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ILS Assessment: A Background Document

(Univ. of Windsor, June 1, 2007)

This document is intended as a first step in evaluating the current environment with respect to Integrated Library Systems (ILS). To date ILSs have been proprietary monolithic systems encompassing the major operations of the library: circulation, acquisitions, cataloguing and a public catalogue or OPAC.

Due to:

- a growing realization that current ILS systems do not adequately support current information seeking and use needs, let alone supporting developing needs;
- an overall concern with the rapidly changing ILS market (the recent sale of Voyager is only one example);
- the age of the Voyager system
- several ongoing problems on University of Windsor's platform for Voyager that have become extremely problematic to endure;

the Leddy Library is undertaking a substantial review of the ILS (its purpose, current functionality, future needs) with the intent of determining if we need to move away from our current ILS, Voyager, and, if the answer is yes, where we will go to meet our current and future needs.

This report is generated from a review of some of the literature and discussions (e.g., on blogs and such) happening around the topic of the ILS. The excerpts chosen were done so because they touched on issues, discussions and ideas that together provide something of a 'big picture' overview of ILS issues (i.e., we didn't include any in-depth discussions about particular functions of the ILS). This overview will help us anchor our coming discussions. The report is presented in 2 parts:

1. Current picture of the ILS as it is used in academic libraries: how it is used, challenges, current issues, etc.
2. Future needs of libraries with respect to information collection, delivery and use and how the ILS and the OPAC fit into that future

This is intended as a first step in our review. Points in each section are presented in bullet form. After each bullet point a citation is given to source the information. Please see the references section end of the document for citation details.

Part 1: Current State of the ILS:

- What is the ILS:
 - an inventory control system
 - a point-of-sale system – a rental tracking component
 - an acquisitions/accounts payable system
 - a description system- is the one least likely to be found off-the-shelf
- (Disruptive Library Technology Jester, June 13, 2006)

- Parts of the ILS:

1. Acquisitions: librarians are part of larger organizations which acquire a variety of materials and services, and have build enterprise systems to support this. It is likely that in many settings libraries will make more use of the generic institutional systems in the future.

2. Catalogue – the local library catalogue is not a central part of most users information behaviour

3. Cataloguing – libraries have many cataloguing workflows – are creating metadata for other resources which may be poorly supported in ILS environment.

4. Circulation – is a core function of the ILS – are some interesting trends to group-wide circulation e.g., OhioLink

(Dempsey, Feb. 22, 2005)

- Libraries must manage different collections:

1. the purchased print collection – print books and journals, CDs etc.

2. the licensed collection – a major focus now, a major investment

3. the local digitized collections – of rare or unique materials – metadata creation for these collections may be expensive

4. The managed institutional research and learning output – institutional repositories of data, research, learning objects, etc.

(Dempsey, Feb. 22, 2005)

- Today – information resources are relatively abundant and user attention is relatively scarce [dispersed]. The network is now the focus of a user's attention, and the available collection is a very much larger resource than the local catalogued collection. This poses major questions for the future of the catalogue and this is bound up with the difference between discovery (identifying the resources of interest) and location (identifying where those resources of interest are actually available). There may be many discovery environments, which then need to locate resources in particular collections. While the catalogue may be a part of the location process its role in the discovery process needs to be worked through. (Dempsey, 2006, p.2)

- In the past the discovery process was tied to the location process and indeed the catalogue is still closely tied to local inventory management. It is typically a part of the system which manages a part of that collection. This makes less and less sense from a discovery point of view. Of course, we want to be able to find out what is in the local catalogued collection, but to what extent should that be the front door to what the library makes available? Does this give us the best available exposure for library collections? Is it tying the discovery process to a location engine? (Dempsey, 2006, p.3)

- If one accepts the premise that library collections have value, then library leaders must move swiftly to establish the catalogue within the framework of online information discovery systems of all kinds. Because it is catalogue data that has made collections accessible over time, to fail to define a strategic future for library catalogues places in jeopardy the legacy of the world's library collections themselves. For this reason, the option of rejecting library catalogues is not [should not be] considered... (Calhoun, 2006, p.7)

- Today a large and growing number of students and scholars routinely bypass library catalogues in favour of other discovery tools, and the catalogue represents a shrinking proportion of the universe of scholarly information. (Calhoun, 2006, p.5)

