



Smart Libraries Newsletter
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December 2008 Dispersed Instantaneous Polling with ResponseWare Web

Smart Libraries Newsletter

Smart Libraries Newsletter delivers hard data and innovative insights about the world of library technology, every month.

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Dispersed Instantaneous Polling with ResponseWare Web

It seems like there is no end to polling. During the recent presidential debates, people watching on television were asked to text their response to questions about who won only a few minutes into the 90-minute debate! The pollsters had small groups of Democrats and Republicans equipped with little devices that enabled them to instantaneously register their pleasure or displeasure with what one of the candidates was saying at the moment. These days, gathering and analyzing instantaneous feedback is the name of the game when it comes to polling.

Libraries and library-related organizations also conduct a lot of polls and surveys. Online web-based surveying services like Survey Monkey often do the job well, but they don't give you the instantaneous feedback that CNN got during the debates.

Turning Technologies, a company based in Youngstown, Ohio, recently released a polling product called ResponseWare Web that enables libraries and other organizations to conduct instantaneous polls with respondents in far flung locations. The respondents may use their computers, iPhones, Blackberry devices, or any Windows Mobile device to input their responses. Surveyors can ask multiple-choice questions with single responses, multiple-response questions, alphanumeric questions, and even essay questions.

Once these instantaneous polls are distributed, they are tabulated and presented in a matter of seconds using the TurningPoint software from Turning Technologies. Because TurningPoint is integrated with PowerPoint and other Microsoft Office applications, the person or organization conducting the poll can display the results immediately in a PowerPoint presentation.

There are many polling applications for libraries and library-related organizations. This software could increase audience participation at conferences and workshops. A presenter could ask a question of the audience, then use the software to quickly tabulate and present the responses for all to see. In this way, in a matter of seconds, the crowd can know their own wisdom (or lack thereof).

This software could be a real boon for online conferences and workshops, where people are dispersed throughout many different locations. One would already need to be sitting in front of a computer to participate in an online event, so responding to a poll pushed out to them using ResponseWare Web would be a snap.

ResponseWare is very user friendly. It requires no special plug-ins, and you shouldn't have to change your firewall settings or open up any additional ports. All you need to respond to a ResponseWare Web poll is an Internet connection and a device supporting AJAX, JavaScript, and HTTP requests. ResponseWare Web is currently certified on the AT&T wireless network.

When ResponseWare has been used, it has been extremely effective. Tod Burkurt, the vice-president of professional sales at Turning Technologies, told me that the response rates they see are often close to 90%. For traditional polls, a 50% response rate is considered successful.

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Tod also reported that this type of polling has been effective for multi-modal events—events where some people meet in person while others participate on the web. When a group takes the same poll and can see their responses aggregated immediately, that group gains a sense of cohesiveness. When I asked Tod if ResponseWare Web has been used with any events that included people in one or more virtual worlds, he said that it had not, but that they would be willing to work with some libraries that wanted to try it.

A ResponseWare Web polling program would also be a great way to learn more about how patrons use a library's various modes and channels. The polls could measure in-person visits to a physical library, phone and text-messaging use, web-based use of library services and resources, and even virtual world use of some libraries.

ResponseWare Web also could be used to increase reader participation in book selection. For example, a library considering some books for purchase could push out a poll to 100 currently active users of the library, asking them to indicate the three titles on the list they would be most interested in reading. The tabulated results could be used as another tool in making informed collection development decisions.

ResponseWare Web is available through a variety of pricing models. For example, a library or organization could license a set number of concurrent users for a year, which would enable that library to conduct as many polls as it wanted, with each poll reaching up to the maximum number of licensed concurrent users. For educational institutions, Turning Technologies offers a license that allows students to use the service for anywhere from one to four years. A library

or library-related organization could also rent ResponseWare Web for a one-shot poll sent out to a maximum number of respondents. Tod Burkurt said that a one-shot ResponseWare Web sent out to 100 people would cost about \$400. This may seem a tad expensive to some readers, but, if you can achieve a response rate of 90 percent or higher, and if you consider that all of the tabulation software is provided for even a one-shot poll, there may be instances where paying for this type of effective, instantaneous, dispersed polling service is well worth the investment.

