Small World: OCLC Launches WorldCat Local

[Editor's Note: For a more in-depth examination of WorldCat Local and other Next Generation Library Catalogs, please read Marshall Breeding's report in the July/August 2007 issue of Library Technology Reports]

OCLC has made another foray (remember LS/2000?) into the online catalog arena by launching WorldCat Local, a version of WorldCat designed to replace the online catalog delivered as part of a library's integrated library system. WorldCat Local competes among an emerging genre of next-generation library interfaces that includes AquaBrowser from Medialab Solutions, Endeca ProFind, Primo from Ex Libris, and Encore from Innovative Interfaces, as well as the online catalogs delivered as part of each ILS.

WorldCat Local Pilot Underway

WorldCat Local builds on WorldCat.org (launched in August 2006) providing a highly-customized version of the interface that a library can use as its online catalog instead of the one provided with their automation system. WorldCat Local makes use of the interface and database of WorldCat.org, customizing it for the users of a specific library or consortium. WorldCat Local prominently presents the logo and other branding of the local library rather than OCLC's own branding. From the user's perspective, an instance of WorldCat Local functions as the catalog for that specific library.

Following a period of behind-the-scenes planning and development, OCLC launched the initial version of WorldCat Local in April 2007. Pilot phase participants include the University of Washington, the Peninsula Library System in California, and a number of libraries in Illinois, including the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Northeastern Illinois University, public libraries in Glendale Heights, Springfield, Hoopeston, and Mattoon, high school libraries in Champaign and Williamsville, the twenty-six libraries of the Cooperative Computer Services Consortium, the Illinois State Museum, and the Illinois State Library.

In addition to these libraries, the ten libraries in the University of California system will partner with OCLC to implement WorldCat Local as the new version of Melvyl, the union catalog that spans the holdings of these libraries. Melvyl is currently powered by ALEPH 500 from Ex Libris, which has been in place only since April 2003, replacing an earlier locally-developed version.

The University of Washington was the first of this group of libraries to make their implementation of WorldCat Local publicly available, unveiled April 30, 2007. This initial version still bears the "beta" designation, representing the

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product as ready for production use, but still under active development.

Expanded scope of search

WorldCat Local leverages the expansive content of the OCLC WorldCat database as it provides a search interface for a library. In a traditional library catalog environment, the scope of the initial search includes only the holdings in the local library or consortium. This approach provides no convenient way for users to know about materials available beyond the library's own collection. If the search fails to locate the desired item, a persistent user then must use an interlibrary loan system to locate and request the item.

Because it searches the entire WorldCat database, WorldCat Local helps users become aware of a much broader universe of content that matches their interests, regardless of whether it happens to be in their library's collection.

WorldCat Local follows a search model based on broad results that can be narrowed to the local collection as opposed to the traditional online catalog scenario that begins with a narrow search of the library's collection that can be expanded to wider resources through separate search utilities.

WorldCat Local provides information beyond books, extending the search universe to include a large number of article citations. OCLC has enriched the WorldCat database with over thirty million article-level citations to date, including records from the public domain GPO, PubMed, and ERIC databases, as well as its own ArticleFirst resource.

Making it local

In order to function as the library's local catalog, the basic WorlCat.org has been extended to interact with some of the components of the library's local automation environment. As the interface displays items, it needs to be able to interact with the local ILS in order to display current shelf status, make requests, or perform other services expected from the library's online catalog. As part of the pilot project, OCLC has developed interoperability with automation systems from Innovative Interfaces, SirsiDynix, and Ex Libris.

As search results display in the initial brief listing, WorldCat Local indicates those held by the local library or consortium. When the user clicks through to view the detailed record for a locally-owned item, the system dynamically retrieves information regarding the location and availability from the local ILS. For each relevant holding library, the item's location, call number, and circulation status are listed. This

holdings lookup takes place only for items with holdings in OCLC that match the local library.