- Your ILS/OPAC is the centerpiece of your business. It's the primary way your community interacts with the collections you provide. Not the only way, but, still, in 2006, the primary way – Is your ILS/OPAC serving that community adequately? (Chudnov, June 16, 2006)
- It is clear that the ILS manages a progressively smaller part of the library activity. Libraries now manage a patchwork of systems which do not always play well together (Dempsey, Feb. 22, 2005)
- The OPAC is poorly designed for the tasks of finding, discovering, and selecting the growing set of resources available in our libraries. It is best at locating and obtaining a known item. (Univ Calif., 2005, p.2)
- The OPAC was developed as an extension of back room functions in the library. The system was optimized for librarians not users. We need to change so the system we provide actually functions as a discovery tool for end users rather than as an extension of a collection management tool for librarians (Tennant, Nov 10, 2006)
- The catalogue currently sits awkwardly in the array of available resources. This appears to be realised within library vendor offerings. A couple of things are indicative here. First we see the emergence of new products like Primo from Ex Libris, which provides a discovery experience across a broader part of the library collection. They [vendors] appear to be trying to make discovery of the catalogued collection a part of a broader discovery experience encompassing those parts of the collection which are in library control: local digital collections, institutional repositories, catalogue. This then needs to be articulated with the journal literature, or other resources, probably through metasearch. (Dempsey, 2006, p.3)
- There is a growing desire to hide boundaries between databases (A&I, catalogue, repositories, etc.) – especially where those boundaries are seen more to reflect the historical contingencies of library organization or the business decisions of suppliers than the actual discovery needs of users. (Dempsey, 2006, p.7)
- Research libraries have invested and continue to invest millions [of dollars] to develop and maintain the capacity to produce local catalogues. In 2004 ARL libraries spent an estimated \$239 million on technical services labour alone. As information seekers increasingly turn to search engines, research library leaders need to examine ways to bring the capacity to produce local online catalogues back into line with the demand to them. (Calhoun, 2006, p.11)
- [Consider a business model] - in healthy businesses, the demand for a product and the capacity to produce it are in balance. Research libraries invest huge sums in the infrastructure that produces their local catalogues, but search engines are students' and scholars' favourite place to begin a search. More users bypass catalogues for search engines, but research libraries' investment in catalogues – and in the collections they describe – does not reflect the shift in user demand (Calhoun, 2006, p.15)
- The time and energy required to do Library business is unsustainable. We have people performing duplicative work throughout our system. We are unable to share matching resources or records across our multiple catalogues, content management systems, and differing standards. These

redundancies have opportunity costs in terms of services we do not have the time or staff to offer. We all agree that the cost of our bibliographic services enterprise is unworkable as we move into an increasingly digital world, yet a solution is nowhere in sight. (Univ Calif., 2005, p.9)

- Within library workflows and systems, too much effort is going into maintaining and integrating a fragmented infrastructure. (Univ Calif., 2005, p.2)

- RE the ILS Market:

- A British Columbia Pines project is well underway. BC public libraries are moving full steam ahead on two concurrent (and very broadly defined) paths [re Evergreen]: 1. Getting Evergreen up and running in BC with 3 libraries in (or around) September '07, with many, many more libraries coming aboard over the upcoming months, and 2. Establishing an advisory committee to investigate governance models etc for what we're temporarily calling "BC PINES." (from an email to Art Rhyno from an attendee at a May, 2007 meeting of the Association of BC Public Library Directors)
- The largest vendor, SirsiDynix (which was recently acquired by San Francisco-based Vista Equity Partners), has announced a major consolidation of its core products in a new technology platform that the company said builds upon the best features of each. The single platform, code-named "Rome" and based largely on the Unicorn system, will allow the company to focus its development efforts and implement changes in a more timely way. While SirsiDynix clearly hopes its new offering will prove compelling to its customers and disruptive to competitors, it is clear that the company's library customers now face a tough and disruptive decision: migrate to Rome, stay with existing products that will no longer be developed, or opt for an alternative product (Hane, 2007)
- The reshuffling of the deck in 2005 presaged even larger changes this year, introducing new players and effecting dramatic shifts. The industry grew at a healthy pace in 2006, with overall revenues expanding from an estimated \$535 million in 2005 to about \$570 million in 2006. Some companies saw decreased revenues from core ILS products and increased income from new web-based interfaces and tools to manage electronic content. RFID products represented large revenue gains for others (Breeding, 2007)
- Legacy system migrations represented 63% of overall ILS sales in 2006, though migrations among the mid-sized to large academic and public libraries are continuing to wind down. K-12 school and small public migrations are just heating up, fuelled by thousands of libraries running aging standalone systems. Opportunities for new automation in the small public library arena abound for companies willing to offer products and services at an affordable price. (Breeding, 2007)
- In a rash of mergers and acquisitions, Endeavor Information Systems and Sagebrush Corporation disappeared from the roster of companies this year. Private equity firms took charge of SirsiDynix and Ex Libris, and Endeavor was merged into Ex Libris. Follett Software Company acquired archival Sagebrush, and Extensity morphed into Infor Library Solutions [formerly GEAC]. (Breeding, 2007)
- In a year of limited opportunities for new sales, Innovative Interfaces took top place by attracting 67 new customers to Millennium. SirsiDynix made 48 new-name sales of Horizon and 45 of Unicorn for a combined growth of 93. In the small public library arena, AutoGraphics and Polaris both had sales to 54 libraries, following the Software as a Service

