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Smart Libraries Newsletter
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2795 USA

NON PROFIT
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BIRMINGHAM, AL

December 2007

Library RFID Companies Converge

Smart Libraries Newsletter

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

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The 2007 subscription price is just \$85 US.

Production and design by Kimberly Saar Richardson,
American Library Association Production Services.

Smart Libraries Newsletter is published monthly by ALA TechSource,
a unit of the publishing division of the American Library Association.

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Smart Libraries

Formerly Library Systems Newsletter™

50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611-2795, USA

December 2007 Volume XXVII Number 12

Checkpoint Systems and 3M Library Systems Converge on RFID

Two of the top competitors in the library-focused RFID and library security products arena, 3M Library Systems and Checkpoint Systems, have consolidated their efforts to produce and market products to libraries. The arrangement, announced October 29, 2007, results in melding the 3M Library Systems marketing channels with products from Checkpoint Systems. Effective the beginning of 2008, 3M Library Systems will serve as the exclusive worldwide distributor and service provider for Checkpoint's family of products oriented toward libraries.

Prior to this strategic partnership, both 3M Library Systems and Checkpoint Systems were major competitors in the growing library RFID market. This alliance effectively combines the efforts of both companies in this arena. 3M Library Systems and Checkpoint Systems will continue to develop and manufacture products and both lines will be sold and supported worldwide by 3M Library Systems.

3M Library Systems has established itself as one of the major providers of security, self checkout, and RFID products to libraries. The company has provided security, productivity, and information management solutions to the industry for more than 35 years. Its products include the Tattle-Tape security strips and detection equipment based on electromagnetic technology, self-service stations for both checkout and check-in of library materials, and many products based on RFID.

Checkpoint Systems develops security and RFID products for a variety of industries, including libraries. Checkpoint's library-oriented products include its flagship Intelligent Library System, a suite of components that provide self checkout and return of materials by library patrons, exit gate security, collection inventory, usage reports, and other functions. The company also offers the DiscMate digital media security system, and CheckPASS, a system for print management and for scheduling public access computers.

A Marketing, Sales, and Support Alliance

This strategic sales and marketing alliance gives 3M Library Systems full responsibility for the marketing and support of Checkpoint products to libraries. Checkpoint will continue to develop and manufacture products, but they will be sold exclusively by 3M. The partnership will also result in a new product developed by Checkpoint to be sold through 3M called The Library Advocate, a new Web-based library productivity software product.

3M will continue to develop, manufacture, market, and support its own products as well. This arrangement significantly expands the portfolio of products that

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ISSN 1541-8820

3M Library Systems is able to offer to libraries through its worldwide marketing channels, and the alliance gives 3M access to a larger customer base by virtue of the libraries that have already implemented Checkpoint's products.

By collaborating with 3M Library Systems, Checkpoint will continue to gain revenues from its products without the need to maintain a business unit dedicated to marketing and support. Reliance on a partner as an exclusive dis-

tributor is not an unusual arrangement for companies that develop and manufacture products.

for 2005. These restatements of earnings provide strong incentives to reduce operating costs moving forward.

Other Players in the Library RFID Marketplace

A number of other companies offer RFID and self-check products to libraries in addition to 3M Library Systems and Checkpoint. Other major competitors in the field include Bibliotheca RFID

and components, has developed its own software and self check stations.

While this strategic agreement between Checkpoint Systems and 3M Library Systems consolidates the efforts of the two companies into one, it does not necessarily involve a narrowing of product options available to libraries. While it would not be surprising to see some paring of duplicative products in the future, the initial terms of the alliance involve the products of both compa-

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Checkpoint Systems' presence in the library market has been in flux since October 2006. At that time the company executed a reorganization that resulted in the creation of a new Patron Services Group that effectively replaced the company's Library Systems division.

In March 2007, Checkpoint Systems announced that it would expand its library RFID operations through the expansion of its Patron Services Division, taking on the efforts of the former Checkpoint Library Division. That revitalization of its library focused marketing was apparently short lived and evidently is superseded by the alliance with 3M Library Systems.

