

Chapter 19

Discovering Our Library's Resources: Vendor Tools Versus In-House Tools

Amy S. Jackson

University of New Mexico, University Libraries, USA

Kevin Comerford

University of New Mexico, University Libraries, USA

Suzanne M. Schadl

University of New Mexico, University Libraries, USA

Rebecca Lubas

University of New Mexico, University Libraries, USA

ABSTRACT

The University Libraries (UL) at the University of New Mexico has experience implementing both a resource discovery tool from a standard library vendor and an in-house, custom built federated search using Drupal® as a Content Management System. The standard vendor-based resource discovery tool was the library's first attempt at a federated search, and feedback from librarians and users was not always positive, largely because results seemed inconsistent and lacking clear relevance to the terms searched. The Drupal® approach proved to be straightforward to implement, very flexible, and customizable, but the project team determined it would not be scalable as a solution for searching the library's entire collection. This chapter describes the UL's experience with both tools, and provides best practices and recommendations for libraries considering either type of approach.

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INTRODUCTION

Like most other academic libraries, the University Libraries (UL) at the University of New Mexico (UNM) pursues resource discovery tools that facilitate positive user experiences. However, the UL has struggled to identify a one-size-fits-all, one-stop shop that can efficiently lead new users and seasoned researchers to resources on multiple heterogeneous platforms. These platforms include standard library subscription databases, digital images and other media housed in ContentDM, an institutional repository built on DSpace, a custom-built data warehouse of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) finding aids, and the Innovative Interfaces Millennium Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC). The UL also understands that many library users are more accustomed to Internet discovery services than library catalogs and they find legitimate sources in web-born data. For this reason, the UL seeks to incorporate homegrown platforms into Internet discovery services while also using social networking and open source content management for acquisitions.

Experimentation with commercial and open source discovery tools reveals that each tool has advantages and disadvantages, depending on the varying needs of user communities. The availability of staff and financial resources impacts the depth and granularity reflected in these discovery tools. This chapter compares the UL's implementation of Serials Solutions^{®1} commercial 360 Search to the execution of an in-house open source Content Management System (CMS) facilitating federated search across records from multiple platforms. The in-house project, Celebrating New Mexico Statehood (CNMS) (<http://digitalnm.unm.edu/>), customizes Drupal[®] nodes to facilitate broad access to diverse resources.

The types of users these tools serve vary. The federated search helps UNM students, faculty, and staff find books in the catalog and articles in select subscription databases. It does not lead them to special collections. CNMS enables com-

munity members from across the state, including students and instructors from eighth grade through college, to interact with special collections. This tool does not incorporate subscription databases.

BACKGROUND

Content Management Systems (CMSs) have evolved significantly over the past 10 years (Souer et al., 2008) and as a result have become extremely popular alternatives for building sophisticated content-driven websites, particularly in the academic library community (Coombs, 2009). The advantage of CMS systems such as Drupal^{®2}, Joomla^{®3}, WordPress^{TM4} and others is that they bundle together many prebuilt website components. These components include full-text searching, text and image formatting and display functions, system administration tools, and desirable end-user features, such as social media communication, commenting and collaboration tools. These features previously required a substantial amount of system administration and/or development time to implement on a standard website. With a good CMS package, it is now possible to set up and configure a full-featured website in several hours, without weeks or months of development time. In addition to effectively lowering development and implementation costs, many CMS systems are also freely available as open source software, making them extremely attractive solutions for library project needs.

Discussions of resource discovery tools in libraries are recent, and include descriptive reviews of commercial tools (Rowe, 2010) as well as white papers (Clarke, 2006; Uzwyszyn, 2007; Burrows et al., 2007), conference documentation (<http://twapperkeeper.com/hashtag/ucryh>), web pages, and blogs. Paul Stainthorp's blog (2011), for example, informs of an event in which librarians from four universities in the United Kingdom shared notes on next-generation resource-discovery tool implementation. Librarians have also engaged in

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