SUNYergy
SUNY Libraries Working Together

Prod and Dev 101: SUNY's Special LMS Environment

SUNY is special. We all know that. One area where this is exemplified is that of SUNY's shared library systems. Both the Library Automation Implementation Program (LAIP) and the SUNYConnect LMS include goals of a shared library system that still allows for an individual library's autonomous decision making.

That is "let's gain the advantages of libraries using the same software system, but still allow each library to decide things like how to catalog their collection or what circulation policies to put into place."

In LAIP and in SUNY*Connect* the selection of the software system was at least partially determined by the facility each system had in meeting this goal of shared, yet autonomous online library management. The "multi-bank" capabilities of Multilis were a reason that software was chosen for LAIP. Ex Libris' experience working with library consortia was one reason the ALEPH software was chosen for SUNY*Connect*. As in many things, the reality in both cases differed from the initial expectations.

For SUNY*Connect*, getting reality to sync up with those expectations has caused some of the delays in the project. But, the pieces are being put into place. So it is time to introduce, at least in general terms, the SUNY*Connect* LMS "environment."

SUNY's special goals and visions regarding the shared library system does add complexity. And it is true that most people using the SUNY*Connect* LMS will be unaware of these complexities. For a library implementation team and for the system librarian in particular, it is important, however to have an understanding of this set up.

Most SUNY*Connect* libraries will share computer hardware with other SUNY*Connect* libraries. For example, Tompkins Cortland uses a computer housed at Oswego that Oswego also uses for its library system. And as "Group2" libraries join SUNY*Connect* as fully implemented libraries they will join TC3 and Oswego on that machine. Each SUNY*Connect* library has their own set of tables and files that configure and customize the software.

Actually each library has two sets of these configuration files. One set is for that library's "production" system (called "prod", for short). This is where the "real" circulation transactions are registered; new orders, new cataloging and new patron records are added. The other set of ALEPH software programs and files is used for "development" ("dev," for short). Here the library can test a new software configuration, try out new circulation policies, work on a new version of the web OPAC, test out a full upgrade to the ALEPH software and provide a training database for instructing staff, students and faculty in the use of the new LMS.

/a50_x5	/prod				/dev			
Demo	Demo	OLIS	Campus A	Campus B	Demo	OLIS	Campus A	Campus B
/aleph	/exl	/sny	/xxx	/yyy	/exl	/sny	/xxx	/yyy
/alephe	/alephe	/alephe	/alephe	/alephe	/alephe	/alephe	/alephe	/alephe
/alephm	/exu01	/sny01	/xxx01	/yyy01	/exu01	/sny01	/xxx01	/yyy01
/usm01	/exu10	/sny10	/xxx10	/yyy10	/exu10	/sny10	/xxx10	/yyy10
/usm10	/exu20	/sny20	/xxx20	yyy20	/exu20	/sny20	/xxx20	yyy20
/usm20	/exu30	/sny30	/xxx30	/yyy30	/exu30	/sny30	/xxx30	/yyy30
/usm30	/exu50	/sny50	/xxx50	/yyy50	/exu50	/sny50	/xxx50	/yyy50
/usm50	/exu60	/sny60	/xxx60	/yyy60	/exu60	/sny60	/xxx60	/yyy60
/usm60								

/aleph

While a library is implementing ALEPH this structure is duplicated on another piece of computer hardware. An implementing library will first look at a test database that is housed on a "test server." This first test database is on the "dev" side of that machine. Eventually a full test database is created on the "production" machine. When a library has signed off on both the conversion of their online catalog and the various configuration tables, the end result is their ALEPH library management system as well as a complete copy of that to use for future developments and training.

SUNY goals of sharing with continued autonomy results in the set up described here. Ex Libris has taken what it has learned from their work with SUNY and offered up similar ideas to the other library consortia they have signed up as new customers. This would indicate that even though SUNY is special it is not unique, and offers the likelihood of collaboration with these international consortia in the future.