—Tom Peters

More Info. @:

<http://www.turningtechnologies.com/>

Ex Libris Launches New Product for Digital Preservation

As libraries become more involved in managing digital content, long-term digital preservation has become a crucial issue. While it is challenging enough to develop digital collections that fit within systems providing convenient access to library users, it's even more difficult to implement processes that guarantee long-term preservation of these materials. Libraries play an important role in ensuring that future generations have access to the artifacts of our cultural heritage. Books, manuscripts, and other physical media have been preserved within libraries for centuries, but in recent years, a tremendous volume of information has been transferred into digital formats. Much of the new work produced today is created digitally. The ever-increasing volume of digital content managed by libraries is creating a need for trusted digital repositories that provide confidence for long term preservation.

The challenge of long term preservation is closely tied to the type of media we use to store information and the rapid shifts in the technology behind it. Information on physical

media like paper has proven to be quite durable when properly managed. In favorable environmental conditions, paper materials will endure for many centuries. CDs and DVD's, on the other hand, may last a couple of decades at best. Tapes and disk systems become obsolete after a just a few years. While the actual digital content may not deteriorate, the equipment needed to access the content on any type of media may not be available to future users.

The quest to preserve digital content into the distant future requires an active process that can overcome the transient nature of technology. We must assume that any given digital object will need to be migrated through many different media types and hardware platforms over time. We must also be prepared for the obsolescence of the basic formats in which digital content may reside. Library users several decades from now will not have the same versions of word processors and document viewers that exist today. Even formats that we consider standard today like TIFF, JPEG, PNG, and MPEG could eventually

become extinct. Access to the content might depend on migrating formats, or providing the means for future systems to emulate those from the past.

In a major advancement in the digital preservation arena, the National Library of New Zealand, Ex Libris, and Sun Microsystems have developed a commercial product that addresses much needed requirements for long-term preservation of digital collections.

The National Library of New Zealand has been actively pursuing a strategy for the long-term preservation of its digital collections and has created the National Digital Heritage Archive, or NDHA. The content of the NDHA repository includes items submitted to the library for legal deposit, Web harvesting, content from the library's digitizing programs and other items in digital form donated to the library.

Beginning in 2004, the National Library of New Zealand began a process to develop detailed requirements and specifications to address its digital preservation needs. This process was com-

pleted in 2006 and led to the search for a vendor to create a product that addressed these requirements. The Library entered into the partnership with the expectation that a commercial product would be developed. If it developed a digital preservation system independently, it would have the ongoing responsibility for continued development and enhancement. By working with a commercial company, the library expects ongoing development and support to be provided by the company as it takes the product forward for itself and other customers.

The National Library of New Zealand signed an agreement with Endeavor Information Systems in August 2006 to develop a system that would address their needs in long-term digital preservation. Ex Libris acquired Endeavor in December of 2006. At the time of the acquisition, Ex Libris and the National Library of New Zealand began discussions on how to complete the project. Options included extending the Ex Libris Digi-Tool digital asset management system to meet the requirements or to develop

a new product. In June 2007, the parties agreed to a partnership that also includes Sun Microsystems, who will develop a new product to address the library's requirements for digital preservation of its National Digital Heritage Archive.

The development of the project involved a peer review group of international experts from institutions including British Library, Cornell University Library, the Getty Research Institute, Helsinki University Library, Royal Library of Denmark (Koninklijke Bibliotheek), National Library of China, Singapore National Library, the University of Glasgow, and Yale University.

The Open Archival Information System, OAIS, stands as the primary international standard in digital preservation. OAIS provides a reference model that can be followed to create a trusted digital archive. Developed by the Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems at the request of International Standards Organization (ISO), OAIS has become well established as the ideal approach for long-term digital preservation. OAIS



Symantec's Ghost software is being used to image all of the new computers at Georgia Tech's Learning West Commons. Photo by Michael Casey.

specifies the workflows involved in submitting items into an archive, storing items within the archive, and extracting items for the purpose of access. It describes the layers of metadata required, the validation that must be performed at each step. An OAIS compliant archive ensures all the transformations or emulations needed for each package to be accessed in the future. The model provides guidance on the myriad of issues involved in operating a trustworthy archive, like the number of copies needed for each package and how they should be distributed.

The agreement between Ex Libris and the National Library of New Zealand established as a requirement that the system produced be compliant with the OAIS reference model.

