

College Library Director DG Annual 2011

[Sixteen?] library directors attended the discussion group at ALA Annual 2011 in New Orleans. After a round of introductions that included a brief overview of one success and one challenge that each director had experienced at their library over the past year, two topics were selected for discussion: Discovery Tools and Renovation/Expansion Projects.

Several attendees had recently contracted for or launched discovery tools (including Serials Solutions' Summon, ExLibris' Primo, OCLC's WorldCat Local and Ebsco's Discovery Service) and they shared their experiences with the group.

Two directors had direct experience with Summon. One was positive, the other was not. In the latter case, expectations in terms of functionality and support were not met. One attendee mentioned that Summon has been chosen for the state university system of Florida. Directors working with Primo commented that problems arose with Ebsco databases. Vanderbilt and Emory are early adopters of Primo.

The director using OCLC was still in the process of implementation but reported that so far things were going well. Their collection is large (1.5 million volumes) and they knew in advance that they had some data issues, but OCLC worked with them to address them. Their Circulation module goes live soon but they decided not to use the reserve module. Learning management system will be used for reserves instead. OCLC is also rolling out a link resolver that also functions as an ERM system.

One attendee asked if anyone had used discovery tools to harvest external content, for example blogs. Some reported harvesting content from Project Gutenberg, Hathi Trust, Archon, Content DM and LibGuides.

Discussion turned to the selection process. All reported that reference librarians were more critical of the products than end users. This may stem from the fact that discovery tools represent a paradigm shift. Reference librarians who are accustomed to conducting a reference interview, providing an overview of available databases and offering instruction on the use of the most relevant databases are reluctant to relinquish their role to computer software that uses a proprietary algorithm that will not be shared and thus cannot be easily examined and evaluated.

One director reported that his library's recent selection process for a discovery tool failed. His sense was that the focus on perfection had stalled progress. Instead of starting another search, he decided to redesign the library's web page so that the catalog more closely resembled Google's single search box and also to implement VUFind.

Another director said that his faculty told him that librarians "give us too much" and encouraged us to "keep it simple". Another director offered that our students and our faculty have already selected Google as their discovery tool. There was some discussion about what might happen if Google decided to develop a discovery tool for

libraries but we concluded that the market was probably too small for Google to invest in developing such a tool.

In closing, one attendee referenced Jane Burke's statement that discovery tools are not built for librarians, they are built for end users. End users do indeed seem satisfied with the results that discovery tools deliver.

On the topic of renovation/expansion projects, two directors reported getting very far in the planning and budgeting process only to have the progress stall. One attendee reported that she had been able to create a learning commons at a very low cost of \$50,000. No major construction was involved. Instead she used her institution's facilities staff to create a cafe and collaborative workspaces within her existing space.

Another director suggested that cost savings could be realized if you removed the architect from responsibility for the furnishings and equipment and instead delegated that responsibility to library staff, who frequently are more in touch with what their users want and with the vendors who can provide furnishing directly without architect's fee.

One director asked the group if they felt that desktop computers would be a feature of academic libraries in the future. Some felt that we might rely on students to bring their own laptops, but in order for this to be feasible, we would need to address issues of weight, security and power that discouraged students from carry their laptops with them throughout the day. Storage lockers that included charging stations offer one option for addressing these issues.

There was also a discussion of furniture that was either collapsible or easily moved. Some reported problems because patrons moved furniture without releasing wheel locks, resulting in damage. One attendee reported seeing book stacks on wheels in Amsterdam. This allowed them to be moved easily when reconfiguring library space for presentations or receptions.

Meeting adjourned at 3:25 pm