

MAJOR LIBRARY PORTAL DEVELOPERS

Auto-Graphics Inc., Fretwell-Downing Informatics, MuseGlobal, and WebFeat have developed library portals for direct sale to libraries or licensing to automated library system vendors. Their products are described in this chapter. Xerox, which has actively marketed a portal product for libraries and museums in Europe, is evaluating the North American market. Its product is briefly described in this chapter.

Auto-Graphics

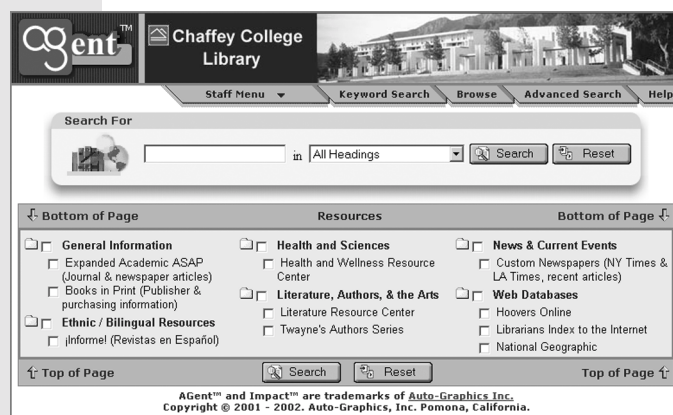
Auto-Graphics has developed AGenT, a Web-based portal that can be used by a library or consortium to access not only a local patron access catalog, but also the catalogs of other libraries, online reference services, and selected websites. The base product is limited to the searching of Z39.50-conforming sites, but an option is available to expand the scope to include SQL, XML, and proprietary databases.

AGenT's source format can be MARC or non-MARC bibliographic records, portable document files (PDF), XML, or Word documents. Various indexes and qualifiers are supported. But the vendor cautions that the indexes and qualifiers have to be supported by the target database.

A search can be refined during a session without starting the search again. A search can be broadcast to many target systems and a combined (deduped) search result returned. The user has the option of displaying detailed (individual resource) results sets. A summary results page is included to provide an overview of the search results. Users can download the results in many formats.

AGenT retains the native environments of the target systems rather than scraping the screens and reformatting the information. Many database producers favor this approach to retain the intended look of the databases. People who favor screen scraping claim that seeing information presented without a consistent look is too confusing.

Scraping is the reformatting of information to facilitate combining it with information from other sources.



The following two illustrations show the difference between a simple keyword search screen and an advanced search screen.

Patron authentication is an available option.

The standard protocols of SIP, SIP2, and NCIP are supported. Although most libraries likely would link to the patron records in an automated library system, maintaining a patron file in AGenT is possible.

Linking is supported, and the product offers an optional pre-

authorized list of more than 15,000 URLs. Book jackets, annotations, and other content enhancements also are available. End users with PCs can add links of interest to their personal knowledge base. The linking component can be removed if a library does not need it or cannot afford it.

Conformity to the OpenURL standard is in development, but no date is set for general release.

A library can customize the user interface, including logos, layout, and color. The vendor is working on an Amazon-like user interface for future release.

An advanced statistical package is an available option.

About 5,000 Texas school libraries have used AGen statewide since 2001 to access the state's union catalog and state licensed online databases. The New Jersey State Library uses AGen to support its virtual resource-sharing system. The seamless interface between AGen and the vendor's virtual document exchange (VDX) patron-initiated interlibrary loan software was a major factor in the selection of Auto-Graphics as the portal vendor by these customers.

Pricing for academic libraries is based on the number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) students; for public libraries, it is based on the number of branches. The base price begins at just over \$5,000.

Auto-Graphics vigorously promotes its application service provider (ASP) option, a service bureau option that places the hardware and software at the library and provides around-the-clock technical support.

