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January 2008 **Ex Libris Captures NYU**

Smart Libraries Newsletter

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

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Ex Libris Captures NYU

New York University announced that it has selected ALEPH 500 from Ex Libris to replace its existing Advance library automation system. In 2005 NYU ranked eighteenth among the 113 academic members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). ARL members stand in the top tier of academic libraries in the United States and Canada and often represent the most sought-after accounts for library automation companies. In recent years, few ARL libraries have changed library automation systems. Prior to NYU's announcement, no ARL libraries had announced a system change in 2007.

Many Libraries, Many Modules

This automation project encompasses a number of libraries. The NYU Division of Libraries includes the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, The Stephen Chan Library of Fine Arts, The Conservation Center Library, the Jack Brause Real Estate Library, and the library of the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. Although not directly part of New York University, the libraries of the New School University and Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art participate in NYU's library automation environment. These libraries participate in the Research Library Association of South Manhattan.

The contract with Ex Libris also includes the purchase and deployment of the company's Metalib federated search product and the Primo resource discovery and delivery platform. In 2001 NYU acquired SFX OpenURL linking environment from Ex Libris. The library was one of the early adopters of the product following the initial beta testing and commercialization of the product in 2000.

In addition to the automation environment associated with the Division of Libraries, New York University supports two installations of Millennium from Innovative Interfaces. The Julius catalog provides access to the collections of New York University Law Library and MedCat supports the NYU's health science libraries, including the Frederick L. Ehrman Medical Library, the Waldmann Dental Library, The Bellevue De La Chappelle Medical Library, and the Herman Robbins Medical Library. NYU signed a contract with Innovative Interfaces for their Electronic Resource Management product in April 2004.

Advance in Retreat

ALEPH 500 will replace the Infor Advance system currently used to automate this group of libraries, which has been in use for the past thirteen years. Formerly Geac Library Solutions, Infor Library and Information Systems now offers the Vubis Smart automation system. In addition to Advance, the company's legacy sys-

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tems include GLIS, PLUS, and BookPlus. Infor's current flagship system, Vubis Smart, has gained a healthy presence in Europe, but has not been widely adopted in the United States.

The NYU libraries have gone through a number of automation systems over the last three decades. In the Seventies they implemented a computerized circulation system for their own libraries and those of the Research Library Association of South Manhattan. In the late Seventies NYU implemented GLIS from Geac. The

The sale of ALEPH 500 to the NYU libraries bolsters the position of Ex Libris as a company providing automation software to the largest tier of libraries.

library worked with Geac to co-develop an online catalog for GLIS, which led to the introduction of the BobCat online catalog in 1983. In 1994, staying within the Geac fold, the NYU libraries migrated to Advance.

By the late Nineties Geac had largely discontinued new development on Advance. By this period, Geac's presence had waned in the North American ILS market, so most libraries running Advance migrated to products from competing companies.

In June 2004 NYU signed a contract with VTLS to implement their VIRTUA integrated library system. The libraries ultimately were not able to implement VIRTUA, leading to the need to select a new automation system. The unsuccessful implementation of VIRTUA resulted in the NYU libraries staying with their aging Advance system about three years longer than originally planned.

As VTLS strives to work its way back into the big leagues of ILS vendors, the aborted effort to implement VIRTUA at NYU represents quite a setback.