The partnership also involved Sun Microsystems. The Digital Preservation System relies on very sophisticated storage technologies, and Sun Microsystems has developed storage systems capable of meeting the requirements of an OAIS compliant preservation system, with very large-scale capacities and with extremely good performance while maintaining data integrity. These systems include both

disk and tape components. The StorageTek 990 from Sun, which can scale up to 330 terabytes and the Sun StorageTek Storage Archive Manager software provide some of the underlying infrastructure for the NDHA.

The software developed by Ex Libris provides the interfaces needed for submitting content into the archive, managing the internal operation of the archive, and providing access to the content in the archive. The Ex Libris Digital Preservation System maintains extensive metadata relating to the content in the archive which can be harvested for the purpose of search and display. The design of the system allows tools such as the company's Primo product to be used to provide access to the digital objects held in the repository.

The National Library of New Zealand put DPS into production on October of 2008. The general release of the product will be available to other libraries beginning in December 2008. A second phase of development is ongoing with completion expected in 2010.

Another interesting component of the NDHA project is the creation of the Web Curator to assist with the archiving

of content from Web sites for the purpose of preservation. One can use the tool either to selectively harvest targeted content, or to comprehensively harvest all Web content within top-level domains. This component was developed jointly with the British Library and made available to the general public without cost as an open source project. The programming for the tool was contracted to a commercial company.

The Digital Preservation System targets national, research, and academic libraries involved with large amounts of digital content. Many of these libraries struggle to provide adequate safeguards for their collections in the short and medium term, much less have the infrastructure needed to guarantee their preservation for posterity. The Digital Preservation from Ex Libris provides an off-the-shelf system to meet this need, following the rigors of the OAIS reference model.

—*Marshall Breeding*

For more information on the National Digital Heritage Archive, see:

<http://ndha-wiki.natlib.govt.nz/ndha/>

The Library Corporation Works Toward a New ILS Platform

The Library Corporation announced that it is developing a new integrated library system called LS2. This product will ultimately become TLC's strategic automation product, though it will continue to develop and support both of its existing ILS products indefinitely. The initial module of the system, the LS2 PAC, has been completed and has been implemented by the Shenandoah County Library System in Virginia.

In the current library automation arena, we mostly see integrated library systems that have followed an evolutionary path, gradually reshaping themselves to accommodate current preferences for technology architectures and the gradual accu-

mulation of desired features. It's rare to see a completely new system announced—recent attempts to do this in the market have not gone forward successfully. The Horizon 8.0/Corinthian project initiated by Dynix Systems before it was acquired by Sirsi Corporation stands as the most recent example of an aborted effort to create a new ILS. Yet many libraries express some dissatisfaction with the approach embodied by the older systems and may welcome a product that begins anew.

The Library Corporation has been at work on its next generation automation platform for more than a year. Its initial efforts have been focused on a new online catalog. This proj-

ect, initially launched under the code name Indigo, features a sharp new look, embracing many of the features of next-generation library catalogs. TLC has recently adopted the LS2 brand for this new family of products. The company's plans for LS2 involve much more than a new interface—they will use the technology framework and agile programming methodologies established as the first step toward creating an entirely new integrated library system.

The LS2 PAC, the first module of the new system completed, can be used as a catalog replacement for TLC's existing products, Library.Solution and Carl.X. The LS2 PAC includes the standard functionality of a library catalog as well as many Web 2.0 features like the capability for user supplied tags, ratings, and reviews. It supports faceted navigation and relevancy ranked search results, which have become common expectations in the next generation catalogs. The product sports a rich visual design, presenting cover art and other graphical elements. LS2 supports RSS both in the ability to offer search results as a feed and to present information from external RSS sources.

The development of LS2 marks the beginning of a new long term strategy for The Library Corporation that addresses the realities of its current circumstances. Since the time of its initial release in 1996, the Library.Solution ILS experienced strong rates of adoption by public libraries. By the end of 2007, the number of installations of Library.Solution totaled 682. In recent years, however, TLC has seen somewhat modest gains in the adoption of Library.Solution, with 35 sales in 2007 compared to 74 in 2001. In an increasingly saturated ILS market in North America, other companies have seen similar reductions of new sales. The company has seen some attrition of libraries from Carl.Solution, its system aimed at large municipal libraries. In recent years, TLC reengineered Carl.Solution, which was designed for the high-availability line of Tandem hardware into Carl.X (which runs on Unix and Oracle). This change was needed both to modernize the Carl software and because the Tandem hardware was being discontinued by its manufacturer. Beginning in 2004, the company was extremely successful at marketing AquaBrowser as a next-generation interface and served as its exclusive distributor in the United States, Canada, and Singapore. With the June 2007 sale of Medialab Solutions, the Dutch company that developed AquaBrowser to R.R. Bowker, TLC was no longer able to hold exclusive marketing rights to the product. This combination of factors makes the creation of a new library automation platform a logical move for The Library Corporation.