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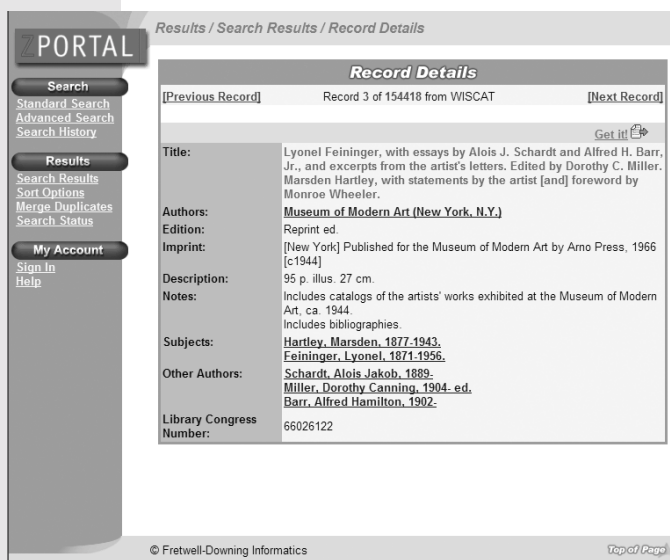
These two AGen screens (above and on the previous page) show the difference between a simple keyword search screen and an advanced search screen.

A sample patron authentication screen.

Fretwell-Downing Informatics

Fretwell-Downing Informatics' ZPORTAL was launched in late 2001 as a Web-based cross-database search that a library can use to target specific library catalogs, internal databases, full-text databases, and online services. Z39.50, HTML, XML, and SQL databases can be searched.

Supported record structures include MARC, EAD, Dublin Core, GILS, and CIMI—the broadest range of any portal product. No screen scraping is undertaken. Web sources are converted to Z39.50 using special scripts.

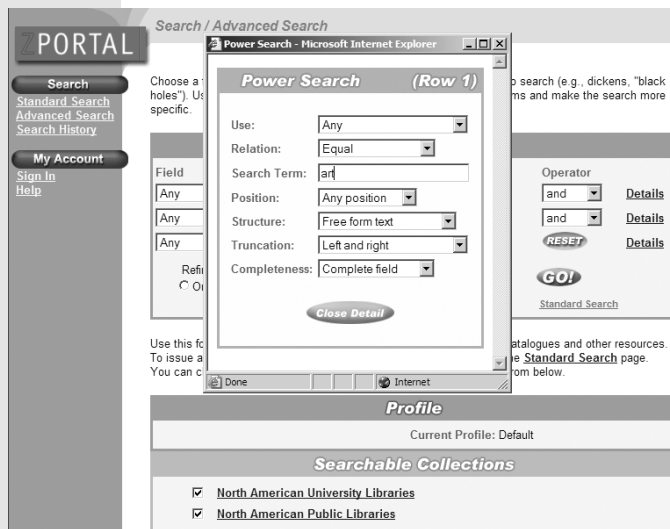


This simple screen limits the search options to library collections. But a library also can include online databases, selected URLs, and many other electronic resources.

ZPORTAL offers the choice of simple keyword or Boolean searching, deduping of results, saved searches for reuse, saved records for collating results, filtering, and sorting of results. It has no provision for loading a thesaurus.

OpenLink is an integral component of ZPORTAL that provides links to many resources. OpenURL is supported. A large file of preselected links prepared by Openly Informatics is available, including links to many scholarly journals. ZPORTAL includes a useful set of links to document delivery services.

ZPORTAL seamlessly integrates with its VDX product, software that facilitates patron-initiated interlibrary loans. The combination has been popular with consortia seeking to create a virtual union database and interlibrary loan system.



Users can modify the search parameters in many ways.

Fretwell-Downing is working with seven ARL members on what the project participants call the scholars portal, a multi-institutional portal tailored to the needs of faculty and students. At least one factor in the selection of Fretwell-Downing appears to have been its willingness to pursue a joint development of new functionality, including incorporating the portal into selected course curricula.