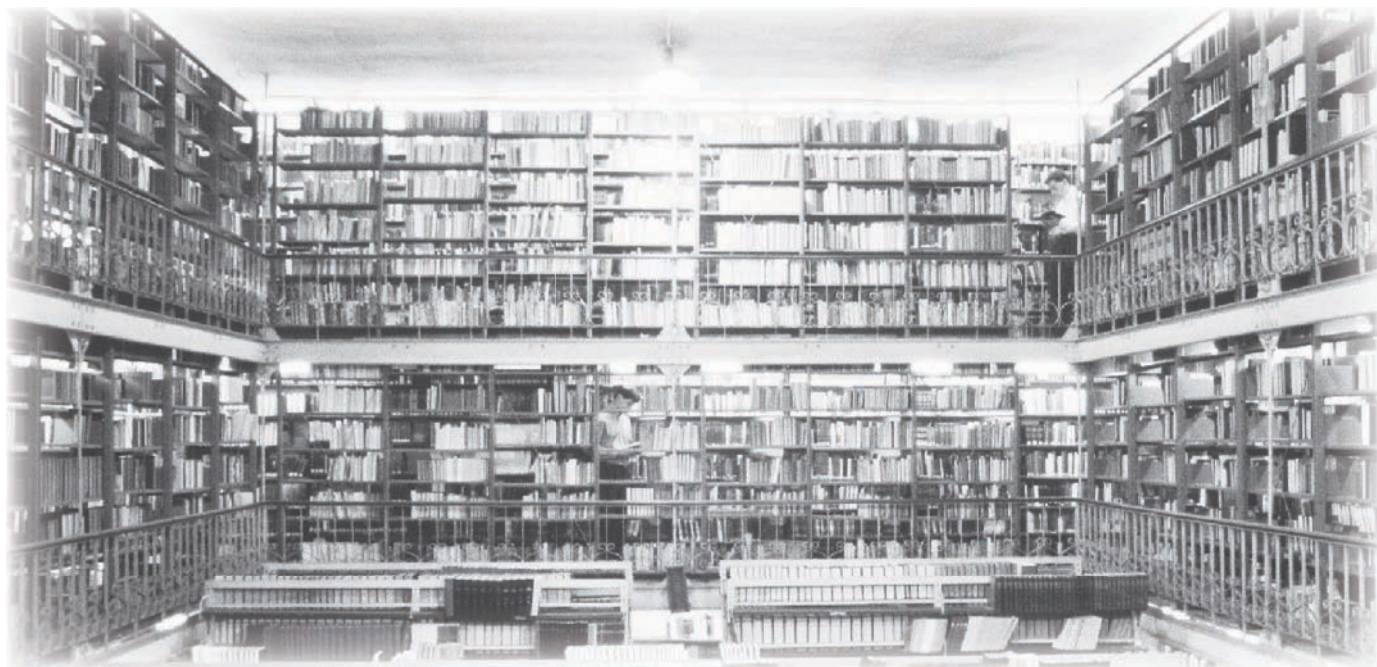
Oxford University, an even larger library system, selected VIRTUA in June 2005. A successful deployment of VIRTUA at Oxford would help restore confidence in the viability of the VIRTUA ILS for large academic libraries. VTLS continues to announce new sales of VIRTUA and its VITAL institutional repository package, primarily to libraries outside the United States.

The sale of ALEPH 500 to the NYU libraries bolsters the position of Ex Libris as a company providing automation software to the largest tier of libraries. Of the 123 ARL member libraries, 22 have selected ALEPH 500 and another 35 use Voyager. When Ex Libris' other products, such as SFX, MetaLib, Verde, and Primo, are factored in, Ex Libris products pervade the large ARL academic and research libraries to an even greater extent. —*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:

Ex Libris Press Release:

<http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/newsdetails.htm?nid=556>



Plinkit: Plinking Away

Creating something from scratch usually is much more fun and engaging than maintaining, nurturing, and improving something that already has been built. This truism is no more apt than in the realm of websites. Some libraries still do not have a website, and the websites of some libraries are not current. Some libraries have current information on their websites, but the sites themselves are skimpy on information and resources, poorly laid out, gaudy, generally smack of the late Nineties, or are just plain static and boring.

Plinkit (Public Library Interface Kit) is a multi-state initiative based on the Plone open source content management software to address all of these website challenges libraries face, especially smaller public libraries, where time and resources are scarce. Plinkit makes it easy for a library that never has had to website to create a new one, and it also helps libraries with existing but out-of-date websites to easily design and deploy dynamic websites that are current, fresh, and easy to maintain and update.

Plinkit started back in 2003 in Oregon as a two-year LSTA grant-funded project coordinated by the Multnomah County Library. In 2005 the project transitioned to the Oregon State Library and has since expanded to the states of Colorado, Illinois, and Texas. The collaborative has invited other states to join, too. Dozens of libraries have Plinkit websites up and running, and many more “instances” are in the works. Plinkit is becoming a bit of a misnomer, because other types of libraries are becoming involved in Plinkit projects in Illinois and elsewhere.

The four-state collaborative has several working groups, such as a steering

committee and a technical group, that meet regularly either via conference call or online. They collaborate on improving the Plinkit software, creating and revising documentation and training materials, sharing best practices, etc. They also have a single contact point with the broader Plone open-source community, which, as a result, has become interested and involved in the Plinkit initiative as an outstanding public good use of Plone. Several Plinkit librarians have attended Plone Boot Camp to better understand the underlying software.

Each Plinkit state has created at least one template, which is preloaded with content and links that many libraries probably would want to include in their local website, such as statewide information resources and services. As each library within a state prepares to launch its own website, the template is massaged and tweaked to meet the specific needs and interests of that community. Although most Plinkit websites contain a slightly similar look and feel, they are sufficiently customized for each community to function as uniquely localized information portals.

