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OCLC Completes Its Acquisition of PICA

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OCLC Completes Its Acquisition of PICA

OCLC took another step in its growth as a global organization by gaining complete ownership of OCLC PICA, the integrated library system based in the Netherlands and used by libraries and library consortia in Europe and elsewhere. While this move represents a solidification of OCLC's European holdings, it does not reflect a major change in strategy. OCLC already owned the majority of the shares of OCLC PICA through combined investments of $8.7 million made in December 1999 and September 2000. OCLC has not yet revealed the amount paid for the remaining 40 percent of the shares.

The completion of the purchase of PICA represents the latest step in OCLC's growth into a global entity. The organization has a longstanding pattern of growth and expansion. Founded in 1967 as the Ohio College Library Center to serve the colleges and universities in Ohio, the organization expanded to the national level in the U.S. in 1977 when its board of directors approved changes to allow libraries outside Ohio to become members and participate in its governance. Since that time OCLC has attracted member libraries from throughout the U.S. and internationally.

Governance Study on Fast Track

One of the key recent activities for OCLC as an organization lies in aligning its governance to reflect its global activities. Toward this end, the OCLC Board of Trustees appointed a Governance Study Committee and engaged a consulting firm in April 2007. According to OCLC's press release, the Governance Study Committee will make its recommendations in November 2007. Any approved modifications to OCLC governance should take effect on July 1, 2008.

The Roots of PICA

OCLC PICA traces its roots to 1969 when the Royal National Library and other Dutch university and college libraries initiated a project called the Project for Integrated Catalogue Automation as a research project to create a system for shared cataloging and automation. In 1986 the project became an independent organization named Stichting Centre for Library Automation, Pica. The organization expanded over time to provide library automation products and resource sharing services to libraries throughout Europe. In 1996, the organization was renamed to Stichting Pica. In 1999, Stichting Pica spun off its automation and resource sharing activities into a wholly owned Dutch Limited Liability Company named PICA BV. By September 2000, OCLC had acquired 60 percent

IN THIS ISSUE

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ownership in PICA BV. OCLC PICA was formed in January 2002 when OCLC consolidated its own OCLC Europe, Middle East and Africa division with PICA BV. Now that OCLC has acquired the remaining 40 percent from Stichting Pica, it gains additional flexibility to integrate OCLC PICA within the governance of its global organization.

According to the press release, OCLC and PICA have been collaborating for 30 years. "Cooperation between OCLC and PICA began in 1977 when the organizations began sharing data."

As OCLC's primary presence in Europe, OCLC PICA has been involved in business acquisitions including the July 2005 purchase of Sisis Informationssysteme for $4.5 million and the November 2005 acquisition of Fretwell-Downing Informatics for $8.9 million. In April 2006 both Sisis Informationssysteme and Fretwell-Downing Informatics changed their name to OCLC PICA. Rein van Charldorp, Managing Director of OCLC PICA since April 2002, leads the combined companies and serves as part of the senior management of OCLC.

No corporate acquisition such as this is devoid of some controversy. This latest move highlights the complexities between the non-profit and for-profit activities within OCLC, which do not go without challenge from their commercial competitors.—*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:
OCLC PICA website:
　　www.oclcpica.org
OCLC Press Release about PICA:
　　www.oclc.org/news/releases/
　　200668.htm
OCLC Press Release about
　　Governance Study:
　　www.oclc.org/news/releases/
　　200660.htm

RFID for the Perplexed

RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology has been around for more than a century. It was used during World War II, but broad commercial applications did not begin appearing until the 1980s. Despite its long history, RFID technology still perplexes me—and perhaps many other librarians. The nagging questions include:

- Is RFID primarily about inventory management for circulating library materials, or inventory management in the stacks? Are RFID tags going to replace even the heretofore smartest barcode system, or will barcodes still be useful and beneficial to libraries? Or is RFID essentially a security system? Perhaps it does all three with aplomb. Some critics may argue that its essence is as a surveillance system.