(SaaS) model. In Georgia, 252 public libraries migrated to Evergreen, a new open source library automation system. (Breeding, 2007)

- The open source movement has long had its proponents in libraries. Before this year, however, the number of libraries in the United States actually using an open source automation system remained few relative to the larger realm of library automation. A number of separate events converged in 2006 to raise open source ILS status. The PINES consortium of 252 public libraries in Georgia migrated from Unicorn to Evergreen, a new open source ILS created by a team of developers funded by the State Library Agency of Georgia. PINES, one of the country's most ambitious statewide library automation efforts, allowed any participating library's users to borrow from the collective collection of 7.7 million items. The Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS) chose Unicorn in 1999 as the basis for the project and was one of Sirsi's (now SirsiDynix) largest accounts. In June 2004, State Librarian Lamar Veatch announced a new automation strategy that involved a concerted effort to develop an open source automation system to replace Unicorn. Though threatened with a lawsuit from Sirsi, that system, later named Evergreen, was successfully completed within the timeframe originally announced. In September 2006, all the 252 Georgia PINES libraries migrated from Unicorn to Evergreen. In January 2007, members of the GPLS development team launched a new company named Equinox Software to provide commercial support and assistance to other libraries interested in implementing Evergreen. (Breeding, 2007)

Part 2: Where Are We Going, What Do We Need To Do?

- The library will be looking for systems to allow digital content management services. It has to put in place workflow and skills to deal with digital assets, which will be increasingly complex, diverse and voluminous. The library may have an institutional repository framework, a digital asset management system for digitized special collections, an image database, and so on. They may work with a central shared cataloging system for some materials, but with local metadata creation interfaces for others. Departments, research centers, individual faculty members may have their own environments. (Dempsey, OCLC doc 2005)
- Library 2.0 [social web] is a concept geared towards the needs and expectations of today's library users. The library needs to make information available wherever and whenever the user requires it, and seeks to ensure that barriers to use and reuse are removed. (Miller, 2006, p.2)
- It is our responsibility to assist our users in finding what they need without demanding that they acquire specialized knowledge or select among an array of "silo" systems whose distinctions seem arbitrary (Univ Calif., 2005, p.2)
- At a minimum, research libraries need to explore extending the life of the catalogue through innovation and cost reduction and second, to develop new uses for catalogue data for existing catalogue users..... Consider decoupling discovery from delivery and inventory control functions..... There has to be investment in new, global information systems that make research library collections more visible and that cover more of the scholarly information universe. Investing in cataloguing of unique special collections (which could be a costly enterprise) may eventually have equal importance..... [have to also] institute a culture of assessment. Some of the challenges we face include:

- unwillingness or inability to dispense with highly customized acquisitions and cataloguing operations
 - resistance to simplifying cataloguing
 - library-centric decision making: inability to base priorities on how users behave and what they want
 - inadequate skill set among library staff; unwillingness or inability to retrain
 - resistance to change from faculty, deans, administrators
- (Calhoun, 2006, p.13)

- [We] need to put the catalogue in a context about discovery and about the continued evolution of library systems including the catalogue, in a changing network environment.... The library needs to think about ways of building its resources around the user workflow.... Need to think of the catalogue, or catalogue services and data as making connections between users and relevant resources, and think of all the places those connections should happen.... The current catalogue will need to be blended in some way with the discovery apparatus for local digital collections, for materials available through resource-sharing systems, for materials available for purchase (either by the user, or by the library on an on-demand basis), for the journal literature, and so on....The catalogue will most likely be integrated with other resources in consolidated discovery environments at various levels (metasearch, regional systems, Google, etc.). (Dempsey, 2006)

- What about migrating library processes to more generic solutions? The use of PeopleSoft, say, for acquisitions is something that you see discussed, especially in the academic environment where library data has to be reconciled with institutional financial data (Dempsey, Nov. 13, 2006)

- The OPAC of the future will not be our most important finding tool...The OPAC should function well alone but recognize its position in the larger scope of available information (the catalogue of the future will feed end user discovery tools as well as be a discovery tool in its own right) (Tennant, Nov 10, 2006)

- What may come:

1. systems environments need to become simpler. We will see more hosted solutions, better integration options in a web services environment and some consolidation of supply

2. for ILS vendors an interesting shift away from their historic core towards e-resource management and in some cases towards digital asset management

3. we will see less focus on the integration of library resources with each other as an end in itself, and more on the integration of library resources with user environments (portals, LMS systems, etc.)

4. data and services need to be made available in ways which better facilitate their recombination in different user contexts.

5. look again at opportunities to centralize services and data

(Dempsey, Feb. 22, 2005)

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