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Smart Libraries™

Formerly Library Systems Newsletter™

50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611-2795, USA

Smarter Libraries Through Technology

by Marshall Breeding

Coming to Terms with Mobile

Mobile technology suddenly seems to be all the rage in libraries. This issue of *Smart Libraries Newsletter* includes several stories of new products or services that aim to deliver library content and services to users with mobile devices.



I've been aware of the rising importance of mobile technology for quite a long time, but it was a bit abstract until I made my own shift from an ordinary cell phone to a full-fledged smart phone. Before I got an iPhone a couple of months ago, I didn't fully appreciate how much one of these devices can shape one's expectations for information and communication. I'm no stranger to mobile computing, but I have mostly been oriented to full-sized equipment. I don't go far without my laptop—I'm constantly battling deadlines for the next article, column, or report. While having a smarter mobile device has been great, I don't see how it could become

my primary productivity tool. Nothing short of a full-sized keyboard will do when it comes to writing in longer forms than Twitter, text messages, or other brief formats. But for many others, a smart mobile device may well serve as their primary tool for access to the Internet. The recently announced Apple iPad brings to the market an example of an intermediate device that further blurs the lines between mobile smart phones and full-form computers.

While I'm not likely to give up my laptop, the iPhone has made a big difference in the way that I deal with information—both the onslaught of incoming correspondence in its various forms and in the way that I gather data for both my personal and professional life. Smart phones change expectations for the immediacy and convenience of information. Now it's hard to wait for any bit of information needed for daily life. I'm also seeing that the media can make a big difference on the content consumption. It's the destinations that make their content or services easily accessed on the mobile devices that I visit repeatedly. Content designed for full-sized browsers can be pretty awful to use on a mobile device. The commercial world has already figured this out, with all the major destinations having sites nicely designed to detect and accommodate mobile visitors or developing apps that take full advantage of a given device. My recent personal experience only reinforces my view that libraries need to consider their position and visibility on the mobile front just as seriously as they would their conventional Web presence.

We're still in the very early days of mobile services for libraries, and we've got a lot of catching up to do. Mobile sites will always offer a subset of the functionality

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available through their counterparts on the traditional Web. So it's essential to deliver the right information and service options that will make the effort worthwhile to mobile users. The early offerings in this space focus on helping users discover nearby libraries and on making the traditional online catalog more functional on a mobile device. While that's a good start, I'm looking for more compelling offerings in the future. In the same way that the traditional online catalog fails to satisfy the current generation of Web-savvy users, prompting the creation of a new genre of discovery interfaces, those drivers apply to the mobile Web. We need a mobile presence that does justice to the full breadth of library collections in a coherent and unified way.

In many of my talks and essays, I discuss the commercial competitors that libraries face in delivering content to our users. I rail about how advanced these competitors appear in the way that they deliver content and services on the Web relative to the offerings of most libraries. I see the genre of discovery interfaces as filling an urgent need to help libraries engage



users whose expectations have been set by these commercial destinations. By and large, libraries have been sluggish when it comes to moving away from their old Web-based online catalogs to more modern discovery interfaces.

Libraries face the same issues now with mobile technology. Having a bunch of disjointed apps or other silos of library content available to mobile users will need to evolve quickly into something more polished and cohesive. This transition will also need to happen in a radically collapsed timeframe relative to what's happened on the traditional Web. I'm looking forward to seeing libraries make ambitious and aggressive moves to ramp up their mobile presence. The products

mentioned in this issue are just the initial front of a whole new dimension of library technology.

The point at which mobile access to the Web will meet or exceed that of larger devices lies only a few years in the future. Now is the time for libraries to get serious about developing strategies for mobile technologies. Otherwise, we'll lose opportunities to provide services, and erode our visibility and relevance.

LibraryThing Delivers Mobile Access to Library Catalogs

One of the most interesting mobile applications demonstrated at the ALA Midwinter Meeting did not come from an ILS vendor. LibraryThing, a company that has found a niche in adding value to existing library catalogs, has created a mobile app that can be used with almost any of the major automation platforms, allowing a broad range of libraries to create a mobile presence at a very low price.