Although the number of new ILS sales made by TLC in recent years is down, the company continues to see some growth and benefits from a large base of customers currently running its products. The company focuses almost exclusively on library

automation products for public libraries. By not attempting to serve a wide variety of libraries, the company has been able to maintain its position as one of the leading providers of automation products to public libraries for over 20 years.

In the library automation arena, a number of approaches are available to move products forward, each with their own challenges. It's often possible to evolve a product through new generations of technology, keeping the core intact while changing out components and gradually modernizing the system. There also comes a time when it's better to develop a new system from scratch, recreating the functionality with a new technology platform in step with current architectures.

The Library Corporation has adopted a strategy that involves continued development of both of its existing products as it creates its next generation library automation platform. In the long term, libraries running Library.Solution and Carl.Solution/Carl.X may opt into LS2 as their forward path for automation, once that new system demonstrates that it offers the full set of features available in their current system, with a modernized approach and new benefits.

Libraries do not tolerate abrupt changes in their automation products well. Anytime a company announces that it will cease to develop a product, it causes great uncertainty for the libraries that use the product and erodes their confidence in that company. Even as TLC engages in a project to develop a new system, it plans to continue developing its existing systems. Had the company chosen to stand down development of its existing products, it might reduce the chances that the majority of its customers would remain loyal and eventually adopt its future system. While the costs of maintaining development and support on its two existing systems as it designs and creates a new system might be higher in the short term, it aims for a better long term outcome based on building the loyalty of its customer libraries by continuing to attend to its current products. By delivering a new user interface as the first module of its new system that also works with its existing products, its customer libraries gain immediate benefits where they matter most.

In the long term, it's advantageous for a library automation company involved in multiple automation products to work toward a single strategic technology platform. Companies that have made abrupt moves to accomplish this result have caused disruption and have lost portions of their customer base. The gradual, longer-term approach that The Library Corporation has adopted may avoid the alienation of library customers. While the approach that The Library Corporation has taken in phasing in its new automation platform seems cautious, the introduction of a new automation system in a market that favors evolved systems is a bold move.

—*Marshall Breeding*

ALA VCL MIG Holds SLymposium

On November 8, 2008 the ALA Virtual Communities and Libraries, Member Initiative Group (VCL MIG) held a successful *SLymposium* in Second Life, the three-dimensional virtual world. Despite how it may sound, a SLymposium is not a weight loss seminar, but rather a symposium held in Second Life. The topic of this inaugural SLymposium was the many initiatives that libraries and library-related organizations are taking on in Second Life. Approximately 80 people attended.

Several things about this SLymposium were remarkable. First, it was planned and executed very rapidly—in just three weeks! About a half-dozen people served on the planning committee and met several times to discuss the type of seminar they wanted to hold. They developed a list of presentations and potential speakers, created a web-based registration form, and began announcing this free in-world event.

The response to the symposium was overwhelmingly positive—within a week over 110 people had registered. Attendees came from all parts of the United States, Canada, the UK, Germany, Lithuania, Egypt, Australia, and other countries. Because a typical island in Second Life can hold approximately 75 people at any given moment, the conference planners decided to close registration.

The speakers and presenters did a great job. All were long-time residents of Second Life, so the idea of presenting in-world was natural to them. The attendees used text chat to great advantage. They asked thoughtful questions, shared their experiences, swapped information, and raised important challenges and opportunities. Lest you think this was an august

gathering of librarians involved in virtual worlds, the SLymposium was full of mirth, LOL, and high spirits.

The attendees were not only geographically diverse, but also diverse in terms of types of libraries and organizations represented and the number of years of professional library experience. Some attendees were graduate students of library science while others were practicing librarians with over three decades of experience. Even some non-librarians attended and reported that they found the SLymposium very enlightening.