Checkpoint Systems also stands among the large group of companies with accounting difficulties. In March 2007, the company issued a restatement of its earnings that reflected a reduction in earnings of \$1.9 million for the first three quarters of 2006 and \$2.9 million

Library Systems, TAGSYS, Sentry Technology Corporation, and Tech Logic.

Bibliotheca RFID Library Systems, based in Switzerland, develops and markets products based on its BiblioChip System that perform both self-check and security functions. This company focuses exclusively on products for libraries and stands as the leading provider of RFID products to libraries in Europe.

Sentry Technology Corporation entered the library RFID market through its 2004 acquisition of ID Systems and offers the QuickCheck patron self-service stations.

Tech Logic Solutions, a wholly owned subsidiary of The Library Corporation, offers RFID and automatic material handling systems for libraries.

TAGSYS RFID is a major manufacturer of RFID tags and related infrastructure equipment. The company markets its products to libraries both directly and through distributors which currently include SirsiDynix and VTLS. VTLS, while it depends of TAGSYS RFID tags

and components, has developed its own software and self check stations. While the number of competitors in the library RFID arena is fairly small, the melding of these two companies' efforts represents only a moderate shift in the overall landscape.

—Marshall Breeding

More Info. @:

Press Release:

<http://www.checkpointsystems.com/default.aspx?page=news&idnews=257>

Bibliotheca RFID Library Systems:

<http://www.bibliotheca-rfid.com/>

Sentry Technology Corporation:

<http://www.sentrytechnology.com/librfid.htm>

Tech Logic:

<http://www.tech-logic.com/rfid.asp>

TAGSYS RFID:

<http://www.tagsysrfid.com/html/eng/page-8.html>

Building the eXtensible Catalog

One of the top priorities in the field of library automation involves inventing new interfaces to provide access to library content and services to users. Dissatisfaction with current OPAC products runs rampant. The need for a new generation of interfaces more in tune with the expectations of Web-savvy library users ranks as one of the top priorities as libraries develop their online presence. Both commercial library vendors and groups within libraries themselves have launched initiatives to develop next-generation library interfaces. One of the non-commercial efforts that continues to show strong promise is the University of Rochester River Campus Libraries initiative to develop the eXtensible Catalog.

The eXtensible Catalog (XC) initiative has garnered the resources necessary to move out of the realm of conceptual planning to an actual product through new funding awarded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. This grant of \$749,000 will be supplemented by financial and in-kind contributions from the University of Rochester and a group of other institutions participating in the project. The value of the total project contributions will total \$2.8 million. This level of funding brings to this initiative the level of resources necessary to create a product capable of competing with the emerging commercial offerings.

This new award follows up on a \$283,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation announced in April 2006 to develop the requirements and conceptual framework for the eXtensible Catalog, bringing the Foundation's total investment to date in the XC to over \$1 million.

The eXtensible Catalog will be created in an open source model and in many ways competes with commercial products such as Encore from Innovative Interfaces, Primo from Ex Libris, and Aquabrowser from Medialab Solutions. As one of this genre of next-generation library interfaces, XC aims to deliver access to a broad range of content managed by a library taking advantage of more current user interface conventions than were present in the earlier generation of OPAC products. XC also aims to extend the concept of the next generation interface beyond the model cast by these commercial products.

Some of the key features embraced by the eXtensible Catalog include:

- A user interface to help library users at varying levels of proficiency to gain access to diverse library collections
- Grouping of results consistent with the concepts of FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records)
- Support for multiple metadata schemas
- Integration with metasearch applications
- Integration with local ILS implementations

An important component of the vision of XC lies in putting the library in control of the way it delivers content. The default interface for XC will be based on the open source Drupal content management system. Libraries will be able to fully customize the interface, or even craft their own interface on top of the underlying XC services using another content management system or development environment. XC will embrace an architecture that lends itself to being incorporated into external environments such as learning management systems (e.g., Sakai and Blackboard) and will include tools to help libraries embed XC services.

During the initial phase of the XC initiative, project staff conducted a number of interviews and focus groups to help develop a conceptual model and the functional requirements. Principals of the project gave a number of presentations to diverse groups which have resulted in significant interest. In February 2007 the group hosted an invitational XC Partner Meeting. Most of the organizations represented at this meeting have agreed to participate either in a material or advisory capacity as the project moves into this second phase.

