



ALEPH-The Teenage Years

by Natalie Sturr, SUNY Oswego

Cover Story

This year I sent my one and only child to college. In the past few months I've watched my son grow from a high school teenager toward becoming an independent young man who is developing his own style, making his own decisions and deciding on his future.

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SUNYConnect, like my son, is also growing up. The ALEPH project looks very different now than it did in its infancy four years ago. It is maturing, developing its own style and culture, and eagerly looking into the future.

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Four years ago at this time SUNY Oswego (OSW) and other pilot sites were already working with Ex Libris on data conversion/migration and training. OSW and TCC (Tompkins-Cortland Community College) librarians spent 20-plus days in February and March at the [SUNY Training Center in Syracuse](#) trudging through the snow learning about ALEPH from Ex Libris personnel.

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In those days there were no SUNY templates, no SUNYConnect procedures, no SUNY/OLIS training and no [Footprints](#). Oswego was the first library in SUNY and the second library in the US to go live with version 14.2. Everyone had so much to learn.

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How far we have come! Oswego STP'd to ALEPH on July 3, 2001 - a lifetime ago in ALEPH-time. Over the past few years, ALEPH has become well integrated into the functioning of Oswego's library.

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During the same time we have had a number of staffing changes resulting in some librarians and support staff who do not know life-before-ALEPH. We no longer train people on "how to use ALEPH," but rather on "how to do their job that, by the way, uses ALEPH."

Our Coordinator of Access Services who oversees Circulation was hired after we STP'd to ALEPH. Under his leadership we have started emailing our overdue notices and automatically printing all daily and weekly circulation reports. We are currently testing the recall feature and hope to have this in place at the start of the semester.

For Reserves, we started by using ALEPH exclusively. Later, we began offering electronic reserves with Docutek's E-Res. Now, we are using E-Res as the point-of-contact for all reserve readings. Users locate material via E-Res and, for print material within our collection, are linked back to the full display record in ALEPH. We continue to use ALEPH both for the web-based management of print material and for loaning print material.

In Acquisitions and Cataloging our earliest challenge was understanding that a bibliographic record enters the OPAC at the point of acquisitions rather than at the point of cataloging. After some experimenting with workflow we have successfully made this shift. This has also allowed us to make better use of 'triggers' and reports in Acquisitions.

We have managed to load several collections of NetLibrary records and to export our holdings quarterly to a regional OPAC. These are services that had been provided by OLIS when we used Multilis. We now have documented our procedures and these have become routine tasks.

Our original, framed OPAC was designed in-house in 2001. This summer we moved to the [frameless OPAC](#) using the SUNY Template and customizing it to our needs. Just a few weeks ago the OPAC, and all of ALEPH, was moved from the Oswego server to an [ITEC-based server](#).

On the technical side of ALEPH, we continue to move forward. As a pilot site, we started on pre-patch 1 of ALEPH and have moved to patches 1, 2, 4 and 7 - and who knows how many other hotfixes. Each change has produced a more stable and functional system.

Oswego has been involved in quite a bit of testing of new services and functionality. This is in part

due to being a pilot site, in part due to my own work with OLIS, and to a large part due to the flexibility of the Oswego librarians and support staff. When possible, we have tried to document our work and share it with the SUNY library community on the Oswego/Ex Libris website available from the [SUNY ALEPH 500 Portal](#).

SUNYConnect has grown tremendously over the past 4 years. We have gone from a handful of pilot libraries to 45 libraries running ALEPH, with 10 more (Group8) currently STP-ing. Version 14.2 of ALEPH has matured considerably and version 16 is on the horizon. SUNYConnect has increased from one to three multi-campus production servers, brought in [ITEC](#) to manage the servers, and instituted the use of [Footprints](#) to track problems and requests. The SUNYConnect Advisory Council is working on a new five-year plan. The OLIS is working on putting the union catalog into production and is working with Ex Libris to provide universal borrowing.



In a few years, my son will graduate from college. He will be more mature and (hopefully) wiser and he will be a different person than when he first entered. He will face new challenges and have the opportunity to grow in new directions.

Where will SUNYConnect and ALEPH be in a few years? The project will mature and it will be stronger - offering more services to libraries and their users in a reliable and stable environment. The project will mature not only because of the ALEPH software and OLIS services, but because campuses will continue to share their knowledge and work together for the betterment of SUNY libraries and their users. Where does our future lead? Where would we like it to go? Like my son, we will face new challenges and have the opportunity to grow in new directions.



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