Your intrepid reporter gave the opening address, drawing on the ideas and information contained in the October issue of *Library Technology Reports* on the topic of Librarianship in Virtual Worlds. Sonja Morgan from the Mark & Emily Turner Memorial Library in Presque Isle, Maine then spoke about what public and rural libraries are doing in Second Life. Tina Coleman from the American Library Association provided an interesting perspective on associational work and opportunities in Second Life. Carrie Kent from Harvard University shared her experiences and thoughts about the activities and goals of academic libraries and institutions of higher education in virtual worlds. Carol Perryman from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill talked about how special libraries, especially consumer health and health sciences libraries, are reaching out to communities of interest in Second Life. Kelly Czarnecki from the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County and Lori Bell from the Alliance Library System informed attendees about what school libraries, school systems, tweens, and teens are doing in virtual

worlds. Last but not least, Sue Bergren from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign gave us a graduate student perspective on all this library activity in Second Life.

Radio Riel streamed the audio of the presenters into Second Life and recorded the audio as well, which is archived on the Radio Riel website.

The ALA VCL MIG also is planning another SLymposium in the spring of 2009 that will focus on what various libraries and library-related organizations are doing in virtual worlds other than Second Life. The ALA VCL MIG also plans to hold multi-modal meetings—where participants may be at the conference location, on ALA Island in Second Life, in the OPAL collaborative webconferencing service, or any combination of the above—both at ALA Midwinter in Denver and at ALA Annual Conference in Chicago.

—Tom Peters

More Info. @:

ALA VCL MIG Blog:
<http://www.virtual.ala.org/virtualpresence/>

Radio Riel:
<http://radioriel.blogspot.com/>

Engagement Announcement: Talis Engage

Libraries serve communities, whether they are geographical communities, learning communities, communities of interest or intent, online communities, virtual world communities, or global communities. This is a fact, and one that won't be changing anytime soon. Nevertheless, as mass book digitization projects gain momentum, the way that most libraries serve the information needs of their communities may shift from acquiring and organizing published information to collecting and organizing community-based and community-created information.

In late October the UK-based library automation vendor Talis announced the official release of Talis Engage, a new library automation module that enables libraries and local authorities to help local community groups gather and codify information. Talis Engage will also increase the presence and visibility of these groups to their communities.

Talis Engage enables representatives from these community groups to create and maintain their own records and information archives. Individual members of the community may also tag the records with words and phrases that are meaningful to them. Talis Engage may be the harbinger of a new type of library-supported information system. In this system, librarians, perhaps working with library vendors, design and develop the basic shell for a useful information system, but users are able to populate these systems themselves. For the community

served by a given library, this represents a new level of engagement.

The interface of Talis Engage has a clean, Google-like appearance with a simple default search box. There are advanced search tools as well as the ability to save a search as an RSS feed that will alert you whenever new information matching the search criteria are added. Because Talis Engage is a hosted service, there is no need to acquire or add hardware or software locally.

Talis Engage also gives users the ability to mash-up content. For example, on the main contact page for a place-based community organization, it is possible to include a link to a Google Maps map. It also is easy to create links to related information, such as photos in Flickr and videos in YouTube.

Talis Engage can operate as a standalone module, regardless of the brand of integrated library system you have at your library. If you want to kick the tires, free trials to Talis Engage are available.

This manner of helping community-based groups organize their information and increase their presence in their communities and beyond seems like a very fruitful avenue of endeavor for libraries of all types. Here in the U.S., for instance, the Plinkit collaborative that helps small libraries create and maintain dynamic websites seems to be evolving with a strong community-based support module in the manner of Talis Engage.

—Tom Peters

The screenshot displays the Talis Engage search interface. At the top, there is a search bar with a 'Search' button and a 'Log In' link. Below the search bar, the results are listed under the heading 'Results for: library'. The results include a list of libraries and groups, such as 'Benham Toy Library', 'Settle Toy Library', 'Scarborough Library Readers' Group', 'Friends Of Scarborough Library', 'Friends Of Scarborough Library Music Group', 'Borthwick Institute for Archives', and 'Airedale and Wharfedale Autism Resource (AWARE)'. Each result includes a title and a location code (e.g., 'C. Is 2 Sc446'). On the left side, there is a 'Limit by' section with checkboxes for 'Town', 'Ebooks', and 'Tags'. At the bottom, there is a footer with contact information for North Yorkshire County Council and the Talis Engage logo.

More Info. @:

<http://www.talis.com/engage/>

<http://www.plinkit.org/>