tools to answer the most obscure (still legitimate) user needs and wishes?

Future

Future is bleak. Almost fanatical political obsession with cutting expenses (budgets would be more appropriate) continues and it hits public sector hard. Efficient and effective allocation of resources is not the topic of the day. In such environment it is hard to promote solutions that bring value for a cost. That is not only Alma related concern - it is happening right now. The situation has not changed from the last year - (constantly raising) maintenance costs of systems are still the main issue. And most likely will be.

From above mentioned reasons an early adoption of Alma is not an issue. Czech institutions will most likely take a conservative stand but will be watching the development of this system with curiosity.