Although WorldCat Local searches the entire WorldCat database, it gives preferential access to the holdings of the local library. When comparing how the results list displays on WorldCat Local versus WorldCat.org, one can see differences in the ordering and presentation of the results from a given search request. WorldCat Local consistently gives exactly the same number of results as the same search entered in WorldCat.org. As the search engine determines the relevance ranking of a search result, it gives additional weight to items owned by the local library. Items ranked highly in WorldCat.org fall much lower in the search result if not owned by the local library.

Several aspects of the brief and full record presentations have been enhanced to emphasize the local library. The brief view includes an additional line that describes the closest library where the item is available, which will hopefully be the local library for the items listed first.

When viewing the detailed display of an item, a "Libraries" tab displays a list of the libraries that offer the item, beginning with those closest to the locality of the user. A box prompts for a location, which can be entered as a postal code, state, province, or country. Once the user enters a postal code it is remembered in future sessions. Each holding library displays along with its distance from the user's location. Clicking on the library name launches a search for that item in that library's online catalog.

Content Delivery Options

WorldCat Local has been enhanced with a number of features to assist the user in gaining access to library materials. On

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the right side of the page, for example, a button appears labeled "Request Item" which links into the local library's ILS or interlibrary loan system. In the case of University of Washington, it links into the Orbis Cascade Alliance union catalog. If the item is available in one of the libraries in the consortium, the user can request that the item be delivered to her or his local library.

WorldCat Local also includes a feature to help take users to an electronic version of an item when available. Depending on the type of content, a button will appear in the upper right corner of the full record display to help the user view the item. For an article-level record, the button is labeled "Check for Online Access" and invokes the library's OpenURL resolver.

When displaying a serial title, a button labeled "Access Online" appears in the same position. Pressing this button will display a page that lists all the online versions of the serial or periodical from the local library or consortium. This page has a link for "Check for Online Access" that invokes the library's link resolver.

Synchronicity with WorldCat

One of the key issues for WorldCat Local involves how well the OCLC database accurately represents the library's collection. The ability for WorldCat Local to function as the local catalog depends on the library's collection being comprehensively represented in WorldCat and all holdings set accurately. In most cases the most complete and up-to-date representation of a library's collection resides in its local automation

system. Though OCLC member libraries theoretically obtain their records from OCLC and update holdings during the cataloging process, there are many opportunities for the local system not to be in synch with WorldCat. If a library obtains records from other sources, for example, those holding may not be set in OCLC. In order for WorldCat Local to serve as an effective substitute for their local catalog, some work may be needed to synchronize the library's holdings with OCLC.

Enriched Content and Display

The display of records goes beyond a textual display based on MARC records. WorldCat enhances the visual presentation through the use of book jacket images when available. While WorldCat allows for user-submitted reviews and ratings, the records are not pre-populated with summaries, reviews, or other supplemental content from third-party sources.

WorldCat provides several opportunities for user to provide input and contribute content. Each full record includes tables for "Reviews" that displays any existing reviews and invites users to "write an online review and share your thoughts with other readers." You must be registered and logged in to use this feature. To write a review, you can select an overall rating from a drop-down selection tool (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, Poor), give your review a short title, and provide a narrative review of up to 20,000 characters in length. Under the details section users can contribute Notes or Tables of Contents for an item.

Faceted Navigation

The WorldCat interface guides the user through the search process via faceted navigation. Once the user enters an initial search, the list of items returned display in a wide column in the middle of the page. A narrow column of facets appears on the left, grouped into several categories: Author, Content, Format, Language, and Year. Following well-established conventions, the number of items associated with that facet selection appears in parentheses after each.