Organizations partnering with the University of Rochester River Campus Libraries on the eXtensible Catalog project currently include University of Notre Dame, the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois, Rochester Institute of Technology, Oregon State University, Cornell University, the University of Buffalo, Ohio State University, the Georgia PINES consortium, and Yale University. Each of these partner institutions will make substantial contributions to the project, either through staff time allocated toward the development of XC or through financial support. Institutions involved in an advisory role include the Library of Congress, OCLC, North Carolina State University, and the Darien Public Library in Connecticut.

Ronald F. Dow, the Andrew H. and Janet Dayton Neilly Dean of the River Campus Libraries at the University of Rochester, will lead the project. Other principals include David Lindahl, director of digital initiatives; Jennifer Bowen director of catalog and metadata management; and Nancy Fried Foster, lead anthropologist for the libraries. —Marshall Breeding

More Info. @:

eXtensible Catalog website:

<http://www.extensiblecatalog.info>

Final Report on the Initial Phase of the Project:

<http://docushare.lib.rochester.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-27534>

Librarians Out of Step on Privacy Issues?

Privacy and confidentiality issues often haunt information technology systems and developments. While privacy concerns have always existed, ever since the dawn of the digital era, threats to personal privacy and breaches of confidentiality seem to have become more prevalent.

Librarianship as a profession has been concerned for a long time about maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of library users. The Code of Ethics of the American Library Association explicitly states, “We protect each library user’s right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted.” This section of the Code of Ethics does not explicitly address the willingness and ability of users of an information system to divulge certain personal information in return for a better, more-personalized information experience. This way of thinking about privacy as some sort of commodity to be bartered seems to be at the heart of many recent online social networking systems.

In the era of digital, networked information systems, the challenges of maintaining patron privacy and confidentiality become more complex. In recent years, as social networking has become more diffused throughout the population, user attitudes about privacy and confidentiality seem to be evolving, with many people apparently willing to release some private information about themselves in exchange for a better, more persistent online information experience.

In October 2007 OCLC issued a whopping 280-page report about “Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Out Networked World.” The report is based on a survey of representatives from the general public, conducted by Harris Interactive for OCLC. The study examines four major areas: user practices and preferences concerning their favorite social spaces; user attitudes about sharing and receiving information on social spaces, commercial websites, and library websites; what is important and less important to online social networkers concerning information privacy; and the social networking practices and preferences of library directors.

Libraries try to meet the information needs and expectations of the populations they serve. The rapid and significant explosion of online social networking

activity in this decade raises some major questions about the behavior and attitudes of the networking crowd. As Cathy De Rosa notes in her introduction to this report, “We know relatively little about what these emerging social Web communities will mean for the future of the Internet or the possibilities they hold for library services on the Internet.”

Over 6,100 users between the ages of 14 and 84 were surveyed about their Internet usage, social networking practices, and their attitudes toward privacy, confidentiality, and trust. The respondents were from six developed nations: Canada, the United States, Japan, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The 382 library directors who also participated in this study were all based in the U.S.

In general, the results of this massive survey suggest that the Internet has become a common component of the lives of most people in these six developed nations, regardless of age group or geographic location (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural). That most people use the Internet and the Web is a given. How they are using these networks is the area of rapid development. Twenty-eight percent of the respondents reported that they had used a social networking site in the past 12 months.

One interesting question posed in this mammoth study involved asking people which popular commercial websites they had used in the past 12 months to browse for and/or purchase music, movies, books, and other retail goods. A group of popular websites was listed along with “a library Web site”



to provide a context. Any library website was checked by 16 percent of the Canadian respondents, 13 percent of the U.S. respondents, and 10 percent of Japanese respondents, with less than 10 percent of the respondents in France, Germany, and the UK indicating that they had used any library website in the past 12 months.

Interestingly, when the responses to this question are grouped by the ages of the respondents, young adults (aged 14-21) checked the library option 13 percent of the time, compared to just 9 percent of the 50-and-older demographic.