LibraryAnywhere, developed by LibraryThing, provides an inexpensive solution for libraries to engage their users with mobile devices. It includes features that will enable libraries to offer mobile users access to their online catalogs, including the ability to search the library's collection and to perform services such as viewing currently charged items and requesting or renewing mate-

rials. It's designed to be a functional mobile online catalog with a reasonable set of features. No mobile interface offers the full set of capabilities found in full-fledged Web versions, but they attempt to focus on the features most needed and those that can be operated through the more limited controls and keyboards of mobile devices. LibraryAnywhere also helps mobile users discover the libraries participating in the service. Features expected in subsequent versions include the ability to return search results in response to queries submitted through a simple SMS text message.

LibraryThing designed LibraryAnywhere to work regardless of the automation system used by the library and for library users with all types of devices. It currently supports most of the major

integrated library systems, including SirsiDynix Symphony, Horizon and Dynix sites using the HIP online catalog, Millennium from Innovative Interfaces, Destiny and InfoCentre from Follett Software Company, Voyager from Ex Libris, Polaris, and Alexandria. It also supports a wide range of mobile devices. Library users with any of the major smart phones will be able to take advantage of the service.

LibraryAnywhere functions as a mobile Web application, but will also offer apps for specific devices, enabling a more enriched user experience. Device-specific apps continue to offer features not possible through Web applications alone, even when those Web applications have been designed for mobile devices.

On the technical side, LibraryAny-

where is based on the open source Web-Kit framework that underlies Apple's Safari browser and Google Chrome. Supported equipment initially includes some of the most popular devices such as the iPhone, those that use the Android mobile operating system from Google, and the Blackberry.

The flagship business of LibraryThing involves its services for helping individuals organize their own collections of books and providing an online community for those passionate about what they read. LibraryThing reports a total of one million members with a cumulative collection of 47 million books. An important part of the infrastructure of LibraryThing involves giving its users the ability to assign tags to each of their items, functioning as an informal set of subject or name headings. These tags, currently totaling over 59 million created and shared among LibraryThing users, function as powerful organizing tools that can be applied without formal training, unlike instruments like the Library of Congress Subject Headings, which are designed to be wielded by professional librarians. While a few libraries have adapted LibraryThing as their online catalog, it primarily targets individuals.

LibraryThing has also developed products specifically for libraries. Its initial offering in this arena, LibraryThing for Libraries, makes use of the body of tags within its system, which can be layered into a library's own Web-based online catalog to supplement the formal and more complex headings derived from MARC records of the underlying ILS. LibraryThing for Libraries has been adopted by 175 libraries, and another 50 libraries use LibraryThing for Libraries content as part of the optional MyDiscoveries add-in to AquaBrowser. As a Web 2.0 service from its inception, LibraryThing brings this understanding of users and interfaces to its library products. LibraryThing for Libraries includes user-created reviews and recommendations that contribute even more substantial content to a library catalog. The company recently added a shelf-browse feature that

lends the ability to visually browse items in shelf order, emulating an important in-library experience.

LibraryThing has found its niche in the library automation arena by creating products that integrate into a library's existing library automation environment to add value through the delivery of content or services missing in the interfaces delivered by the ILS vendor. LibraryAnywhere extends this niche to the mobile



arena. Some of the ILS vendors have recently announced iPhone apps for their products, but many seem to be slow to respond to this pressing need. LibraryThing aims for LibraryAnywhere to deliver mobile access to library collections earlier, with more features, and at a much lower price than those offered by the ILS vendors. From its initial version, LibraryAnywhere conforms to the requirements of Section 508 for use by persons with disabilities, a vital feature for publicly funded libraries with mandated compliance.

LibraryAnywhere leverages the connectivity layer that LibraryThing has developed for its LibraryThing for Libraries offering that allows libraries to integrate user-generated tags and other user-supplied content into their Web-based online catalogs. One of the key realities of library automation today involves

Tim Spalding, founder of LibraryThing, reports that LibraryAnywhere is currently in the testing phase and that libraries will find its cost surprisingly cheap.

a separation of the interface layer from the underlying library automation system. This separation has been driven by interest in alternative Web-based discovery products, such as Encore from Innovative Interfaces, Primo from Ex Libris, AquaBrowser from R.R. Bowker, Summon from Serial Solutions, as well as open source alternatives such as Blacklight and VuFind. The independence of the interface from back-end automation will also prevail in the mobile arena, opening up competition that will exert upward pressures for increased features, functionality, device support and downward pressure on price.