Given the position of OCLC as a global cooperative of libraries with the largest bibliographic database, it stands in a strong position to offer a search product that many libraries will see as a valuable approach to helping their users find library materials. WorldCat Local addresses many of the weaknesses seen in the previous generation of online catalogs and follows an approach for information discovery more consistent with current expectations by today's Web-savvy users. OCLC has already lined up an impressive group of libraries with plans to deploy WorldCat Local as an alternative to their current online catalogs. With the debut of WorldCat Local, the dynamics of the competition for next-generation library interfaces have taken on a new dimension.
—*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:
WorldCat Local Press Release from OCLC: www.oclc.org/ newsreleases/200659.htm
University of Washington's WorldCat Local Beta: http://uwashington .worldcat.org

Pre-Teen Avatars on a Library Quest

The world population of avatars who operate in virtual worlds has been growing exponentially recently. Adults and teens especially have taken to virtual worlds like ducks to water. For pre-teens, the virtual world options seem more limited. Well, there's Whyville, which has nearly two million registered pre-teen and early-teen avatars. According to the information for parents section of Whyville's Web site, "Whyville was launched in 1999 as a virtual city for engaging young people in constructive educational activities while promoting socially responsible behavior." The company that built and manages Whyville seems to be particularly focused on science and math education, and they have been in discussions about starting a library in Whyville to serve the Whyvillians.

Some libraries have undertaken planning and demonstration projects for developing a library presence and library services in this burgeoning realm of virtual worlds for pre-teens and early teens—generally young people between eight and fourteen years of age. Not all of these ventures involve commercial backing or large grants. It is possible to make a difference and get your library's foot in the virtual door with a small, grassroots effort. The Virginia Beach Public Library, for example, is working on a series of library-related virtual world quests that it will make available to pre-teens this summer through the Active Worlds multi-user virtual environment.

Cindy Hart, one of the librarians at the Virginia Beach Public Library, is spearheading this project. She became interested in the concept as she watched her two sons, now nine and fourteen, become immersed in virtual worlds and online games. She wanted to devise some way to teach pre-teens to be comfortable yet cautious in online environments while at the same time teaching pre-teens how to improve their overall information fluency and new media skills. She thought that developing a library presence in a virtual world frequented by pre-teens would be a great way to accomplish these goals.

Hart made a couple of brilliant moves to get the ball rolling. First, she enlisted five pre-teen and early-teen experts to help her design the library's presence in a virtual world. The three boys and two girls currently are seven, nine, ten, fourteen, and fifteen years of age. The group of experts was unequivocal and emphatic in recommending that the virtual environment be a quest to draw and hold the attention of this age group. They wanted lots of fun, challenging, and dangerous quests, with multiple skill levels, where you confront an authority figure (not a bunned librarian shushing, one hopes) or a major obstacle near the conclusion of each level. Hart, however, insisted that these information fluency quests involve no weapons or simulated violence. Rather, the quests being developed involve thinking through a problem or outwitting an adversary.

The second brilliant move was to get other local stakeholder groups involved in this project. Hart approached the local Friends of the Library group to obtain some seed money to design and build the initial set of quests. The Friends, most of whom are at least sixty years of age, admitted that they do not really understand virtual worlds and rarely if ever visit them, but they did fund the project on the strength of Hart's well-articulated proposal. Hart also is planning a gaming workshop for local library staff members in August, to help everyone better understand the challenges and opportunities of gaming culture and the value of virtual worlds.

Hart believes these library-themed Active Worlds quests could be a great outreach tool for this age group. The emphasis is on improving the information fluency of the participants, helping them develop new media skills, and assisting them in broadening their collaborative learning experiences.—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:

Whyville: www.whyville.net
Active Worlds: www.activeworlds.com
Virginia Beach Public Library: www.vbgov.com/dept/
    library

TWITTERPATED:
TWITTER SOCIAL NETWORK

At the Computers in Libraries Conference in blustery Alexandria, Virginia in late April, there was quite a bit of chatter about Twitter, the social network launched in March 2006 that enables friends to send short, quick messages back and forth. Twitter bugs, Twitterians, Twits, the Twitterpated, or whatever Twitter users are called, can send messages via their browser, instant messaging, or text messages on their cell phones. To encourage pithiness, Twitter stipulates that messages must be 140 characters or shorter, and spaces count as characters. People generally seem to inform their friends of what they are doing, or what they just did.