Plinkit makes it easy for a library staff member or volunteer to create and edit content, using an interface similar to that of a wordprocessing program. Various levels of access and editorial responsibilities enable staff to create, edit, and review new content and changes before they are published and made available to the general public. Plinkit also can be used to create a library staff intranet.

Plinkit also makes it easy for the library’s website to serve as a community resource, containing information and links about other governmental, social, and cultural organizations. Plinkit also

can be used as a community archive and repository for images and textual information.

Various “portlets” can be embedded in the Plinkit webpages to contain random and rotating quotes and photos, as well as current local weather conditions, library locations and hours, special announcements, and other time-sensitive or rotating information that makes the library’s website interesting, current, and fresh.

Plinkit is a work in progress worth watching and investigating, and the four-state collaborative is working hard to expand and improve what Plinkit can do for libraries, library users, and geographic communities. Plinkit does not yet incorporate many social software components of the read/write web, but that will come. In the future, Plinkit websites will become more interactive, multilingual, and will include other media forms, such as podcasts. —*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:

Multi-state Collaborative Website:
<http://www.plinkit.org/>

Plone Website:
<http://plone.org/>



Whybrary: A Virtual Library for Tweens

Efforts are underway, led by the Alliance Library System in central Illinois, to start a virtual library for tweens in Whyville, a virtual world from a Pasadena-based for-profit company called Numedeon, Inc. Funding and partners are still being sought, but AASL (the American Association of School Libraries) and the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have expressed initial interest in the project.

Compared to other virtual worlds, Whyville is a low-graphics affair, with a concomitantly low technology bar for users to get over. The Whyville virtual world is barely three dimensional, and the avatars are usually disembodied heads. They communicate primarily via text chatting, which hovers over each avatar's head for a few seconds, rather than being pulled into a chronologically ordered text chat history. Avatars can move around in most spaces in Whyville, but you cannot really change your perspective. The dancing that occurs looks like la bamba performed by bobble head dolls.

Most of Whyville's three million registered avatars are "tweens" between the ages of eight and fifteen, with twelve being both the median and mean age, according to representatives from Numedeon. A 2006 demographics fact sheet, including projections for 2007, states that girls outnumber boys two to one in Whyville. It is an international population, with the majority of tweens coming from the U.S. and Canada.

Whyville accounts are free, and non-tweens need not go through an overt real-life background check. The primary revenue stream appears to be fees supplied by sponsors of the virtual world environment, which include real-world for-profit corporations (e.g., Toyota), governmental agencies (e.g., NASA), charitable foundations (e.g., the John P. Getty Trust), and others. Also, there is a proto-economy in Whyville, based

on clams, the currency used to purchase goods and services in Whyville. The branding and messages of sponsors are integrated into the world and the experience. For example, Toyota offers "carvatars" that avatars can customize and take for joy rides around Whyville. ("And she had fun, fun, fun until her daddy took her carvatar away.")

Whyville runs on a proprietary virtual world platform called NICE (Numedeon Interactive Community Engine). Compared to other virtual worlds, the interface is simple, but it does not require a separate software download, will work on all the major browsers, and should work on a 56K dial-up connection. Numedeon offers the platform for sale to organizations that want to start their own virtual worlds. In addition to the customizable avatars and bubble chat obvious in Whyville, NICE also offers a transcription tool, calendar, event scheduling, moderator tools, document sharing, collaborative sharing, and more.

In December, to gauge interest among the tweens in having a "Whybrary" in Whyville and to test having a library-type program in that world, a series of brief book discussions about the C.S. Lewis novel from the Chronicles of Narnia, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, was held. Attendance was strong, especially for the evening sessions, with close to 40 tweens attending at one point.

Attendance is a slippery concept in Whyville. Although a tween's avatar may be in the online space where something is happening (in the case of the book discussions, they were held in the Greek theater), they may not be paying much attention to the main thread. Usually in Whyville, anyone can text chat at any time...and they do, with multiple text chat threads occurring simultaneously. Trying to lead a book discussion in such a communication environment is akin to trying to put on a play in the Globe

Theater or in a monkey house. There are many side conversations, intra-audience diversions, and general pandemonium to compete with the main event.

Nevertheless, many of the tweens in attendance were genuinely interested in participating in an in-world book discussion. They also liked the idea of having a library in Whyville. One group in particular began asking very specific questions about the nature, scope, and timeliness of the collection of the imagined Whybrary. Would it include certain books, or books containing a certain type of language? How quickly would newly released books get added to the Whybrary collection? What sort of circulation model would be used? Would there be overdue fines that had to be paid in clams?