Pricing is based on weighted full-time-equivalent (FTE) student count. A formula estimates the number of active users within the population. The product appears to be geared to

larger libraries and consortia since all the libraries contacted had been quoted prices of at least \$20,000.

The company's website is a poor source of information about ZPORTAL, consisting mostly of marketing language. The sales representatives, though, are excellent sources of information.

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A detailed bibliographic record in ZPORTAL.

MuseGlobal

MuseGlobal's MuseSearch is not divided into separate single-search, patron authentication, and linking components as are many of its competitors' products, but the linking component has been separately labeled as Muse's LYNX.

MuseSearch is a Web-based single-search tool that accesses many electronic resources using keywords or Boolean logic. The source can be Z39.50, Web, SQL, telnet, or proprietary, and the information can be full-text or image.

MARC, Dublin Core, and EAD formats are supported.

Users can select their search statements, sort keys (source, subject, author, date), dedupe methods (title, author/title, subject), search limiting, language options, and result list display preferences.

Screen scraping is used to facilitate combining the results from different databases into a common format. Libraries can define the look and feel, all available processing, search and groupings, search sequences, cross-index searching, and display options. Post-processing options include filtering, sorting, deduping, and many other data manipulation techniques. The product has no thesaurus and one cannot be loaded into it. MuseGlobal's development priorities are focusing on results manipulation. The intent is to incorporate many of

A typical initial search screen for MuseSearch.

these results manipulation features in the next release of the product (no release date set).

Patron authentication is an integral part of the product.

Muse's LYNX, which is embedded in MuseSearch, provides connections to related information, including full-text and images. Search results yield three kinds of linking: basic, focused, and extended. Basic linking takes the user from a bibliographic citation to the full-text, when available. Focused linking groups a set of similar functions behind a single on-screen button. Extended linking provides one-click linking from fields, words, or phrases in a search result to start a new search. The links can be to enriched content, such as tables of contents, jacket art, and book reviews. LYNX also may be used to request a loan or purchase that which has been retrieved.

MuseGlobal has done more with results manipulation than any other vendor. An add-on product called Expanded WorkRoom provides extensive additional functionality, such as the saving of searches for later automatic re-execution, expanded results sets, and the merging or comparison of different result sets. It is available at additional cost.

MuseBridge, a separately priced product, enables connectivity and communication among disparate systems under a single interface. The product allows two or more systems to exchange information or issue commands without the need

for internal modification of the systems. An example might be a bridge between a legacy automated library system and a newer technology Web server. Both of these could then be linked to MuseSearch. Pricing is based on the size of the library.

TLC's YouSeeMore and Innovative Interfaces' MetaFind have been licensed from MuseGlobal since June 2001. Endeavor also licenses MuseSearch, but the agreement among the parties requires that neither party provide information about the agreement. Although the MuseGlobal product can be customized by a licensee, its basic features are difficult to disguise. This agreement is part of the company's policy to allow both libraries and partner companies to brand MuseSearch any way they wish, as long as MuseGlobal's copyright is protected.



A typical results screen for MuseSearch.

Although MuseGlobal has not disclosed its relationship with Endeavor, the relationship is general knowledge within the industry.

Major direct customers of MuseGlobal are the New York Public Library—Branch Libraries and the Westchester Library System of New York.

When MuseSearch is purchased directly from the company by a library with an automated library system, it can be integrated into an existing library portal (usually an existing Web server), used as the main interface for a new library portal, or used to replace an existing patron access catalog.

Pricing for academic libraries is based on the number of full-time-equivalent

(FTE) faculty and students; for public libraries, the size of the collection and circulation determines price. The latter reflects a decision to stop using the number of branches as the basis for pricing. For special libraries, pricing is based on the size of the user population.