For some reason, Twitter reminds me of the self-reflective Seinfeld television sitcom episode where Jerry and George were writing (or trying to write) the script for a TV sitcom about nothing. It is difficult to decide if Twitter is about nothing or everything.

The librarians I spoke with at the CIL conference generally saw something valuable in Twitter. Some saw it as a way to provide a new type of ready-reference service. Any type of work team can quickly provide updates or ask short questions of the group, regardless of where people are physically located. One librarian I breakfasted with reported that during the keynote speaker's talk on the previous morning she and several of her colleagues were using Twitter on their cell phones to comment on the keynote speech. The friends who were in attendance did not need to be sitting together, and they did not need to lean over to mutter their comments and reactions.

At a higher level, or at least by taking a longer view of things, we seem to be in the midst of a long revolution where different types of communication—conversations, entertainment, news, ideas, and information—are all being mixed and channeled through the same set of devices. In the good old days (the 1960s, let's say), each type of communication had its own primary mode and device. The black rotary phone was used primarily for conversations across a distance. The movie theater was used primarily for entertainment. Libraries were used primarily for information and edification. Granted, even fifty years ago television was used as a vehicle for entertainment, news, and even education, but the different types of programming were clearly, if implicitly, tagged.

Now there are a wide variety of devices capable of handling conversations, information, and entertainment equally well.

Cell phones are being used for all manner of communication, including TV sitcoms repackaged for the really small screen. My laptop enables me to work, converse, and play in more ways than I have time to explore.

Libraries historically have been sources of information, but over the past few decades the entertainment suit has been played in some libraries with increasing emphasis. Some librarians and library users applaud this mixing of channels, while others bemoan the loss of the former clear, singular purpose. One way to understand the Library 2.0 movement is as an effort to introduce more participatory communication channels into the missions and information systems of libraries. Multi-modal personal portable communication devices, such as cell phones, portable gaming devices, laptops, and tablet PCs, seem to be the way many people want to communicate. Twitter can be understood—and exploited—as just the latest salvo in this long revolution.—*Tom Peters*

More Info. @:
Twitter Web site: http://twitter.com/home

Google Corner(ed)
BY TOM PETERS

Revenue, Profits, and Acquisitions Increase

Google's profits continued to soar. Miguel Helft's article ("Profits Up 69% at Google, Exceeding Expectations") in the April 20th *New York Times* reports that during the first quarter of this year Google had profits of $1 billion on overall revenues of $3.66 billion, compared to profits of slightly less than $600 million during the first quarter of 2006. Eric Schmidt, Google's CEO, emphasized that searching and online advertising remain Google's core business, with 75 percent of Google's employees focused on these two meat and potatoes activities.

Usage of Google also increased dramatically. In February alone 3.6 billion searches were conducted using Google, 40 percent more than in February 2006.

Google also has become truly global. Nearly half (47 percent) of its total revenue was generated outside the United States.

Success such as this can fortify your rivals and cause general concerns. Rumors were whirling about in early May that Microsoft and Yahoo may merge. Combined, they would provide stiffer competition to Google. Viacom has filed a large copyright infringement lawsuit against material contained on YouTube, which was acquired by Google. Microsoft and AT&T have asked federal antitrust officials to examine Google's acquisition in April of DoubleClick. ■

Google and States Partner

The *danse macabre* continues involving Google, other large corporations, governmental entities and legal systems around the world, and consumers. In late April Google announced a partnership with four state governments—Arizona, California, Utah, and Virginia—to help make information contained on their Web sites easier to index and search. The program officially is called the Public Sector Content Partnerships Program, with no hint of beta about it. In fact, in May Google was advertising for a Content Analyst to join the PSCP team, and one of the required qualifications for applicants was an MLS degree.