Tim Spalding, founder of LibraryThing, reports that LibraryAnywhere is currently in the testing phase and that libraries will find its cost surprisingly cheap. Spalding offered an early glimpse of LibraryAnywhere at the Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association in Boston, with full release expected in April 2010. In a rather unusual move in the library automation industry, LibraryThing has published specific pricing for the product:

- Schools, \$150 + \$50 per additional location
- Public libraries: \$350 for main facility + \$50 per branch
- Two and four-year colleges: \$750 + \$150 per additional library building
- Universities: \$1000 + \$150 per additional library building

Libraries anxious to enable mobile access will have multiple options, including those offered by their ILS vendor and from LibraryThing. Other competitors will likely emerge. With the high level of functionality and the low pricing, this competition will lower the threshold for mobile technology into the reach of almost any library.

—Marshall Breeding

SirsiDynix BookMyne

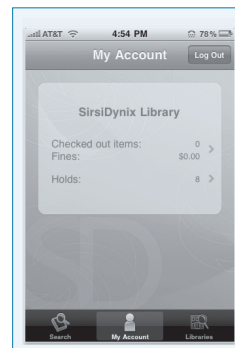
SirsiDynix joined the mobile arena with the launch of its BookMyne iPhone app, announced at the ALA Midwinter meeting in Boston. The app has been available for download from the Apple Store since January 2010 and has seen some implementation by libraries. Through BookMyne, library users with an iPhone can find and access their local library, provided that their library has enabled the requisite software. SirsiDynix has not released apps for other smart phone platforms.

In order to make their services available to mobile users with the BookMyne app, libraries need to operate a version of SirsiDynix Symphony 3.3 or higher. In addition, they will need to install the recently released Web Services module. This software layer allows the library to expose a variety of data elements managed by Symphony to external applications. This Web Services component, used initially by BookMyne, will find many other uses beyond the proprietary API already available. SirsiDynix Symphony Web Services is available without cost to libraries running the requisite version of Symphony.

SirsiDynix has made BookMyne available as a free download through Apple's App Store. Once installed, iPhone users will be able to find any library that has enabled the service and perform catalog searches. The patron self-service feature, naturally, functions only with the user's own library, requiring

their established user name and PIN for access. BookMyne app will be able to select and view a directory of any participating library, listing library contact information, hours, a library logo, a link to the library's Web site, and an image of the library. Libraries can be selected geographically, using the iPhone's built-in GPS capability and the Google Map API. A list of favorites provides convenient access to one's home library. Key features of BookMyne include the ability to search their library's catalog, and to sign in to make requests.

BookMyne involves no cost either to iPhone users that want to use the app or to the libraries that want to have a mobile presence. But the matrix of libraries to users is currently narrow. Apps have not yet been delivered for other mobile platforms and only libraries that run SirsiDynix Symphony 3.3 with the Web Services layer will be discoverable. The popularity of the iPhone and the large number of libraries using SirsiDynix Symphony forms a large potential audience for this product.



—Marshall Breeding

Summon from Serials Solutions Goes Mobile Early

The Summon discovery service from Serials Solutions, previously covered in *SLN*, was announced in January 2009 with live product launch in July 2009. The release of a mobile version came only a few months later.

Serials Solutions released its mobile application for the Summon discovery service in November 2009. This app,

available across the spectrum of mobile platforms including iPhone, Blackberry, Android, Palm, and Windows Mobile, engages and downloads automatically once a user visits their library's Summon service. In the same way that Summon turns library research into a simple Google-like experience, the mobile version operates with the same ease of use.

Many of the features of the Web-version of Summon do not appear in the mobile version, like facets for narrowing results. Still, it presents a relevancy-ranked list of results, that leads users to more details, usually including an abstract, with the ability to click through to the original document.

—Marshall Breeding

A Decade of Mobile at Innovative

While other library automation players have made announcements for their support of mobile devices, Innovative Interfaces introduced its first product in this category back in 2001. The early versions came out at the time when PDA's were the dominant handheld wireless device. AirPAC delivered an online catalog interface scaled down to accommodate the smaller screens and limited input controls of these smaller devices.

AirPAC has steadily advanced in step with the evolution of

the broader mobile arena. Today AirPAC supports a variety of mobile devices, including the specific apps for the Apple iPhone and the Blackberry Storm. The iPhone version of AirPAC was introduced in January 2009.

Capabilities of new version of the AirPAC include searching the library's catalog with results listed in relevancy order, taking advantage of the company's RightResult search technology. Users can identify library locations through a direct integration

with the Google Map API, sign into their account and renew charged materials or place requests, select items in lists for later reference, or register for programs offered by their library. AirPAC includes access to the library's electronic materials, with links to full-text materials.