- Some large retail organizations, such as Wal-Mart, are really pushing the use of RFID technology, but there seem to be differences between the technology they use and what libraries are using. And isn't RFID technology also being used at highway toll plazas and slow-and-go weigh stations for commercial trucks? RFID technology also is being used in some unusual places, such as in the identification tags attached to the ears of livestock and passports issued by an increasing number of countries. Some RFID tags are literally getting under the skin of some humans. Are these radically different uses of RFID technology, based perhaps on different standards, specifications, and best practices, going to result in yet another library technology ghetto?

- What exactly are the privacy risks of deploying an RFID system in a library? If the technology was used for nefarious purposes, would it be possible to "look" into someone's book bag without their knowledge and consent, perhaps even if they are not physically in the library? During the LITA Top Tech Trends experts discussion session at the ALA Conference in D.C. in late June, there was an interesting riff amongst the experts about the privacy concerns associated with RFID technologies. Some experts saw the risks as minimal and manageable, while others expressed concern that linking library-deployed RFID information with information gained through other RFID systems could lead to some serious privacy compromises and breaches.

- How much does it cost to implement an RFID system? Will the costs be dropping as (if) more libraries use RFID? What is the potential return on investment for an RFID system?

Seeking answers to these and other questions about RFID, your intrepid reporter interviewed Shai Robkin at the ALA Annual Conference. Shai is an RFID expert in at least two capacities. He is the founder, President, and CEO of Integrated Technology Group (ITG), a Georgia-based company that sells RFID systems, self-checkout systems, and automated materials handling systems to libraries. Robkin identified ITG and 3M as the two leading vendors in the library RFID market. He also is one of three co-authors (along with Connie K. Haley and Lynne A. Jacobsen) of a book published earlier this year by

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Libraries Unlimited titled, *Radio Frequency Identification Handbook for Librarians.*

RFID tags, perhaps like people, come in three types: active, passive, and semi-passive. An active tag contains its own power source (such as a battery) which powers the embedded microchip and enables it to communicate with the RFID reading device. RFID tags used in cars and trucks are active. Passive RFID tags, the type used in libraries, receive their power and ability to communicate via an electromagnetic field emitted by the RFID reading device, such as a hand-held wand. When the reading device's "interrogation zone" encounters a passive RFID tag, the tag "awakens" and sends the information contained on the chip.

RFID basically is a type of radio communication. Passive RFID tags fall into one of three ranges: low frequency (LF), high frequency (HF), and ultra high frequency (UHF). Just as my dog Max can hear sounds I cannot, it is difficult or impossible for a LF RFID system to "hear" an UHF RFID tag and vice versa. LF RFID systems often require the tag and the reader to almost touch, such as when an employee with a identification card on a lanyard holds the card up to a wall-mounted RFID reader in order to gain access to a room. HF RFID systems are used for item-level tagging, which is being pioneered in a big way by libraries,

not by major retailers such as Wal-mart and Target. Retailers and wholesalers currently are using UHF RFID tags primarily at the pallet level to identify inventory being shipped.

One of the real advantages of RFID tags in libraries is that the tag can be read without physically opening or even touching the book. Entire shelves of books can have their RFID tags read with one fell swoop of the reader wand. This fact makes RFID systems particularly appealing for shelf reading and inventory activities in libraries. Although they are expensive, smart bookshelves have been developed that will read all the items on the shelf without even the pass of a wand.

One big downside to RFID technology is that the signal does not pass through metal. A metallic mesh layer added to a book bag would thwart the system.

Robkin is keen on RFID technology for libraries, but he also cautioned that we need to have reasonable expectations. It probably will not completely replace the need for barcodes anytime soon. For example, if a library with an RFID system frequently interlibrary loans materials to libraries without RFID systems, having both an RFID tag and a barcode is the logical "belt and suspenders" solution. In fact, some of the RFID tags now contain a space for a barcode.