Contact: MuseGlobal

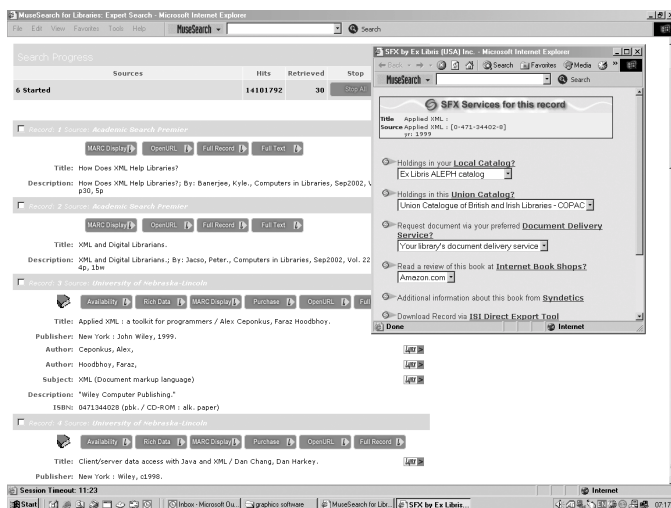
4001 S. 700 East, Suite 220

Salt Lake City, UT 84107
(MuseGlobal moved from New Mexico to Utah in September 2002.)

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This screen shows the linking tool that can be used to access other libraries, websites, or other portals.

WebFeat

Founded in 1998, WebFeat—not to be confused with WebFeet, the Internet cataloging service—is the oldest library portal company. Its original mission was to develop a search engine that could search two or more websites simultaneously.

The product is unbranded, meaning that a licensee can change the look and the wording of the search prompts to such a degree that a user may not recognize the WebFeat product.

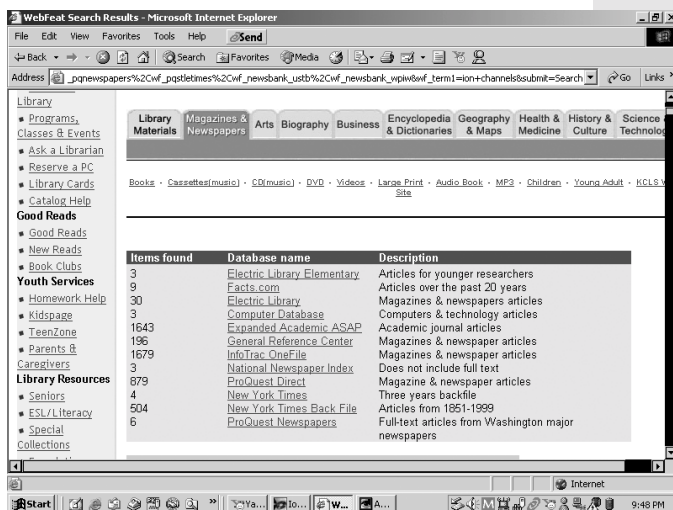
WebFeat's first portal contract, in March 2000, was with Follett Software, a company that specializes in library automation for school libraries. The second, in May 2000, was with the University of Illinois—Chicago Circle. The largest implementation is by SEFLIN, a Florida consortium of libraries that serves one-third of the population of Florida.

WebFeat consists of three modules:

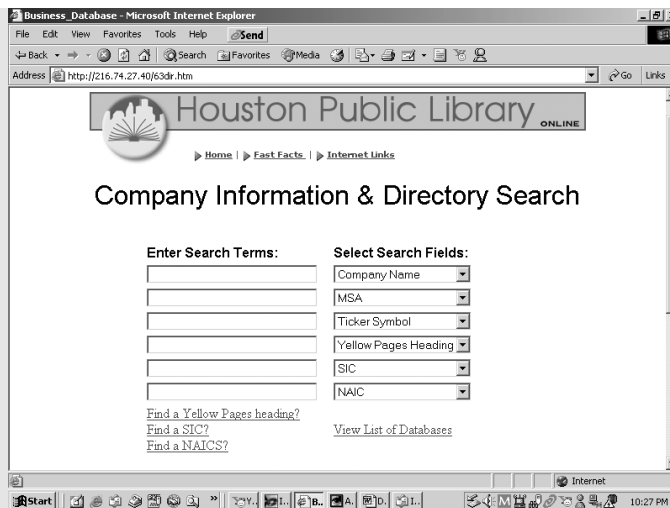
- Research Module
- Authentication Manager
- Usage Tracking Module

WebFeat's Research Module supports single-search access to Z30.50, Web-based (HTTP), and many other databases (XML and proprietary) with keyword or Boolean entries.