In this era, where one company after another makes

announcements for new mobile apps, Innovative interfaces has had a product in this space for almost a decade.

More info:

<http://www.iii.com/products/airpac.shtml>

—Marshall Breeding

Polaris Library Systems Announces It's Mobile

Polaris Library Systems has also announced its intentions to deliver a mobile public access catalog for its Polaris ILS. At the January 2010 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston, Polaris announced a version of the Polaris PAC that will be released later in the year. The Polaris mobile PAC will have search and patron

request features. It will support a wide variety of mobile devices, including the Apple iPhone, the Google Android platform, and the Blackberry.

—Marshall Breeding

Another Major Win for VTLS

VTLS has learned that it has been selected as the new ILS provider for the Hong Kong Public Library. Following a rigorous multi-year procurement process, the library selected Virtua as the ILS to replace its current Dynix Classic system, which has been in place since 1999. The Hong Kong Public Library includes 66 library branches and 10 mobile libraries,

with a collection of over 12.7 million items, spanning materials in Chinese, English, and many other languages. Annual circulation transactions in 2007 were over 61 million. The contract for the Hong Kong Public Library handles follows the company's successful implementation of Virtua at the Queens Borough Public Library, the busiest in the United States with annual circula-

tion of around 23 million. Queens selected Virtua as its new ILS in July 2008, marking a new focus for VTLS in the large municipal library arena. The project to supply automation to Hong Kong Public Library will involve multiple vendors, and includes RFID and other components. VTLS will provide the ILS and RFID software.

—Marshall Breeding

Letter from the Editor

At TechSource, we're committed to helping you stay on top of the technology that can help your library run most efficiently. In addition to giving you the latest news from the library automation industry, we strive to provide information that can help librarians learn to work directly with software, web applications and other tools that can make library technology more efficient, user-friendly and cost-effective.

To that end, we're happy to present a three part series on WordPress and libraries, authored by Joshua Dodson and Laura Slavin of Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee. This series is designed to help librarians become familiar with WordPress, a free, easy-to-use and very powerful tool. While primarily known as a blogging platform, WordPress has the capability to be converted to a full-fledged management tool for a library's web presence.

Our authors for these articles know because they've done it. In their positions at LMU, Joshua and Laura have built a fully functional web presence for their library using WordPress, and have given several presentations for librarians on how they can save money and advance their web presence using this versatile tool.

We hope these articles will be helpful and informative.

Sincerely,
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What WordPress Can Do for You

In today's information environment, libraries must do everything possible to provide the best service at the lowest price. A polished, well developed website is essential, but library staff may not have the technical knowledge, funds or time to develop and maintain a website. In this three-part series, which will run in the next three issues of *Smart Libraries Newsletter*, we will present WordPress as an affordable option for a library web presence. WordPress will be discussed as a multi-faceted, customizable content management system for libraries.

How can WordPress be Beneficial to Libraries?

In these tough economic times, libraries require affordable and creative options for website design and management. WordPress provides a variety of options for libraries to develop and maintain a web presence. It can serve as a content management system and a blogging tool, and can be used as a web application framework. Since WordPress is open source software, it is also free to download, use, and modify. With a small amount of preparation, WordPress can be installed very quickly. It is simple to use and easy to modify. WordPress is highly customizable, and can be adjusted to fit the size and skill level of any staff. WordPress allows administrators to set up different levels of accessibility so that librarians of all skill levels can creatively participate in the modification of their library's web content and design specifications. Librarians need the ability to make large amounts of content available to their patrons. WordPress acts as a content management system that makes it easy to manage and access information. WordPress offers a full range of options that can immediately be utilized by libraries upon installation. The following included components can quickly turn a boring library Website into a dynamic



Library 2.0 site that engages the users:

Blogging: WordPress was originally built to be a blogging platform. The capabilities of WordPress have been extended significantly since its original creation, but blogging is still very much at the heart of WordPress. WordPress makes it easy to write sequential blog posts about events occurring at the library.

Bookmarking: WordPress has a bookmarking system that makes it easy to share interesting links with site visitors. This functionality can be compared to services like delicious.com, but built into a WordPress installation. You can save a bookmark to a website which would then link back to your site. You could also use bookmarks to link to specific sections of your site. For instance, you may want to highlight posts tagged "New Books," so you can create a link to the "New Books" tag and add it as a bookmark. You can create multiple bookmark sections, making it possible to display links to other Websites as well as featured sections of your own Website.