The project involves helping Web site administrators at these state governments to implement Google's sitemap protocol, to make sure that search engines such as Google can easily and effectively crawl and index these state government Web sites. Another facet of the partnership will help these state government Web sites improve their own indexing and searching systems.

Reuters reported that the partnerships will involve no financial payments between the partners. Some privacy advocacy agencies have expressed concerns that many state Web sites contain information about citizens that could reveal their identities or become powerful marketing tools when tied to the searching behaviors of individual citizens. ■

First the Historians; Then, History Itself

Who knows how history will judge the Google massive book scanning project of the early 21st century. Historians, however, have begun to pass judgment. On April 30th historian Robert B. Townsend posted a long comment about the Google Books project on the blog of the American Historical Association. After spending three months using Google Book Search as a research tool, Townsend found the early results of this massive digitization project "deeply disconcerting." He is concerned about basic quality control in areas such as the quality of the scans, the quality of the metadata, and the decisions about restricting access to content.

Townsend notes, "I find it passing strange that so many libraries are joining in Google's headlong rush to digitize without similar [to AHA's higher standards] quality requirements."

Townsend links to the April 23rd ACRL blog post that summarizes Siva Vaidhyana-than's recent address at Drexel University on this topic. Marc Meola, the blogger, notes, "He [Vaidhyanathan] basically accused some of the world's top research libraries of rushing into deals with Google in which they did not realize the true value of their holdings, failing to insist on quality control, failing to guarantee user privacy, and damaging their relationships with publishers."

As anticipated, both blog posts generated quite a few substantial comments. And so the blogosphere hurtles through information space while the scanning continues apace. ∎

More Info. @:
Google Book Search: http://books.google
    .com
AHA blog post: http://blog.historians.org/
    articles/204/google-books-whats-not
    -to-like#comment
ACRL blog post: http://acrlblog
    .org/2007/04/23/siva-vaidhyanathan
    -questions-google-book-search

AquaBrowser Aids
Libraries in Web Exposure

Medialab Solutions, the developer of the AquaBrowser search interface, has extended the product to enhance the way that users find library materials by providing a mechanism for the Web search engines to harvest the contents of a library's catalog. Most library catalogs are not friendly to the way that search engines harvest information for the inclusion in their indexes. Like many other databases, the contents of library catalogs fall within what is often called the "hidden Web" that holds information beyond the reach of search engines. Library catalogs typically employ a complex syntax including session keys that make it difficult for a search engine to systematically retrieve and index each record.

To address this problem, Medialab Solutions added a new feature to AquaBrowser that essentially creates a separate Web page for each record from the library's catalog. With the records represented as Web pages with a sitemap to link them together, search engines can index the library's collection as they would any other large body of content.

It is not clear how well this strategy will work once many libraries adopt this approach. How will it work when multiple libraries make the same titles available to the search engines? Will there be a mechanism for guiding users from these mul-tiple representations in a search engine to a specific library?

In a similar approach but on a much larger scale, OCLC has been making the records in WorldCat available for har-vesting by the Internet search engines since December 2004. The WorldCat.org interface provides a mechanism for taking users from what they find in the Internet search engines to the local library.

While it is yet to be seen how effective this approach will be in connecting searchers on the Web with content in librar-ies, it recognizes a key problem that libraries face. According to the 2005 study conducted by OCLC titled "Perceptions of libraries and information resources" only about one percent of the general public responded that they think of a library Web site when asked "Where do you typically begin your search for information on a given topic?" Eighty nine percent responded that they begin with search engines. Given these measures, the idea of making library materials available in these search engines seems a worthy endeavor.—*Marshall Breeding*

More Info. @:
AquaBrowser website: www.medialab.nl/index.asp
OCLC 2005 report: www.oclc.org/reports/
    2005perceptions.htm
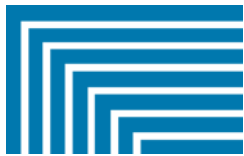
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