



WorldCat Local: “A modernized, more Google-like view of our local catalogue”

Multilingual support and ease-of-use made WorldCat Local the right choice for a new discovery service

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Situation

McGill University Library has participated in the LibQUAL+ survey* five times since 2001. Results from these surveys indicated that library users were having difficulty finding information in the library’s collection. According to Joseph Hafner, Associate Director, Collection Services, McGill’s library needed a new discovery approach to its traditional catalogue and electronic resources.

“There’s evidence out there that most people are using search engines first and avoiding library gateways and catalogues,” says Joseph.

“In response, library vendors are creating search engines that include major, needed features like relevancy ranking, social networking tools, links to images and reviews, and improved searching possibilities. We were looking for an easy-use tool that would bring us these features.”

Solution

Louise O’Neill, Associate Director for Library Technology Services, explains why McGill decided to implement a subscription to WorldCat Local.

“It gave us a modernized, more Google-like view of our local catalogue,” says Louise. “WorldCat® Local also provided access to McGill’s electronic resources, which allowed us to have one unified interface that included access to e-journals and other resources.

“Other reasons we chose WorldCat Local as our discovery tool included its low cost in comparison to other discovery tools on the market, its ease of implementation and its simple Web interface.”

Another benefit McGill would gain from WorldCat Local was its French interface—a practical tool for a Quebec library.

Staff in McGill’s Collection Services and Library Technology Services departments teamed up to develop configuration plans. They consulted with McGill’s eSearch Committee

AT A GLANCE

- McGill University Library, in Montreal, Quebec, includes a main campus library and 12 primarily subject-based branch locations.
- The library collection includes more than 6 million items, including more than 1.6 million e-books and e-theses.
- Access to the collection is offered through the McGill WorldCat Catalogue and the library’s Classic Catalogue.

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*Joseph Hafner, Associate Director, Collection Services
McGill University Library*

and then created presentations to explain the benefits of WorldCat Local to other library staff.

Although it took a couple of months to implement WorldCat Local, the main configuration process was straightforward and efficient. “The longest part of the process was doing a reclamation of our holdings to bring them up-to-date,” says Joseph.

“We offered an hour-long training overview to all McGill library staff, and we offered it six times,” says Joseph, who reports that more than 70 percent of the staff attended one of the sessions.

While the single search box interface was new to some of the library staff, Joseph notes that the transition to WorldCat Local came easily to most of them.

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“A modernized, more Google-like view of our local catalogue”

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Results

McGill University Library offers WorldCat Local in tandem with its traditional catalogue, and usage for both is about the same. However, one key difference WorldCat Local offers is its multilanguage interface.

“About 12 percent of the WorldCat Local searches are done on the French interface,” notes Joseph. “For 25 percent of our students, French is their first language at home, and 50 percent of our students are bilingual. So, it’s a good thing for McGill to be able to offer them a catalogue in French.”

Joseph reports that McGill is also seeing increasing requests from other libraries for its materials, which he attributes to having the McGill’s holdings updated in WorldCat.

New students without any training on the previous catalogue—especially undergraduates—took to WorldCat Local easily, according to Joseph. “And staff love the Web 2.0 features like lists, tags and cover art,” says Joseph.

Article searching and linking features in the catalogue have improved as WorldCat Local has been enhanced, Joseph notes. The new WorldCat® knowledge base is improving access to e-resources, and the “multiple-core indexing” in WorldCat Local’s central index has also been helpful.

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Joseph recommends WorldCat Local, particularly for libraries that want a solution that:

- Is focused on users, “with lots of good user testing”
- Is easy to implement
- Requires minimal staff time to support—and doesn’t require new staff
- Has many Web 2.0 features.

He also values how updates are handled. Updates to the library’s traditional catalogue are time-consuming and costly to install, test and introduce to staff.

“On the other hand, WorldCat Local continues to improve with updates that are installed in real-time without involving our staff.”

And the bottom line? “WorldCat Local meets our users’ needs for finding information.”

Learn more about WorldCat Local at www.oclc.org/worldcatlocal.

*LibQUAL+® is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand and act upon users’ opinions of service quality. These services are offered to the library community by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Learn more: www.libqual.org/home/.