

In My Opinion, Technological Diversity & Challenge *By Bill DeJohn*

Recently, I was thinking about all the technological changes underway in the three-state region and their impact for library users and for library staff. These changes present a challenge for staff in all types and sizes of libraries -- as well as for their customers. Whether you are a staff member at a large research library or are working in a small community library, these changes have implications for how you do your job and how you serve your customers.



I keep making lists, and they become more complicated since the technologies are blending into each other and creating some remarkable interoperability issues as well as more challenges for staff and end users. In the rich resource-sharing environment we live in (and are lucky to do so), libraries take part in consortia for particular reasons, but they continue to add technologies to their individual list of service offerings. And, those technologies may not be added by other libraries in their consortia. Hence, we have a group of libraries sharing resources using one technology, but some of the libraries may be using additional technologies to provide targeted service to their own customers. There isn't anything wrong with this -- in fact, it shows that library directors and staff are free to make decisions they believe will benefit their customers.

Let me boggle your mind with the following information about the region as it relates to library technologies. I submit that while at one level, this is an exciting time, but at another level, we seem headed for fascinating challenges as end users expect and demand more. At the same time, we need to cope with the different technologies and systems we've integrated into our library environment with the best of intentions -- as well as meet user expectations and, even, try to anticipate user needs.

Let's look at the region from two perspectives:

1) Integrated Library Systems (ILS) -- Commercial & Open Source

COMMERCIAL

- Ex Libris
- Innovative Interface
- SirsiDynix
 - Horizon
 - Unicorn
- Polaris
- Follett's Destiny
- Endeavor
- Alexandria
- Others I probably don't know about

Each ILS offers different functionalities from which library staff can select -- not all modules have to be purchased. Each system brings its own challenges for library staff as they cope with upgrades that bring

improvements, as well as additional problems. Vendor user groups meet regularly within states and nationally to suggest and vote upon enhancements that may take months or a year to be developed and released. Each ILS features an interface that helps libraries choose which system they will purchase. This, then, becomes the main online catalog for that particular library, usually linking from the library's main webpage.

OPEN SOURCE ILS SOFTWARE

Since 2000, we have seen open source Integrated Library Systems developed and deployed as local library directors and staff seek more control over the software and hardware that provides access to their collections and services and integrates more closely with the constantly changing Internet.

- Evergreen – PINES
- Koha

These two recently developed open source Integrated library Systems are being discussed quite widely. Georgia Library **PINES**, a program of the Georgia Public Library Service, is the statewide public library automation and lending network for 248 public libraries in 127 Georgia counties. Its supporting software is called Evergreen.

On the other hand, Koha was developed in New Zealand and is a free open-source ILS in use at over 50 libraries worldwide. The name comes from the Maori word for a gift or donation. The Koha website indicates that there are six Koha sites in the U.S., including the Crawford County (PA) Federated Library System with nine libraries.

Many library directors are looking at these open source systems because of growing frustration (and expense) with commercial integrated library systems. SirsiDynix's recent decision to stop production on Horizon and move to a new platform has reminded local library directors and staff how dependent they are upon investors interested in the bottom line. With a commercial ILS, the responsibility is on the vendor to keep the system operating, release upgrades to fix and improve the system, and do myriads of other functions that a library pays the vendor to do.

However, with open source systems, there are similar issues that require attention. To quote the director of the Nelsonville (OH) Public Library:

It's important that libraries do not look on Open Source as free software that they just download, press a button, and all their problems will magically be solved. Open Source requires just as much commitment as commercial software - you still only get what you pay for. Libraries should approach Open Source with the notion that they will commit a lot of staff time to understanding the code and how the software does its job. (<https://www.athenscounty.lib.oh.us/koha.html>)

As in everything related to technology, the challenge is to be able to provide sufficient technical staff support in implementing these systems. I know a few MINITEX library directors are interested in open source integrated library systems, and I would suggest anyone who's interested in the Evergreen software running PINES should also look at the Koha sites. See the Q & A with the director of the Nelsonville Public Library, which serves Athens County (population 62,223 in 2000), to see a Koha system in operation. Just search Google for PINES and KOHA to get some links.

