Chapter 7

Conclusion

Abstract

The next-generation catalog has clearly made an impact, and that impact can be measured; however, it is clear that these solutions have not met the demands of it users to the fullest and have not solved the problem of creating a compelling starting point for the research process. This chapter identifies how the NGC has impacted libraries and what lies in the future of discovery for libraries.

It is clear today that the NGC has had a significant impact on the library by providing a search experience that was more familiar to library patrons and easier to use. Libraries that have deployed such solutions have not seen a dramatic increase—or any increase at all—in circulation of the physical collection, but they have also not seen a decrease. This is important. When the direction of spending at academic libraries is taken into account, it indirectly shows success of the NGC as book collections continue to shrink in favor of electronic collections.

The NGC is a stepping-stone technology, preparing libraries for the migration to web-scale services. The NGC is after all a catalog of content that is held by the library, and according to Eric Lease Morgan's principles discussed in chapter 3, a failure in the model. The NGC does not meet the users' expectations: it provides a convenient and compelling single search box, but it does not search everything. This failure has opened a position for web-scale discovery to make an entrance to the library marketplace. Acting as a stepping stone, the NGC has helped libraries prepare their local collections for migration to the web-scale discovery model, making the adoption of this new technology easier. The web-scale discovery products on the market today put a big emphasis on the power of the facets—which was the impetus for the cataloging staff at many libraries to have taken on a new workflow. By exposing various elements of the metadata in a whole new way, the NGC has led many libraries to invest effort into cleaning up the metadata found in their records to ensure that everything followed their local cataloging standards. Since this work has been done in connection with the adoption of the NGC, moving to the web-scale solutions has been made easier. Additionally, systems librarians have also become familiar with additional workflow elements sparked by the NGC, such as the routines of exporting the bibliographic records and dealing with deleted and suppressed records. With this learning curve lessened, libraries will have a smoother transition to the end goal, which is web-scale discovery.

Next Step: Web-Scale Discovery

Web-scale discovery has taken over the library market with a fury. This product line is just over two years old and already has captured the minds of librarians around the world. The idea to go beyond the NGC to provide a single search box to the full breadth of the library's collections is extremely compelling to both the library and the researcher. Because of this interest, the market has become highly competitive. We learned more about this market in the January 2011 issue of *Library Technology Reports,* in which Jason Vaughn of UNLV reviewed four products available at the time.[1] In the past two years, we have seen hundreds of academic libraries jump on the opportunity to go beyond the NGC to provide a compelling starting place and bring the researcher back into the library. With this product line taking over the interests of the library administration, is it safe to say that the NGC is dead?

The Future of Discovery

In the early half of the 2000 decade, federated search was the next big thing; in 2006, the NGC came to the library market with a slow but steady adoption rate; in 2009, web-scale discovery exploded as the solution to discovery in the library. But it is safe to say that we will see something bigger and better in the coming years. Moore's Law, named after Gordon Moore, the co-founder of Intel Corporation, states that the number of transistors (or commonly, processing power) in a CPU doubles approximately every two years.[2] While this law is specifically about integrated circuit design, it can be applied to other technologies. It helps with assumptions about the evolution of technology and the rate at which this evolution occurs. While the web-scale discovery product line is still young in the marketplace, we need to keep our ears to the ground for what might be new.

The Google Book project has been buzzing in the library community since its inception. It has a feature that is very compelling to librarians—making the full text of print materials in the stacks discoverable in a very convenient and familiar interface. Google Scholar has also been able to catch the eye of the young researcher by making it possible to find academic research very easily from the same environment that researcher uses for everyday activities. Many libraries have been thinking about how to better leverage these sources. We see the Google Books logo appearing as a link within many of the NGC products mentioned in earlier chapters. However, the answer is not forcing the user off to Google—libraries need to continue to keep their stake in the research process.

With the web-scale discovery solutions on the market adding the publically available metadata from the HathiTrust Digital Library, there are signs of a focus on making content from beyond the confines of the library's collection to be discoverable within the NGC. The focus of the NGC had always been the library's defined collections; however, it is beneficial to move beyond that and expand the resources that the researcher can discover. Some of the more recent enhancements to the VuFind code base support harvesting disparate collections; some library users of VuFind have begun loading collections such as the freely available HathiTrust metadata collection to provide a more encompassing NGC solution. This is a step in the right direction to allow academic books outside of the library's controlled collection to be more easily discoverable. In March 2011, Serials Solutions formed an agreement with the HathiTrust Digital Library to allow the full text of the digitized print material collection to be discoverable within its Summon product. This further exemplifies the power of the web-scale discovery solution and the shortcomings of the NGC solutions.

Notes

1. Jason Vaughn, "Web Scale Discovery Services," *Library Technology Reports* 47, no. 1 (Jan. 2011).
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore's_law.