



ALEPH User Groups

Cover Story

International Consortium of ALEPH Users ([ICAU](#))
North American ALEPH Users Group ([NAAUG](#))
SUNY ALEPH Users Group ([SUNYAUG](#))

[Footprints: Steps Toward ALEPH Edification](#)

Features

From Canton (NY) to Changchun (China); Binghamton, Brandeis and Brisbane; the National Library of Armenia and Zentralbibliothek Zuerich; Potsdam (USA) to Potsdam (Germany) ... this should give you some idea of the worldwide span of Ex Libris customers.

[ALEPH User Groups](#)

[SUNYAUG](#)

[Additional SUNYConnect Updates](#)

[How to Contact Us](#)

[Linkable Links](#)

[Link to the SUNYConnect Committees List](#)



As a result of such a diverse array of ALEPH sites, various user groups have been established. The [various groups](#) (some of which are listed above) provide a range of benefits, both tangible and intangible. Tangible benefits include [meetings and conferences](#), [newsletters](#), [email discussion groups](#) and ALEPH software enhancement recommendations. Inter-personal "networking," a sense of a shared experience, and exposure to a diverse range of individuals and institutions are areas that offer more intangible, but not less valuable benefits of the various user groups.

The user groups listed here are independent of the software vendor, Ex Libris. They are self-supporting organizations that provide a collective voice for Ex Libris customers. Offering resources for collaboration and problem solving, the user groups are an important component for creating a sense of community among the various ALEPH users.

Some examples of this include NAAUG's "Documentation Swap" at their [upcoming annual meeting](#), the SUNY users group first annual meeting (see Bill Drew's article in this issue of SUNYergy), and ICAU's "[ALEPH Satisfaction Survey](#)" (MS Word).

SUNYConnect is an example of SUNY libraries working together. These user groups provide a means for ALEPH libraries to work together.





An Interview with Dale Flecker

Editor's note: Dale Flecker is the Chairperson of the North American ALEPH Users' Group (NAAUG) Steering Committee. Mr. Flecker is Associate Director of the University Library for systems and planning at Harvard.

SUNYergy: What do you see as the most important role that NAAUG plays?

Flecker: NAAUG plays two key roles: -- it provides an organized collective voice for Ex Libris customers to communicate shared concerns with the company. This includes annual enhancements requests, concerns about operational support such as bug resolution, documentation, or training, and advice on the evolution of ALEPH and the other Ex Libris products.

-- it provides a locus for ALEPH users to communicate with each other, sharing local developments, solutions to shared problems, and advice on how to best use the product.

SUNYergy: Would you comment on the role of the users group in facilitating interpersonal exchanges ("networking")?

Flecker: User groups provide at least two key mechanisms promoting such "networking": electronically through such things as listservs, and person-to-person in annual meetings and on task forces and similar activities.

SUNYergy: What comments do you have on the ALEPH software enhancements process?

Flecker: Both the North American ALEPH Users' Group (NAAUG) and the International Consortium of ALEPH Users (ICAU) have organized annual processes for selecting a small number of specific systems enhancements to ALEPH. Each group has a guaranteed annual level of development resources from Ex Libris (expressed as "development points", each point representing a person-day of programming) at its disposal for such developments.

The [NAAUG and ICAU enhancement processes](#) are useful, and insure that the company addresses user community needs for the sort of minor enhancements normal for any system. However these processes have a couple of limitations that have concerned the steering committees in recent years. First the process is time-consuming and slow. We are right now selecting our NAAUG enhancements request for the current year. The selection process began last fall, and the developments specified will not be available until release 17 of ALEPH, which many customers will not install for a couple of more years. That is a pretty attenuated cycle.

The other problem with the current enhancement processes is that they are well suited for smaller developments, but not for the sort of major additions to ALEPH or the Ex Libris family of products that are required as our environments change. Both NAAUG and ICAU have been discussing the need for a mechanism for Ex Libris and its users to work together on this sort of larger development. Currently we are specifically exploring a joint study of the functionality required to support the selection, purchase, and management of commercial on-line resources. I am very hopeful that this process will be found by all to be useful, and will become a model for North American and international users and Ex Libris to work together on larger developments in the years to come.

SUNYergy: What types and level of interaction should there be between the various ALEPH user groups?

Flecker: The NAAUG and ICAU steering committees have given a good deal of thought this year to how to work together and insure that our efforts are coordinated and cumulative rather than competing or disjointed. There is cross-representation between the groups (Larry Woods (Iowa) has been incredibly effective in keeping the two groups synchronized). The steering committees held a joint meeting for the first time this year to discuss issues of mutual concern, and selected members of each group attend the annual meeting of the other. Mechanisms are also

being put in place to more formally share information on our respective enhancements processes.

Another level of users groups working together happens annually at the ICAU meeting when representatives of the various national users groups meet for half a day to discuss major issues of mutual interest.

SUNYergy: Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and comments about NAAUG and ALEPH user groups.

Flecker: You're welcome



Cover Story

[Footprints: Steps Toward ALEPH Edification](#)

Feature

[ALEPH User Groups](#)



Feature

[SUNYAUG](#)

[Additional SUNYConnect Updates](#)

[How to Contact Us](#)

[Linkable Links](#)

[Link to the SUNYConnect Committees List](#)