We also discussed the data privacy concerns surrounding RFID technologies. Robkin stressed that RFID systems, especially the low frequency and high frequency varieties, are not akin to GPS (Global Position System). The interrogation range for these system usually is measured in centimeters, inches, and feet, not miles. He also advised libraries to put only a minimal amount of information about a library item onto the microchip embedded in the RFID tag, such as only a unique identifying number that would be linked to a record in the library's integrated library system. Both Robkin and some of the LITA Top Tech Trends experts think that security of a library's ILS may be a bigger privacy concern than the potential misuse of RFID tags.

Robkin also provided a ballpark figure of $1 per tagged item for the overall cost of an RFID system for a medium-sized public library. The overall cost per item in an academic library probably would be below $1, because the cost of equipment other than tags would be spread across more items.—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:
Integrated Technology Group:
www.integratedtek.com

New CEO for SirsiDynix

On June 19, 2007, just in time for the ALA Annual Conference in D.C., SirsiDynix appointed Gary Rautenstrauch as its new CEO. The appointment of Rautenstrauch comes about four months following the departure of Patrick Sommers on February 16, 2007. Rautenstrauch takes responsibility for worldwide operations of SirsiDynix, currently the largest company in the library automation industry.

The appointment of Rautenstrauch provides new leadership at a critical period in the company's evolution. February 2007 saw the departure of the top tier of SirsiDynix management. Those exiting with Sommers included CFO Dean McCausland, COO Don McCall, and CMO Angus Carroll. Between the exit of the previous C-level executives and the appointment of Rautenstrauch, Martin Taylor, Operating Principal of Vista Equity Partners, functioned as the company's chief executive. During this interim period SirsiDynix executed a strategic decision to focus on Unicorn as its flagship library automation platform, discontinuing development of its new Horizon 8.0 platform and placing Horizon 7.x into legacy status.

SirsiDynix maintains primary offices in Huntsville, Alabama; St. Louis, Missouri; and Provo, Utah. Until recently the Huntsville office was listed as Corporate Headquarters. Rautenstrauch will be based in the company's Provo facilities.

Prior to this appointment, Rautenstrauch has held senior positions in other companies that provide products and services to libraries. Rautenstrauch spent the bulk of his career at Baker and Taylor where he advanced through a number of positions of increasing responsibility including Executive VP of Technology and Executive VP of Distribution. Most recently, he served as CEO of Baker and Taylor from March 2001 through 2003. Rautenstrauch joined Blackwell Book Services as CEO in September 2005.

From November 2006 through March 2007 he served as President and CEO of Advanced Marketing Services, Inc., a company that specialized in wholesale book distribution services from publishers to retailers. Rautenstrauch exited the troubled company as its assets were acquired by Baker and Taylor.

Rautenstrauch received an MBA from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business at New York University in 1977.

The new core management team is being assembled. SirsiDynix also announced that Douglas R. Maughan will join the company as CFO, replacing Bill Kennedy, who has been serving as Acting CFO since the departure of Dean McCausland (March 1, 2006 through February 2007). Maughan will also work from the company's Provo office. —*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:

SirsiDynix Press Release: www.sirsidynix.com/Newsevents/ Releases/2007/20070619_rautenstrauch.pdf

R. R. Bowker Acquires Medialab Solutions

Medialab Solutions, the Amsterdam-based company that develops and supports AquaBrowser, has been acquired by R. R. Bowker, a company that produces bibliographic content products. Medialab Solutions developed AquaBrowser, which has proven to be popular, as an alternative interface for library catalogs in public libraries. AquaBrowser finds use in about 80 percent of public libraries in The Netherlands and about 120 libraries in North America. About 2,000 libraries worldwide have implemented AquaBrowser.