MARC, EAD, and Dublin Core formats are supported. The results are displayed according to source.



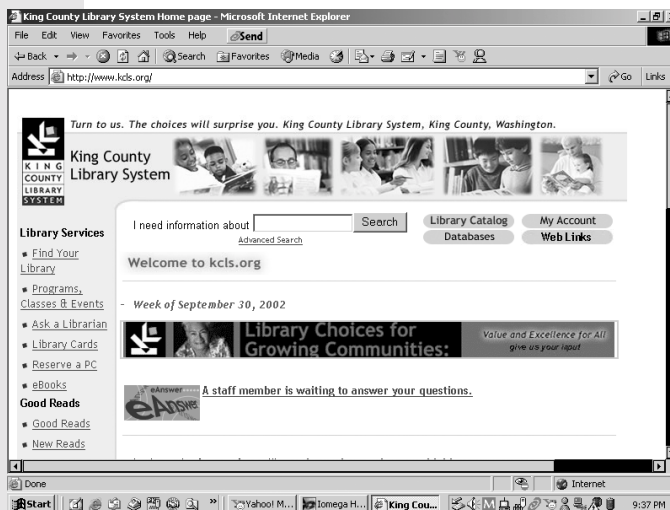
In this typical search screen from WebFeat, a patron can enter the search terms, limit by date range, and specify that only full texts of articles are sought. (The list of databases has been left out at the library's request.)



Note that the results are not merged in the results summary on what the vendor calls a scoreboard.



A full record in the native format of the source—in this case, OCLC's WorldCat.



This WebFeat screen is an example of another application—a company information directory that a library can load onto a server either from a locally created or commercial source.

The user determines how the records may be presented and sorted. Records can be short or long, and they may be presented in chronological order or by relevance. Records may be formatted with identical font styles and sizes to create a consistent look and feel.

The module can seamlessly link short records to e-journal text records or create hard-copy article requests. Once a record is selected, WebFeat brings the user into the full record. As is the case with AAgent, the full record is displayed in the native interface. Searches may be saved, retrieved, and combined. Any WebFeat source may be searched in an alert or SDI.

Patron authentication is available in a separate product call the WebFeat Authentication Manager (WAM). A unique element of WAM is an option of presenting custom views to a single system depending on who is using it.

WebFeat Usage Tracker (WUT) tracks how much each database is used. The statistics include number of search requests, number of hits, number of full record requests, and usage time. Reports may be presented using WebFeat or exported to another application such as Excel. When combined with WAM, WUT can provide detailed reports on database usage. This ability is critical for evaluating the cost versus benefit of subscriptions to expensive commercial databases.

epitech offers WebFeat as an optional part of its iPAC. Gaylord offers WebFeat as an optional part of its PowerPAC. WebFeat also may be purchased through METRO (a New York City-area consortium), NELINET, or PALINET (both OCLC-affiliated networks). TLC has an agreement with WebFeat as well as with MuseGlobal, but no customer has chosen WebFeat because TLC has not yet promoted the WebFeat option.

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Xerox 4

In September 2002 Xerox was investigating the possibility of bringing its askOnce portal product from Europe to the United States. It supports Z39.50, HTTP, and XML. Although its product includes single-search user authentication, and linking components, it does not support the MARC and EAD formats. It supports Dublin Core. It does offer strong multilingual capability. If the company decides the U.S. market has potential, it may contract for exhibit space at a future ALA conference, according to a European spokesperson for the company.

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