Integrated library systems – 2011-2016

Overview

A good introduction to the subject can be found in Library Technology Reports’ “Library Services Platforms: A Maturing Genre of Products” by Marshall Breeding published by ALA. It gives a good introduction of concepts and characteristics, considerations for choosing an ILS, detailing how each system works with Discovery products, and gives guidelines to major products on the market. The two major concepts undergoing study and evaluation are Open Source ILS, and Next Generation ILS. The process of migration to a new system is also the frequent subject of study and research.

Matt Enis, the LJ associate editor for Technology, in a 2015 article, summarizes some of the corporate mergers and partnerships in the “Library Systems Landscape,” describing how libraries are adapting and evolving in a rapidly changing marketplace. He outlines a number of vendor plans for development and implementation of new systems, including mobile technology and RDA integration.

A 2011 issue of OCLC Systems & Services : International Digital Library Perspectives contains articles dealing with Open source ILS/OPAC implementations. Article topics include next generation technical services at the University of California Libraries; Managing digital libraries; Understanding agile project management methods using Scrum; inter-university cooperation for implementing Kohain libraries; OSS diffusion in Italian libraries; Migrating from Innovative Interfaces’ Millennium to Koha: the NYU Health Sciences Libraries’ experiences; and How to choose a free and open source integrated library system.

Open Source ILS

Archana, Padmakumar, and Beena (2014) compared cataloging features available in a traditional ILS with those of the Koha open source software platform. They compared such features as access points for searching, record/data entry format, import and export data, authority files, display of catalogue cards, OPAC search interfaces, and display of search results. They found that the cataloging module of the Koha open source system is almost at par with that of the proprietary software.

Londhe and Patil (2015) studied all available data on 31 open source library management systems and such aspects as longevity, features, license, documentation, and technology used. They found that only 15 of the systems were currently active at the time of their research. Most of the other projects became inactive or were abandoned shortly after their initial release.

Singh (2014) at School of Information Sciences, University of Tennessee, Knoxville compared the technical support-related experiences with the expectations of librarians using open source ILS. This study identifies expectations and experiences of librarians regarding their ILS technical support, evaluates the technical support for open-source systems, and gives recommendations for librarians. Survey participants found the technical support to be lacking in such places as project
documentation, the terminology/jargon of the technical support staff, and the addition of advertising products or features during their problem-solving episode.

Engard (2016) advocates for the increasing adoption of open source software by libraries, thus allowing “libraries [to] tak[e] the power back into their own hands and us[e] the open source license to make sure that their software will never stop growing, changing, and improving in the directions that libraries want to go” (56).

While some libraries prefer the flexibility of open source systems, due to lower cost and higher flexibility, an article in the Apr. 1, 2015 issue of LJ (“Open Source Picks Up the Pace”) cautions that “While open source systems are free for any library to use, many libraries do not have the IT staff needed to maintain or modify an open source ILS without help” (35). However, the article notes that some vendors are now working with these open source providers to provide funding and technical assistance. This will likely make open source a more viable option for additional libraries in the future.

Success stories can be found in the literature as well. A particular case study for the implementation of the Koha open source system was documented in the Electronic Library journal by an Independent Library in Bangladesh. In this case, successful ILS implementation was achieved without the help of any information technology professionals (Ahammad, 2014) Similarly, Hamby, McBride, and Lundberg (2011) describe how the SC State Library and a group of public libraries formed the SC LENDS consortium to share resources, using the Evergreen open source platform. 53 libraries across the state now use the system.

**Next Generation ILS**

Wang and Dawes (2012) examine the state of library systems today and describe the features needed in a next-generation library system. The authors also examine some of the next-generation library systems currently in development that purport to fill the changing needs of libraries. Two pillars of these systems are: management of library resources in a comprehensive and unified way regardless of resource format and location; and divergence from the traditional ILS models to build on the service oriented architecture model. Full integration of Electronic Resource Management systems is also essential.

Carl Grant examines “The Future of Library Systems: Library Services Platforms” (2012). He details six of the new library service platforms, and includes a chart for feature comparison by each system. He offers suggestions libraries in the process of choosing one of these new systems.

Next generation library systems are sought after by consortial library systems. Cloud-based systems with shared software are more compatible for collaborative approaches to technical services and resource sharing. Fu and Fitzgerald (2013) conducted an analysis of the impact migration to a next generation ILS would have on library staffing models. They estimate that the migration would reduce the workload of systems staff by 40 percent. The authors emphasize that systems staff should use their additional time to learn how to use APIs provided by their next-gen ILS to support customization.
Machovec (2014) discussed the advantages of next-generation ILS for consortia. He discusses system characteristics, consortial options, and challenges consortia may face in choosing a new system.

**System Migration**

Jeff Siemon discussed the experience of Fuller Theological Seminary migrating to OCLC WorldShare Management System (WMS) during the summer of 2012. The library found problems with the copy cataloging workflow, so they chose instead to use a workflow combining WMS and Connexion for their cataloging.

Vandana Singh (2013) interviewed twenty librarians who had migrated to an open source ILS or were in the process of migrating. Interviewees discuss their experiences and lessons learned in the process. These results are used to create guidelines and best practices for each stage of the adoption process. Motivating factors influencing the decision to move on an open source ILS are a link to intellectual freedom, cost, and functionality.

Saarti, Luokkanen, Ahlqvist and Lager (2014) describe the evolution of the Finnish library systems and evaluate the methods used in the planning of the new library automation system. The Finnish library sectors together with the National Library of Finland formed a joint committee in order to assess the feasibility of a library system entirety, possibly an open source solution that would suit the needs of all the different types of libraries. This paper describes the planning for the acquisition of a new library system, and an effort to establish a joint system with common databases for all interested libraries.

Zhu and Spidal (2015) provide an overview of the Washington State University Libraries’ journey from planning the implementation of a new shared integrated library system to ‘go live’ from a technical services perspective and discusses the challenges encountered by their Technical Services department. They discuss their implementation in terms of leadership, staff participation, communication, data cleanup, training, policies, procedures, and workflows, project documentation, and the actual implementation phase.
Works Cited


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