Medialab Solutions currently has a number of distribution arrangements for AquaBrowser. The company markets the product directly to the libraries in its home territory. The Library Corporation (TLC) serves as its exclusive distributor for AquaBrowser in North America and Singapore. TLC signed a three-year renewal of this exclusive distribution contract in January 2007. In June 2007 BOND GmbH became the exclusive distributor for AquaBrowser for Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Infor Library Solutions (formerly Geac Library Solu-

tions) signed on as the exclusive distributor in the UK and Ireland. These distribution agreements will remain in force following the acquisition of Medialab Solutions by Bowker.

In recent months Medialab Solutions has announced a hosted version of AquaBrowser that will provide a convenient and inexpensive approach for small libraries to implement this interface. In April 2007 the company announced a set of enhancements to AquaBrowser, called My Discoveries, that add personalization features to the

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product and extend it to include Web 2.0 concepts such as end-user tagging.

Bowker is a major supplier of bibliographic content and services, including Books in Print and the Ulrich's Periodicals Directory and ulrichsweb.com. The company serves as the official ISBN Agency for the United States, assuming responsibility for assigning this critical identifier for all books published in the U.S. In September 2004 Bowker acquired Syndetic Solutions, the leading supplier of book jacket images, tables of contents, and other bibliographic content enhancements.

Since its 2001 acquisition from Reed International, R. R. Bowker is wholly owned by Cambridge International Group. CIG, a privately held interest,

also owns ProQuest, RefWorks, Sotheby's Institute of Art, the Bach to Rock chain of music schools, and Navtech, which develops aeronautical navigation systems. ProQuest is a new company formed in February 2007 by the merger of CSA, already in the CIG portfolio, and ProQuest Information and Learning acquired in December 2006.

Serials Solutions, acquired by ProQuest Information and Learning in July 2004 also resides within the CIG fold.

In a separate announcement, Serials Solutions announced in June 2007 that it will be taking responsibility for the Ulrichseb.com and the Ulrich's Serials Analysis System. Effective August 1, 2007, Serials Solutions will act as the exclusive developer and distributor

for these two products. Responsibility for these products shifts from R.R. Bowker to the Serials Solutions division of ProQuest, all companies in the CIG portfolio. Placing Ulrichsweb.com, the Ulrich's Serials Analysis System, and Serials Solutions family of electronic resource management products within the same organization will facilitate the development of greater interoperability among the products and will present opportunities for cross marketing. —*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:
Bowker Press Release:
     www.bowker.com/press/
     bowker/2007_0622_bowker.htm
ISBN website: www.isbn.org

Recorded Books and OCLC File Lawsuits Over Audio Book Service

Usually collaboration between two entities is a cause for celebration, something that the broader social community ought to and does encourage. When a collaborative effort turns sour, however, things can turn ugly.

Take, for instance, the collaborative effort between NetLibrary, a division of OCLC, and Recorded Books to develop and operate a downloadable digital audio book service. Launched in early 2005, the service seemed to be a worthy competitor to OverDrive's downloadable digital audio book service, which launched in November 2004. Another friendly competition, which often complements collaboration and benefits the broader social community as well, seemed to have begun.

Two and a half years later, the collaborative effort between NetLibrary and Recorded Books has devolved into a series of lawsuits and counter lawsuits. On May 31, 2007, Recorded Books, LLC filed a breach of contract and copyright infringement lawsuit against OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc. in Maryland District Court. On June 19, 2007, OCLC filed a counterclaim against Recorded Books.

Evidently the rift between the two companies first surfaced in a series of email messages distributed in early May, quoted at length by the "Libraries are more than books" blogger in a

May 10 post titled "Clash of the Titans." Library customers of the downloadable digital audio book service received dissonant messages from Recorded Books and NetLibrary about the future of the collaborative service.