Like many virtual worlds, Whyville can generate initial impressions that are unsettling. Nevertheless, after spending a little time in Whyville, librarians and other non-tweens begin to discern the underlying rich social structure and modes of interaction. Based on early experiences, library collections and services appear to be welcome and needed by some of the Whyvillians, and early testing will continue to understand the optimal warp and woof for a rich library mosaic in this virtual world. —Tom Peters

More Info. @:

Whyville Website:

<http://www.whyville.net>

Whyville Demographics (2006):

http://www.whyville.net/top/pdf/whyville_demographics.pdf

NICE Information Sheet:

<http://www.whyville.net/top/pdf/nice.pdf>

Numedeon Website:

<http://www.numedeon.com/smmk/frontOffice/lobby>

Au Courant: Michigan in Bed with Google

The portion of the Google massive book scanning project involving research libraries around the world continues to raise fundamental questions and engender lively debate about the nature of this project and the best way to pursue it. This part of Google scan basically is a partnership between a relatively young but fast-growing technology company and dozens of research universities, including many publicly-funded universities. Bilateral agreements between Google and individual universities got the ball rolling, with consortial agreements between Google and existing library consortia occurring as well.

Many of the participating universities and libraries have been questioned about relying on a for-profit company to fund and execute large portions of these massive digitization projects. Defenders of the project often reply that, without Google's funding (and Google's technical infrastructure and expertise), these massive digitization projects would have taken many more years to complete.

The University of Michigan was the first research university to sign an agreement with Google for this project, and they have consistently defended in public their decision to enter into this agreement with Google.

In November 2007 Paul Courant, the University Librarian and Dean of Libraries at the University of Michigan, started a blog called Au Courant. On November 4th he published a blog post defending the fact that the U. of Michigan is "in bed" with Google on this project. As a trained economist with emphases in public goods and public policy, and as a former Provost of UMich, Courant insists that these partnerships between Google and research universities "...are changing the world for the better." Courant believes "...that our library is doing exactly what it should do in the best

interests of scholarship and our users, now and in the future."

After articulating several of the key points of this argument, Courant concludes that "...being in bed with Google is way better than sleeping alone."

Courant's post generated dozens of responses from key participants in this debate, such as Brewster Kahle and Paul Duguid. Siva Vaidhyanathan, who is using another blog as a book in progress about the *Googolization of Everything*, also responded with several key questions. He suggested that Courant prematurely dismisses the serious search problems with Google Book Search and Google's reluctance to discuss the factors, standards, practices, and algorithms that are producing the lamentable search results that several critical users have reported. He also chides UMich and Google for having no language in their contract covering quality-control standards and methods, nor any way for users who discover poorly-scanned pages to report these flubs. Vaidhyanathan also expresses concerns about long-term file format viability, general preservation issues, patron confidentiality, and a whole cluster of copyright issues.

Courant in turn used his blog to respond to Siva's response. Courant notes the paragraph in the UMich agreement with Google that empowers UMich to engage in random sampling and benchmarking for quality assurance, with work stoppages for flagrant violations or unresolved issues. Regarding the maelstrom of copyright questions (and litigation), Courant reiterates what University of Michigan officials have

been stating throughout this process—that the University "...believes that when we have Google digitize our holdings we do so under the law and in order to make uses that are not only lawful, but that are completely consistent with the undergirding purpose of copyright law."

Google scan may become one of the most hotly debated library and information technology projects of the past several decades, surpassing the hubbub over the discarding of card catalogs in favor of computerized catalogs. As a record of a debate, this back-and-forth blogging with numerous appended comments and rebuttals may be better than dueling entry edits on some wiki. —Tom Peters

More Info. @:

Paul Courant's Blog Post:

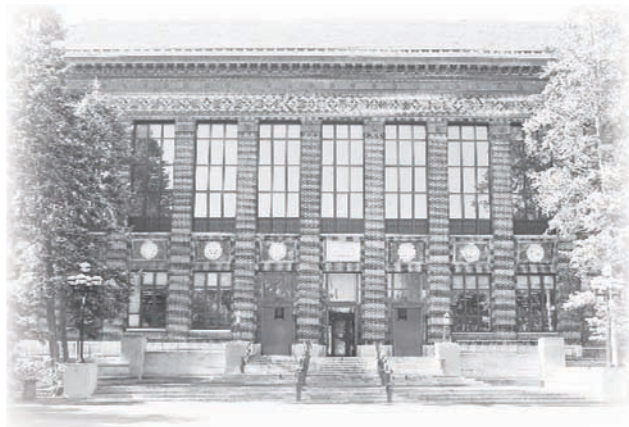
<http://paulcourant.net/2007/11/04/on-being-in-bed-with-google/>

Siva Vaidhyanathan's Blog Post:

http://www.googolizationofeverything.com/2007/11/paul_courant_of_michigan_addr.php

U. of Michigan's Agreement with Google:

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/mdp/umgooglecooperativeagreement.html>



Romance, Big Games, and E-Books in Libraries

Romance novels, online role-playing games, and e-books do not seem to have much in common, but a recent survey reveals the hidden ties that bind.