2) Looking at Integrated Library Systems by State

- **South Dakota** – There are two integrated library systems in place.

a) The South Dakota Library Network (SDLN) uses Ex Libris' Aleph software and includes a majority of the academic, public, K-12 school, private college, hospital, special library and state government libraries. Some individual libraries may operate a stand-alone integrated library system.

b) Siouxland Libraries (a public library system in Sioux Falls) includes 12 branch libraries, two of which share quarters in rural areas where they are responsible only for the public side of things. Their ILS is SirsiDynix Horizon. However, their holdings are included in the South Dakota Library Network (SDLN) database and accessible to all SDLN libraries.

- **North Dakota** -- There are two integrated library systems in place.

a) ODIN (the Online Dakota Information Network) uses Ex Libris' Aleph software and includes a majority of libraries in the state: academic, public, K-12 school, private colleges, hospital, special libraries, and state government libraries.

b) Central Dakota Library System (a consortium based in the Bismarck/Mandan area) includes seven public libraries, three school media center libraries, a tribal library, and the University of Mary. It operates on a SirsiDynix Horizon platform.

In North Dakota, there are also some individual libraries that may operate a stand-alone integrated library system.

- **Minnesota** has many integrated library systems, and I'm not sure of the best way to profile the array of systems.

a) The MnLINK Project, funded by the State Legislature, resulted in a major automation effort. The MnLINK Gateway, which runs on OCLC PICA software, brings together collections of academic, public, state government, and K-12 school libraries – providing access to over 33 million volumes. There are 21 Gateway server sites, which use several integrated library systems and are linked together through Z39.50 software available from OCLC PICA.

The libraries of the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and the coordinate campuses at Duluth, Crookston, and Morris are using Ex Libris Aleph software plus such additional Ex Libris products as SFX, MetaLib, MetaData. They are also a development partner with Ex Libris for PRIMO that should be rolled out for usage this summer. PRIMO and other new front-end interface tools allow integrated searching of the library's catalog and a wide range of other resources.

MnPALS, which includes the MnSCU institutions, several private colleges, Minnesota state government libraries, the MINITEX Office, and one school library, also uses Ex Libris' Aleph software.

b) CLIC, a consortium of the libraries of nine private colleges in the Twin Cities, uses Innovative Interfaces, Inc software to operate CLICnet, its joint catalog. Individual libraries are using additional software, either cooperatively or as a stand-alone implementation. For instance, one library is using SFX through the MINITEX/University of Minnesota arrangement and other libraries are using Serials Solutions products that they have purchased through discount programs arranged by MINITEX.

c) THE BRIDGE is a joint catalog of Carleton College and the College of St. Olaf, which uses Innovative Interfaces, Inc. software to serve the two colleges located in Northfield.

d) Regional Public Library Systems and several public libraries are participants in the MnLINK Gateway and use different integrated library systems.

| <u>Library or Library System</u> | <u>ILS Vendor</u> |
|---|--|
| Arrowhead Library System | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| East Central Regional Library | SirsiDynix Horizon, but moving to Unicorn |
| Lake Agassiz Regional Library | Innovative Interfaces |
| Northwest Regional Library | (using Innovative as part of Lake Agassiz) |
| Viking Regional Library | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| Pioneerland Library System | Innovative Interfaces |
| Kitchigami Regional Library | Innovative Interfaces |
| SELCO/SELS | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| Traverse des Sioux Library System | SirsiDynix Unicorn |
| Plum Creek Library System | SirsiDynix Unicorn |
| Great River Regional Library | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| MELSA, including | |
| Anoka County Library | SirsiDynix Unicorn |
| Carver County Library | Innovative Interfaces |
| Dakota County Library | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| Hennepin County Library | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| Minneapolis Public Library | Innovative Interfaces |
| Ramsey County Library | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| Scott County Library | SirsiDynix Unicorn |
| Saint Public Library | Innovative Interfaces |
| Washington County Library | SirsiDynix Horizon |
| Rochester Public Library | SirsiDynix Unicorn |
| Duluth Public Library | Polaris |

In my discussions with directors and staffs of the above libraries, all have various issues regarding their ILS vendor. SirsiDynix's announcement about Horizon will play out over the next several years. Issues with upgrades affect all libraries since upgrades, often, affect functionalities that have been operating well -- up to the time of the new improvement. Most libraries are very much involved in their state and national vendor user groups where they can make their concerns and future needs known.

e) Minnesota K-12 schools use a variety of local automation systems and, with a few notable exceptions, are not involved in resource sharing.

