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Next Generation Library Systems -- A Primer

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This article attempts to spell out some of the details related to various "next generation [library systems](#)".

It will provide some basic distinctions between these systems as well as some examples in various categories.

Discovery Systems

Examples: [EBSCO Discovery Service](#), Primo with [Primo Central](#) (Ex Libris), [Summon](#) (Serials Solutions), [WorldCat Local](#) (OCLC).



These systems strive to provide a single interface for searching all library resources -- books, articles, digital collections. In addition to capabilities found in next generation catalogs, these commercial entities have sought agreements with publishers for article-level metadata that allows for searching of this material via a pre-established index.



Rather than using a federated search tool (360Search, MetaLib, etc.) these systems search an article-level index that is native to the system. The goal being retrieval of all types of library materials within onesystem and with response times and result consistency not available from federated systems.

Agreements between publishers and these system providers are being announce regularly. Competition to provide the most extensive article-level index has been intense.

Next Generation Catalogs

Examples: [AquaBrowser](#) (ProQuest), [Blacklight](#) (open source), [Encore](#) (Innovative Interfaces), Endeca, [Primo](#) (Ex Libris), [VuFind](#) (open source).

The distinction between these and the discovery systems is the absence of a pre-established index of licensed journal literature. These next gen catalogs do allow for additional data sources, but these need to be provided by the library. So, for instance, digital repository data can be searched along with local collections and the library's bibliographic database. But, journal literature would be searched via these systems only if the library can provide the data locally or by way of a link to a federated search tool.

These systems strive to provide a modernized search tool for these various library collections. They usually include capabilities such as

- faceted browsing;
- spelling or search assistance tools ("did you mean?");
- relevance ranking;
- tagging or other community empowerment tools

Library Management System developments

Examples: Unified Resource Management/[URM](#) (Ex Libris), [Web-scale Management Services](#) (OCLC).

The other systems described here relate to the library user discovering library materials. Such new catalogs, etc. obviously don't replace nor fulfill other functions of the library related to acquiring, cataloging or circulating those materials. Various vendors are working on new or modified approaches to library management systems. [Elsewhere in this issue](#) of SUNYergo readers are reminded of *SUNYConnect's* plans related to the Aleph LMS.

Currently under development by vendors are some new strategies related to automated library management. OCLC is working on tools that would be available over the web and hosted by them. Ex Libris' URM design allows for work on all library materials regardless of format, a modular, more open approach and use of the software as service model.

These systems are changing quickly. The developments are seemingly moving faster than the terminology used to distinguish between them. Still we seek that holy grail of the perfect library software system.



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