On December 4 Peter Svensson, a technology writer for the Associated Press, published an online article about how e-books are faring quite well in several niche markets within the vast labyrinth of book genres. The three niche markets for e-books that Svensson identifies are books that support role-playing game enthusiasts, the buyers of college textbooks, and readers of romance novels.

Svensson notes, "Role-players buy lots of books, which contain rules for their games or expand on the imagi-

nary worlds in which they are set. It's fiction, but it's more like reference material..." Svensson notes that e-book sales account for approximately ten percent of the roughly \$25 million in annual sales of role-playing games books. Svensson compares this healthy percentage to overall e-book sales across the entire publishing industry. In 2006 the Association of American Publishers estimated that only \$54 million of the \$24.2 billion U.S. book industry was used to purchase e-books, a scant .2 percent of total sales.

Interestingly, the major distributor of role-playing game books, DriveThruRPG, abandoned all DRM (digital rights management) in 2005. When they abandoned DRM, sales rose 30 percent.

The American Library Association is building upon its successful Gaming, Learning, and Libraries Symposium last summer and recent increased interest in all types of gaming across all types of libraries. Gaming in libraries was listed by *American Libraries* as one of the top ten library stories of 2007. Big game events, where public spaces (e.g., an urban neighborhood or a library) are used by the participants to play a game, are planned for both the Anaheim annual conference in 2008 and the Chicago annual conference in 2009. There also will be Gaming Pavilions in or near the exhibits at both conferences.

Romance novels in electronic format also are generating some interest and sales. Harlequin, which publishes anywhere from 120 to 140 romances per month (itself a sobering statistic), currently offers all of these books in e-book format as well. Although Svensson cites a Harlequin executive saying that ebook sales make up less than one percent of Harlequin's total sales, Harlequin has begun an experiment in selling short stories only in ebook format, priced less than \$1 each. Perhaps the electronic delivery of genre-specific short stories will resuscitate the publishing industry for short stories, which has been in the doldrums since the days of pulp fiction.

—Tom Peters

More Info. @:

Svensson's Article:

http://biz.yahoo.com/ap/071204/business_of_life.html?.v=2



The Mark of Zotero

Of the making of lists of books and articles there is no end, and in the managing of citations there is no end to new beginnings. On Halloween version 1.0 of Zotero was officially released, thus ending the public beta phase of this interesting open source citation and content management software.

Zotero began as a citation generator and citation management tool, but it quickly expanded beyond that to include full-text and full-image capture, tagging, annotating, and other research-related activities. Zotero can be used to cite, describe, and capture many types of information objects, including Flickr photos, blog posts, podcasts, and maps.

Zotero was created at the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University in Virginia. The project has received funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

Zotero works only as an extension to the Firefox browser, not because the developers are dismissive of Internet Explorer and other popular browsers, but simply because with Firefox they have access to the code they need to make Zotero work.

The search function within Zotero searches through all the metadata associated with an item, as well as the full text of web-pages you have zoteroed. Plain text files also are included in the search feature, but at present PDF files and Microsoft Word documents that have been zoteroed are not included in the search. Some of the features of Zotero work even when you are offline. For example, you may add notes to saved items, search for items, and organize your collection.

Exporting citations and bibliographies from Zotero is as easy as pulling citations and objects into Zotero. The Zotero documentation explains: “There are several ways to export items from your collection. Zotero can generate formatted bibliographies as rich text files, HTML files, or directly into Microsoft Word and Open Office through our

MS Word and Open Office plug-ins. You can also drag and drop any of your items into any text field to generate fully formatted references. Using this method it is easy to export from Zotero to web tools like Google Docs. Zotero also allows you to export your collection to other bibliographic tools like Endnote or Refworks.”

According to the Zotero website, the minimum browser requirement includes having either Firefox 2.0, Netscape Navigator 9.9, or Flock 0.9.1 running on your Microsoft Windows, Mac, or Linux machine. “Zotero is not compatible with earlier versions of these browsers.”

Zotero is beginning to make its mark in the world of digital scholarship, online weblibliographies, and personal digital archives. —*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:

Zotero Website:

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

Press Release:

<http://www.zotero.org/blog/zotero-10-released/>

