

Chapter 37

Tiptoeing Forward: Implementing and Integrating WorldCat Local as a Discovery Tool

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the implementation of the WorldCat[®] Local discovery tool in a multiple-library system at a mid-sized university. The catalog data preparation required for implementation is a key focus, including discussion of the use of the OCLC holdings reclamation process. Special circumstances and limitations regarding government documents records are described. The challenge that WorldCat[®] Local's architecture presents for a library system with multiple processing units is explained. Additional concepts discussed are the decisions regarding configuration and presentation on the Library's Web interface, the challenges faced by librarians and staff, and the impact on instruction and reference. Comparisons between the number of searches in the traditional library catalog and WorldCat[®] Local are presented as well as interlibrary loan requests statistics pre and post implementation. Various difficulties encountered and the applied solutions are explained and discussed as well as ongoing challenges and issues.

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INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time Online Public Access Catalogs (OPAC) resembled tools of the future. The ability to do keyword searching of records and to not be restrained by officially-approved subject headings was a revelation in information retrieval. Today, OPACs represent the dinosaurs of the information retrieval world, headed for slow, albeit sure, extinction among rapidly evolving metasearch, discovery tools, and of course, Google. The culture of libraries is a strange one. Librarians work hard to preserve information, mostly in a 500 year old format, but also have one foot in the future and are often trying out new technologies, just to see if they will work. The University of Louisville (UofL) Libraries are no different. As the Libraries have implemented the WorldCat® Local discovery tool, it has been a journey of excitement and trepidation, and it is one that is not over yet.

BACKGROUND

The University of Louisville is a metropolitan university offering master, doctoral, and professional degrees. In fall 2010 there were 18,295 FTE students. The UofL Libraries consist of the Art Library, Music Library, Health Sciences Library, Law Library, University Archives, and the Ekstrom (main) Library. The Libraries use Ex Libris' Voyager®² integrated library system (ILS), as well as SFX®³ (OpenURL link-resolver).

The UofL Libraries conducted a trial of WorldCat® Local as part of a consortial offer to the libraries in Kentucky's state supported institutions. Following this successful trial, WorldCat® Local seemed a logical choice for UofL's discovery tool for several reasons. The Libraries had been contributing cataloging records to the OCLC WorldCat® database since 1975. Another attractive feature was that in addition to the 194 million records created by libraries globally for the materials they hold, WorldCat® Local also has 501 million citations to

articles from several databases, including Article-First®⁴, ERIC, MEDLINE®⁵, GPO, and JSTOR®⁶. OCLC as a vendor was a known quantity, even if this was a new product for them. Furthermore, OCLC offered the UofL Libraries the means to make sure that the Libraries' data in OCLC was accurate through OCLC's reclamation process. OCLC had adopted FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records), which would provide users with a single result by grouping different editions or formats together. Users have the option of viewing all the editions and formats that have been FRBR-ized, but it was thought that most users were not searching for a specific book, and any edition would be sufficient. WorldCat® was always one of the most heavily used databases at UofL, so the "brand" of WorldCat® was already a familiar one to many of the libraries' users. The idea of including local content, such as UofL Libraries' digital special collections via CONTENTdm was also exciting. Since OCLC had also discussed creating an integrated library system at some point in the future, this seemed like a good opportunity to get in on the "ground floor" of that effort and perhaps have a voice in the creation process. Last but not least, the cost of WorldCat® Local was reasonable at that time. While there were some drawbacks, overall, WorldCat® Local represented a solid choice for UofL's library system.

PREPARATION OF CATALOGING RECORDS AND CONFIGURATION

WorldCat® Local gives users the ability to discover from a single search box all items from the Libraries' catalog and the collections made available through OCLC, including books, databases, articles, and digital materials. A library generally configures WorldCat® Local so that users retrieve search results that display items from the library's local collection first. In its implementation of FRBR, WorldCat® Local uses the record with the

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