At the time of this writing, it is not certain whether the lawsuits will be settled out of court or in court. The effect on the current and potential library customer base, other than some confusion and frustration, is unknown. The impact of this cluster of lawsuits on the still-fledgling library-based downloadable digital audio book service sector also remains uncertain. Downloadable digital audio book services in libraries seem to be experiencing impressive patron demand and usage, but DRM schemes, format wars, and device incompatibilities may already have created a glass ceiling against which we all are bumping our noggins. Now Recorded Books and NetLibrary are rattling their sabers at each other. —*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:
Case summary: http://news.justia.com/cases/library/
     392414
Clash of the Titans blog post: librariesaremorethanbooks
     .com/2007/05/10/clash-of-the-titans/

Removing Scratches from Optical Media

When CD technology first became popular in libraries in the mid-1980s, I distinctly remember a library school professor averring that you could almost use a CD has home plate during a software game in the afternoon, then use that same CD to access bibliographic information during the evening. The new technology, he claimed, was that resilient.

After more than twenty years of actual use, the current wisdom of the crowd seems to be that optical storage media, such as CDs and DVDs, are not especially resilient to or forgiving of foreign material (such as fingerprints and food particles) and scratches. Scratches on CDs and DVDs are one of the minor nuisances of the present age, focused on optical storage media. If the scratches become numerous or deep enough, the experience of the content on those media becomes compromised, leading the user and/or owner of the disc to opine for the days of vinyl.

Foreign material on optical storage media can be gently washed away, but scratches require special attention and equipment. To my semi-technically literate mind, the problem with a scratch is that it contains a mini ridge and valley, which bend the optical ray from the reading mechanism, rendering the underlying data unreadable, causing the optical storage

disc to freeze or skip. To solve the scratch problem, you either need to shave off the ridge or fill in the little valley of the scratch, or both.

Normally my interest in hardware extends only to personal, portable playback devices, but the problem of scratched optical storage media enters my daily life so frequently now (both for materials borrowed from libraries and for discs in my family's collection) that I sought out one CD/DVD scratch repair vendor at the ALA Annual Conference in DC.

The OptoClear process from VenMill helps libraries remove the scratch, thus removing the itch to pitch that CD or DVD and invest in a replacement copy. They solve the "valley and ridge" problem of a scratch in an interesting way. Their technology actually heats up the optical storage disc and then applies pressure so that the surface layer material in the ridge of the scratch "flows" back into the little valley. They use the analogy of ironing the wrinkles out of a piece of clothing through the application of heat and pressure. As long as the scratch is not too deep (thus gouging into the data layer of the disc) or the scratch has not removed material from the disc, the Skip-Away should work well to extend the life of a library's (or a family's) collection of optical storage media.

The MSRP for the Skip-Away machine, designed for the consumer market, is $250. The MSRP for the VMI 3500 industrial strength machine, designed for libraries, video retail outlets, and used CD stores, has a MSRP of $2,300. It is recommended for collections with more than 2,000 optical discs. —*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:
VenMill website: www.venmill.com
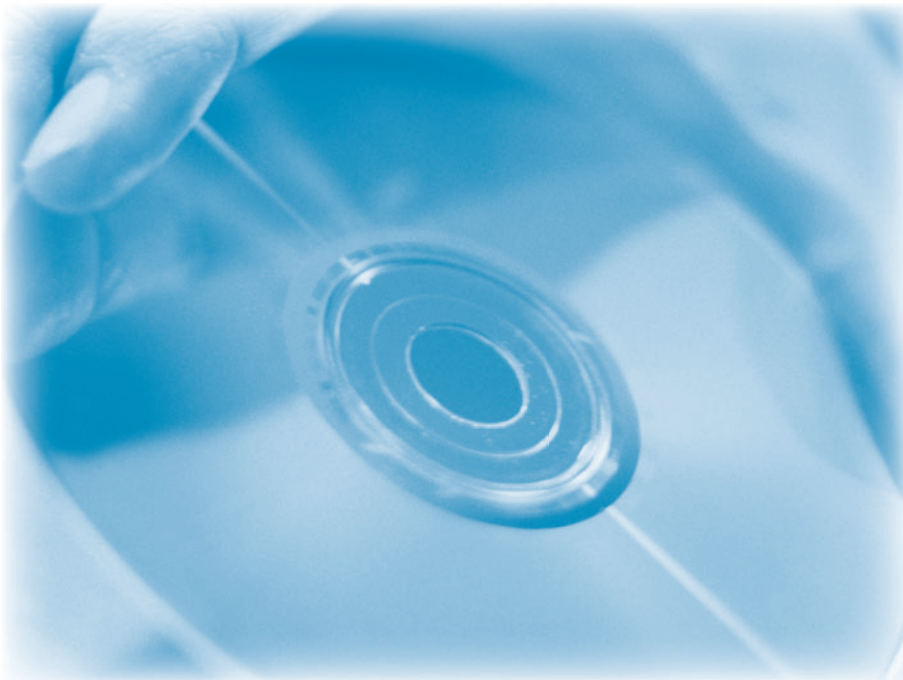
Public Libraries Try Their Hand at Mass Digitization