- ⇒ In northwestern Minnesota, North Star Library Consortium uses Follett's Destiny Software to support its group catalog, which includes 89 school and special libraries located from Thief River Falls, south to Fergus Falls, and east to Park Rapids.
- ⇒ Several K-12 schools and special libraries have joined local regional public library system ILS's. For example:
 - Arrowhead Library System has nine school districts with 21 schools, 25 public libraries and 4 contributing public libraries and one special library. School libraries are full members and participate in resource sharing.
 - SELCO/SELS has 38 public libraries, 24 school library media centers, 2 special libraries and in process two additional school libraries and two small college libraries. School libraries participate in resource sharing.
 - East Central Regional Library has two school libraries.
 - TdS has the holdings of one school library in its automated system.
- ⇒ There are other school library media centers using Follett and Alexandria and probably several vendors I don't know about.

And, there are other developments on the horizon that we'll need to watch in FY08.

- Google Books (U of MN Libraries and the CIC. It's too soon to know how this (along with Google and other mass digitization projects) will play into resource sharing activities in our region. My personal opinion is that this will generate additional interlibrary loan activity as users find books they want to borrow.
- OCLC's WorldCat Local (you can view the first large academic implementation at <http://www.lib.washington.edu/>). This development by OCLC 'overlays' the University of Washington's integrated library system and provides the WorldCat interface to search the online catalog and open resolver. It also provides functionalities including access to the University of Washington's resource sharing partners in the Pacific Northwest. I believe this product will be available from OCLC in Fall 2007. Additional next-generation library interfaces include AquaBrowser, Endeca Pro-Find, Primo and Encore.

(See the June 2007 issue of *Smart Libraries* Newsletter, published by ALA TechSource, for a description of OCLC WorldCat Local.)

- Users can now search Google and other search engines and be directed to nearby libraries that own books they seek. We are just beginning to see evidence of this within the MINITEX region. (See "WorldCat, WorldCat.org, and Open WorldCat," *MINITEX/OCLC Mailing*, Sept. 2006, p. 12, <http://www.minitex.umn.edu/publications/oclc/2006/sept06.pdf>)
- Digitization projects are underway by several libraries in the region. An example is the Minnesota Digital Library's project Minnesota Reflections, which we hope to make available as part of the MnLINK Gateway. The idea behind these projects is to improve access to special collections via the Internet and retrieve images and other digitized documents using existing search engines.
- In addition, several libraries are using such Ex Libris products as SFX through an expanded contract that the University of Minnesota has with Ex Libris that provides for access to these resources for MINITEX participating libraries. And, several academic libraries are using Open Source software, such as LibData and Assignment Calculator, that were developed by staff of the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Libraries.

So, looking forward. . . .

Anyone can guess where all this is going to lead, but it is certain that it will lead us to a different resource sharing world than we have seen in the last few years. We are hearing that libraries may buy modules of integrated library systems from vendors and link them together with modules from other vendors to customize the services they want to provide their users. There will be more interoperability issues, and the impact on staff will be greater. Staff will need to be more adept and flexible to understand these issues when explaining to end users. But, end users will continue to use the new search engines and new technologies, so they probably won't have as much of a challenge as some of the staff now working in libraries.

We have a strong resource sharing environment among our libraries in this region and, therefore, residents of our states have access to a vast array of resources. As we deliver more of those resources digitally, it may change some of our practices. Change will continue and will increase its rapidity, and we'll have to increase our abilities to adapt our policies and procedures to cope with the changing times.