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S·F·X is Here!

Binghamton's Linking of Library Resources

by Bern Mulligan and Abigail Bordeaux (University at Binghamton)

SFX is a convenient tool for connecting electronic databases and delivering information seamlessly across them, including full-text journal articles, abstracts, and catalog records. Last spring, three sites were chosen by the SUNY*Connect* Advisory Council to pilot SFX. Staff from Binghamton University, SUNY Cobleskill, and SUNY Fredonia received training at the SUNY Training Center in Syracuse at the end of June.

In July, a five-person committee was appointed to implement the project at Binghamton. Committee members are Abigail Bordeaux, Roman Koshykar, Sarah Maximiek, Rachelle Moore, and Bern Mulligan. We met twice a week for six weeks and discussed service options, publicity, and staff training.

The service options we chose were put in place using a combination of the SFX web administrative module and UNIX. Since then, SFX has been relatively easy to maintain.

S·F·X CONTEXT SENSITIVE LINKING

Publicity efforts began with an announcement on August 12 on the Libraries' home page that "SFX Is Coming!" which was changed to "SFX Is Here!" on August 16, when the service officially went live. Three training sessions for all staff members were conducted during the week of August 19-23, demonstrating SFX and explaining its capabilities.

During the first week of classes, a flyer was sent to all faculty, administrators, and teaching assistants. This flyer included information not only about SFX but also about ILLiad, our new interlibrary loan service, and emphasized how both can improve the way students and faculty do research.

Raw usage statistics and anecdotal evidence suggest SFX is quickly catching on with undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. Librarians are including information about SFX in credit-bearing courses and course-related sessions and reference librarians are utilizing it as a natural extension of the research process.

As mentioned, Binghamton's future plans for SFX include adding interlibrary loan access via ILLiad. Then from one simple menu, patrons will be able to see whether BU has electronic full-text or print holdings, and if not, immediately submit an interlibrary loan request.

A subscriber to the ERIL-L (Electronic Resources in Libraries) email list asked "How does your library make the best use of your electronic resources?"

A librarian from Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis responded:

"I think the SFX software is the best thing since whipping cream...If the student finds a citation in one of our databases, but there is no full-text in that database (CSA for example), they can click on the SFX button, which searches our other databases. If there is a full-text in another database, it will automatically pull that up. If there is no full-text, the next choice is to automatically search our catalog for the journal title. I love it, and so do the students."

Joseph C. Harmon IUPUI University Library

And Abigail Bordeaux of Binghamton concurred:

"I completely agree with this.

"For those of you who don't know about SFX, it is a 'context-sensitive linking service'. The official site is http://www.sfxit.com. There are some other similar services out there based on the same technology, OpenURL.

"I think it's fair to say the most common use of SFX is to link from a citation to a full-text article, but it can do much more than that. We have set up our service to show full-text links, abstracts if no full-text is available, and always a link to our catalog. Soon we hope to add an ILL link if no full-text is available, and soon after that we hope to make it show only if we don't have the paper.

"When we brought up SFX and our new ILL service (at the start of this semester) we used the slogan 'Improving the way you do research'. SFX not only improves the use of our electronic resources but reminds people about our print and ILL options too!"

Abigail Bordeaux Electronic Resources Access Librarian Binghamton University Libraries

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