ACEF annual report
2021 IGeLU National User Group meeting

Presentation and membership

Founded in 2000, the ACEF users group was formerly known as AUFA (*Association des Utilisateurs Francophones d'Aleph*). It changed its name during an extraordinary general assembly on February 12th 2007 and became the ACEF (*Association des Clients d'Ex Libris France*).

Initially dedicated to Aleph, as its former name suggests, the association has grown with Ex Libris' customers base. Its statutes were amended in 2016 to include ProQuest customers, who did not have their own customer group. The effects of this change have remained limited, with the steady decline in the number of ProQuest customers in France since that date.

Note that the Innovative's customers have their own user group, so there are no plans to change the statutes to integrate them. However a contact was made recently to discuss with the executive committee of this association : for them as for us, it seems necessary to ask Ex Libris for a clarification of their commercial policy after the takeover of Innovative.

By 31 December 2020, the association had 71 members, compared to 60 the previous year and 50 at the end of 2018. This sharp increase is the consequence of a project initiated in 2012, which aimed to implement a shared ILS in the French academic libraries. The project and its goals have changed a lot since this date ; all the universities of the country did not participate in the project, four providers have been selected at the end of the procurement procedure, but most of the universities have chosen the same candidate : Ex Libris for Alma and Primo or Primo VE.

Thereby Alma and Primo are the most widely used softwares among the members of the association with at least 38 and 47 customers (both Primo BO and Primo VE). However, Aleph and SFX are still used by a significant number of institutions (10 and 14). The others (Summon, 360 Link, Digitool, Rosetta, etc.) have become marginalized.

The majority of the members are French institutions (academic libraries almost all), but several customers are from Belgium (University of Liège, Free University of Brussels, European Parliament, etc.) or Switzerland (Swiss National library, Swiss Library Service Platform, BCU Lausanne, etc.). It should be noted that there have been no Québec institutions for a couple of years, nor African institutions.

Organization

The association is directed by an executive committee composed of 6 persons. This committee has been totally renewed in 2020. The committee is assisted by a referent person for each software. These referents are more particularly in charge of coordinating votes for Ners and monitoring changes to their software. Currently, only Alma and Primo have a designated referent, which is too few for the amount of work to be provided. So, one of the goals of the executive committee for the next months is to reform the organization of the association in order to obtain a greater involvement of its members.

The life of the association is organized around two great moments : the tools training campaign, generally organized between October and February, and the general meeting organized twice (in January or February and in June). Unfortunately, the covid crisis has upset these habits : no training has been organized since February 2020, apart from a webinar on DARA last May (the first webinar organized by the association !), while the general meetings were maintained but on another date for one of them (in September, instead of June) and in the form of a Zoom virtual conference for the other one.

Despite the difficulties of the moment, the broadcast list remained very active with an average of 80 messages sent each month for more than 350 registered persons.

Main events since the last IGeLU meeting

General Meetings

Two general meetings have been organized since the last IGeLU meeting : the first one on September 23 at the Campus Condorcet, a campus dedicated to research in humanities and social sciences ; the second one on January 28, in the form of a virtual conference. Thanks to Zoom, the latter broke the attendance record for a general meeting with more than 100 participants.

Part of the first meeting has consisted of a round table on the management of a digital library. Some examples were based on Ex Libris' products (Alma-Digital especially), but others were homemade solutions, based on open source software (Omeka).

The second meeting was organized around two moments : a feedback on services implemented during the first lockdown (lists of ebooks thanks to the "Discovery Collection" service of Alma/Primo, creation and management of request baskets with the API and webhooks of Alma and a homemade interface developed under the framework Django) ; the presentation of the roadmap and some new services of Ex Libris. These presentations have been made by the French office of the company and covered topics as varied as Cloud Apps, Rialto of the new support program for new customers.
On this subject, the participants expressed their surprise to learn that Ex Libris offered an additional paid training offer. Indeed, the initial training is considered very poor by all the customers who recently implemented Alma. Priority should be given to its improvement.

All the presentations made during these two general meetings have been posted on the Intranet site of the association.

Alma/Sudoc Synchronization

Sudoc is the shared catalog of the French academic libraries. It is the daily work tool for their cataloguers. For this reason, one of the goals of the project mentioned above was to improve the synchronization between the Sudoc catalog and the local catalogues and more particularly to avoid certain tasks (for instance, the creation of the physical items in the local catalogues).

A project carried out in collaboration between l'Agence bibliograhique de l'enseignement supérieur, the institution which manages the Sudoc catalog, and the University of Bordeaux has started in 2020. It aims to simplify the description and management of the electronic resources of the French institutions which use Alma (these resources will be managed locally in Alma and the electronic inventories will be harvested by the catalogue Sudoc for updating the informations of localization contained in it).

The project is still in progress, but several advances have already been made : the ebook records from the Sudoc catalog for French-speaking resources have been uploaded to the Community Zone, and the unique identifiers of all the ebooks records are gradually added in the CZ records.

The association is closely associated with the monitoring of this project. Moreover, its deputy chairman is the project manager of the University of Bordeaux.

Unimarc mapping for Primo VE

Primo VE offers less possibility of customization of the normalization rules, than Primo. At the same time, the mapping used by default for Unimarc format is not always relevant for French libraries, which use a local version of Unimarc. This situation is considered unsatisfactory, so it was decided, under the advice of Ex Libris, to work with ITALE, the national Italian user group, to improve the situation.

A working group has been created to identify the improvement requests wished by our community. A similar work has been made by ITALE. A work meeting has been managed during the last spring to examine and discuss the requests of each of us and validate the common requests. A summary document is being prepared. It will soon be submitted to Ex Libris.

This first collaboration has been considered as very useful by both associations.

Integration of Istex resources in CDI

Istex designates the archives of scientific serials purchased by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research for the entire French scientific community. Istex also designates the platform which makes it possible to consult these archives.

Our community wanted the Alma links to point to this platform rather than to the publisher sites, where relevant, as in SFX. For this reason, the association asked Ex Libris and the institution which manages the Istex platform - l'Institut de l'information scientifique et technique - to improve the situation. Two solutions have been implemented between summer 2020 and spring 2021 : the addition of a special collection which allows to display a link to the Istex platform in addition to the other links, and the integration of Istex records in CDI (23 billions of records).

Outlooks for the coming year

The main goal of the coming year is to improve the operation of the association so that more people participate in the life and work of the association. It is the main condition for the achievement of new projects (for instance, a work could be led about the interlibrary loan or the electronic furniture of documents). This could also allow us to get more involved in the life of IGeLU. For the moment, we are completely absent.

The second goal is to organize a new campaign of training for Alma, Alma Analytics, both Primo BO and Primo VE, Aleph and SFX. Things seem to be on the right track.

On behalf of the ACEF user group

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http://a-c-e-f.org