A general perception of a recent decline in Internet privacy was not indicated in the responses. The majority (52 percent) of the respondents felt that personal information they supplied on the Internet was kept as private or more private than it was two years ago. Only 27 percent indicated that their personal information was kept less private than it was two years ago, with 21 percent not sure. When broken down by age, 35 percent of the 50-or-older respondents felt that their personal information was less private in 2007 than in 2005, compared to only 20 percent of young adults.

Most of the respondents did not feel that their use of library websites and print collections is very private. Only 11 percent of all respondents described their use of these library resources as extremely private, and only 9 percent described it as very private.

The survey also indicates that U.S. library directors may be making some erroneous assumptions about the privacy atti-

tudes and fears of the general population. The report notes, “Librarians overestimated privacy views of their users in every instance.” As Cathy De Rosa summarizes in her introduction, “Our survey finds that while libraries are using the same Internet resources as the general online population (often at higher rates), their practices and attitudes about sharing, privacy and trust differ substantially from the populations they serve.”

This is just one research report, but the prospect that our professional attitudes and practices concerning privacy, confidentiality, and trust are on a divergent path from the overall attitudinal and behavioral patterns of the general populations of these six developed nations is worthy of careful professional discussion and further research. For some librarians, this apparent divergence may be a source of professional pride, rather than a cause for concern. For other librarians, it may serve as a signal that our profession is losing touch with the general population on the key issues of sharing personal information in complex online social spaces. —Tom Peters

More Info. @:

OCLC Report on “Sharing, Privacy and Trust in Our Networked World:

<http://www.oclc.org/reports/sharing/>

ALA Code of Ethics:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.htm>

OCA Plans to Scan on Demand in 2008

Recently the Open Content Alliance has emerged as a viable alternative to more commercially oriented massive book digitization projects, such as Google Book Search. The OCA massive book digitization project is focused on out-of-copyright works that are in the public domain.

Another problem with providing online digital access to published books centers around orphan works—works that are still covered by copyright but that present difficulties in locating the copyright holders.

This fall the OCA announced an expansion of its mission and activities related to the mass digitization of books. The Internet Archive, the organization behind the OCA, has partnered initially with the Boston Public Library, the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, and Universidad Fran-

cisco Marroquin in Guatemala to develop and offer a scan-on-demand digital interlibrary loan service for that troublesome large middle ground of published books that are neither gloriously in print nor officially in the public domain.

OCA already has numerous regional digitization centers that are busily scanning works in the public domain. According to the announcement, “Book digitization requests will be processed by existing regional scanning centers, and downloadable, searchable files will be made available within a few days.” —Tom Peters

More Info. @:

Open Content Alliance’s Announcement:

http://www.openlibrary.org/details/oca_test_004/leaf10

Gluttons for Punishment?

With all the success book discussion groups have had in recent decades, one would think that live online and/or in-world (i.e., in virtual worlds) book discussions would be very popular, in part because these real-time digital events allow book lovers to place-shift. In theory, anyone in the world with the proper connectivity could participate in an online or in-world discussion of their favorite book, author, or genre.

In fact, however, many online and in-world book discussions do not draw large audiences. Breaking into double-digits for attendance often is considered success. And yet, online asynchronous social networking sites for book lovers seem to be doing well. LibraryThing has over 300,000 members who have a collective catalog of over 20 million books. Google Book Search recently added a suite of tools that could be interpreted as providing direct competition to LibraryThing.

Any company contemplating entering this schizophrenic situation (online and in-world book discussions are experiencing disappointing attendance, while bookish social networks are booming) could be labeled a glutton for punishment. Well, consider that a naming opportunity that some enterprising company recently seized.

The BookGlutton social network for avid ebook readers launched recently. It combines elements of online bookish social networks with real-time online book discussions. If you want to, you can chat in real-time with other people around the world who are at the same or similar point in reading a book as you are. The designers of BookGlutton's Unbound Reader software have called this feature "proximity chat." David Rothman, blogging for *Publishers Weekly*, reports that BookGlutton may add a real-time online voice chat feature soon.

With BookGlutton, you can read a book by yourself (how retro!), or with an existing BookGlutton group, or with people worldwide who have registered with BookGlutton and who are currently reading the book. The "Talk" tab on the left side of the displayed page of text helps you manage this real-time interactive conversation. You can chat with anyone who is currently reading the book, or only with people who are in the same section of the book as you are. By using that feature, you can reduce the chance that some fellow reader will "spoil" the book for you by revealing information that occurs later in the book.