How many massive book digitization projects does the world need? How many of these projects can dance on the head of a pin? These are the burning practical philosophical questions of our age.

To date, most mass digitization projects involved large research libraries almost exclusively. In June, however, BookSurge, a unit of Amazon, and Kirtas Technologies announced an agreement with the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, the Toronto Public Library, Emory University, and the University of Maine. These partners will collaborate to digitize rare and out-of-print books and make them available not only digitally but also via print-on-demand.

In addition to having a fair share of public libraries among its original members, the project also is noteworthy for a couple of other things. First, it allows the participating libraries to retain full control over the use of their digitized content. Second, it relies on print-on-demand book sales, BookSurge's métier, as a way to generate revenue to help defray the costs of digitization and to subsidize additional scanning and preservation activities at the member libraries. The companies and libraries involved in this project think they have built a better business model for mass digitization and preservation of print materials by adding the print-on-demand facet. They hope that other libraries will join in the project.

BookSurge, based in Charleston, South Carolina, was founded in 2000. It was acquired in April 2005 by Amazon. For customers who opt for overnight shipping of a print-on-demand book, BookSurge states they should be able to get the book into the user's hands less than 24 hours after the order is placed. The BookSurge Libraries Program will use Kirtas Technologies' automated, nondestructive scanning process. The print-on-demand products will be available through Amazon.com and other unspecified retail channels.

Google, Microsoft, and Amazon now are partnering with libraries in massive book digitization projects. The long-term impact of these projects on all phases of book production, distribution, and use remains to be seen, but it is interesting to note that many of the press releases from the past few years about these projects often mention, in varying words, that soon the average citizen will have access to a major corpus of books from research and public libraries. It will be interesting to watch how John and Jane Q. Public respond to this unprecedented access, and how their use of digitized and print-on-demand content changes scholarship, librarianship, the relationship between universities and society, and the life of the mind. —*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:
BookSurge: www.booksurge.com
Kirtas Technologies' Newsletter Story: www.kirtas-tech.com/newsletterNew.asp?ID=26

New Name for Unicorn Sounds Good

SirsiDynix has announced that its Unicorn library management system will be re-branded under the name SirsiDynix Symphony. This system now stands as the company's single flagship library automation system.

The strategy to focus on a single ILS based on Unicorn was announced in March 2007. At that time, the company began using the name Rome as a temporary name for this ILS, which is now superseded by SirsiDynix Symphony as the official product name. Based on the Unicorn platform, SirsiDynix Symphony will be developed with a focus on enhancements to deliver features and modules specified in the former Horizon products in addition to the functionality already present in Unicorn. SirsiDynix plans to begin implementing Symphony during the fourth quarter of 2007.—*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:
SirsiDynix Press Release: www.sirsidynix.com/Newsevents/Releases/2007/20070623_symphony.pdf

7