Static/Dynamic Pages: It is important to have options when choosing a content management system. WordPress offers choices of either static pages (called "Pages" in the WordPress Dashboard) that do not change, or dynamic pages that display "Posts" in various ways. Posts are displayed through the use of tags, categories, and authors through the primary blog function and several other ways.

SEO Friendly Out of the Box: If search engines can't find your website, neither will your users. The creators of WordPress have made Search Engine Optimization (SEO) a priority. This allows search engines like Google to find your website very easily. WordPress even goes so far as to send a ping, or notifica-

tion, to search engines when the website is updated. This allows for the fresh content to always be accessible to users as they search for you.

Tags and Categories: With the help of metadata and organizational options like Tags and Categories, a website is no longer limited to linear organization. By utilizing the tags and categories in WordPress, a library can organize the content of their website by multiple themes without having to rekey the information. While the blog function initially was for sequential posts, tags and categories mean that blogging doesn't have to rely on chronological organization; it can also be organized by category.

One of the selling points for using WordPress at Carnegie-Vincent Library was the huge amount of training available for the product.

Posts can be arranged by topic in multiple formats by using categories and tags simultaneously.

Search: WordPress comes with its own search capabilities. This enables the user to find information on the site that is relevant to his or her immediate needs. Think of a personalized Google that only searches the library site. While tags and categories make the job of assigning metadata to content much easier, search eliminates the worries of whether or not you remembered to add all of the relevant tags. The search function will search all of the content within a page as well as the tags and categories, giving users a rich, dynamic way of finding exactly what they need on your site.

RSS feeds: RSS feeds allow users to subscribe to all of the new content that is being published through the website. WordPress has added the option to create

RSS feeds for specific categories, tags, users, searches, or just about any way that you could imagine dividing up a Website. WordPress is incredibly versatile and the RSS feed is one of the many ways that it shines. For example, a user can subscribe to a feed of the blog posts written by “Mrs. Librarian A” within the category of “New Books” and read all of them within Google Reader or another RSS reader. See Plymouth State University Library for an example of a prominent RSS feed link (<http://library.plymouth.edu>).

How We Have Used WordPress at LMU

The librarians and staff at Lincoln Memorial University Carnegie-Vincent Library (<http://library.lmunet.edu>) transformed their library website using WordPress. They felt strongly that the website needed a major overhaul, largely because it was becoming cumbersome and extremely difficult to manage. Technical staff found themselves repeating the same changes multiple times. This repetition was both time-consuming and error-prone. The library decided to customize the website using WordPress and create a dynamic environment. Now, one change to the database list

Carnegie-Vincent Library is powered by WordPress.

remains current with a single edit, even if a link appears multiple times. The library continues to incorporate Web 2.0 technologies and dynamic content.

One of the selling points for using WordPress at Carnegie-Vincent Library was the huge amount of training available for the product. WordPress.tv is

an excellent option for training staff on how to use WordPress. Visit WordPress.tv and click on the “How To” tab. Here you will find a variety of video tutorials that help both beginners and experts understand and apply the functionality of their WordPress installation.

—Joshua Dodson and Laura Slavin

About the Authors

Joshua Dodson is the Technical Services Technician and Web Assistant for Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, TN. He specializes in developing Web sites with the WordPress framework. He has developed a system for creating library subject guides through WordPress that is currently implemented at Carnegie-Vincent Library. An article on this topic has been published through the Code4Lib Journal. He has presented on topics including information literacy, open source software, Web 2.0/Library 2.0 technologies, and using WordPress for library Web sites.

Laura Slavin graduated from the University of South Florida School of Library and Information Science in 1998 with a concentration in Cataloging. Since then, she has worked at Troy University as Cataloging Librarian, and currently at Lincoln Memorial University as Technical Services Librarian. She has presented on a variety of topics including live chat reference, open source software, and enhancing library Web sites.



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March 2010 Coming to Terms with Mobile

Smart Libraries Newsletter

Smart Libraries Newsletter delivers hard data and innovative insights about the world of library technology, every month.

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The 2010 subscription price is \$85 in the United States and \$95 internationally.

Production and design by the American Library Association
Production Technology Unit.

Smart Libraries Newsletter is published monthly by ALA TechSource,
a unit of the publishing department of the American Library Association.

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