With BookGlutton's Unbound Reader software you also can add asynchronous comments (marginalia) that can be seen and commented on in turn by subsequent readers of the

book. If you want to use BookGlutton as a solitary reading and commenting experience, you can mark your marginalia as viewable only by yourself. When a public comment has been added to a paragraph in the book, a discreet asterisk appears in the margin, alerting future readers that someone had something to say about that paragraph.

A service such as BookGlutton is not only about reading and community, but also about content and presentation of content. At least initially, the BookGlutton collection will be heavily weighted toward public domain works published prior to 1923. The BookGlutton gormands, however, are working to legally add newer works to the database, and they have added a feature that allows living authors to upload their own creative works.

Regarding the presentation of the content, according to David Rothman's blog post, BookGlutton enables users to download content in the new .epub format from the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF). This file format can be used in Adobe Digital Editions software, which was released in June 2007, as well as in other ebook reader software programs.

How will BookGlutton as a company feed its appetite to survive and thrive? Through advertising, of course, which, along with gambling seems to be the two crutches many businesses and governments rely on in this enlightened era to float their gravy boats. Rothman reports that the BookGlutton folks don't plan to allow advertising within books, but only in the surrounding material.

BookGlutton is a novel concept that may emerge as a way to foster and facilitate books and reading in the future, especially among younger readers. It could be used to advantage by high school and college literature courses as one way to get the class members actively engaged in and discussing the book as a group.

—Tom Peters

More Info. @:

BookGlutton website:

<http://www.bookglutton.com>

YouTube demo video from the developers of BookGlutton:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkCoknkwua4>

David Rothman's blog at Publisher's Weekly:

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/blog/760000476.html>

International Digital Publishing Forum:

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

Entwined

Keeping track of all your digital documents, organizing them, sharing them with friends and colleagues, and squeezing any and all group intelligence from those digital documents is a tall order. Just organizing—not to mention editing—your digital photos and videos is a Herculean task. Creating, finding, and capturing information has never been easier. Making sense of and gaining value from that welter of information has never been more difficult.

A tool called Twine from a San Francisco based tech company called Radar Networks is poised to help you organize all the digital documents in your life, which includes the digital documents dear to family, friends, and colleagues. Twine will help you bind it all together.

Twine, which currently is in a by-invitation-only beta testing stage, is being touted as the first cool tool of the much-discussed but heretofore little implemented Semantic Web. According to the “About” page on the Twine website, “... Twine uses the Semantic Web, natural language processing, and machine learning to make your information and relationships smarter.” Twine will use semantic processing to organize your information space, make connections, add metadata, etc. The wisdom of crowds and machine intelligence are two additional loose-end concepts that are entwined in Twine.

While scads of online **social** networks exist, with digital friends coming out of the woodwork, Twine promises to foster and facilitate the creation and growth of smart online **knowledge** networks.

According to early comments about Twine, while it will look to the end user as an amalgam of a wiki, blog, email client, RSS aggregator, and other Web 2.0 tools, under the hood there will be lots of Semantic Web technologies, creating what the founder of Radar Networks, Nova Spivack, calls a “Semantic Graph” that maps relationships between both people and topics. Twine will help make knowledge visible.

An article in *Technology Review* states that Twine will become available to the general public as a free application in the summer of 2008. Twine probably will be of most use to workgroups in education, research, and business who want to share lots of information with complex relationships in the hopes of gaining something significant from making the collective intelligence on a topic more manifest.

Libraries are feeling pressure from both meta-collections (such as mass digitization projects) and from “private” digital collections of limited scope but astounding depth being created by individuals and small workgroups. Twine seems to be a way for the creators and maintainers of private digital collections to take the usefulness of these collections to new heights. The worthwhile application of Twine to library-related activities, perhaps via the Library 2.0 movement, remains unknown. —Tom Peters

More Info. @:

Twine website:

<http://www.twine.com>

Technology Review article about Twine:

<http://www.technologyreview.com/Infotech/19627/?a=f>

