

**OCLC Members Council Cooperative Reference Interest Group Meeting
Notes
October 2002**

Monday, October 21

Joint Meeting: Cooperative Reference Interest Group & Resource Sharing Interest Group

Lynne King, Nylink (Chair, Cooperative Reference Interest Group)
Shirley Leung, OCLC Asia Pacific (Chair, Resource Sharing Interest Group)

OCLC's Group Services Initiatives (Doug Loynes, Manager, Group Catalog and Collette Mak, Manager, Resource Sharing)

Doug described OCLC's progress to date on investigating and developing new services to facilitate resource sharing among groups of libraries. In particular, he described a "group catalog" initiative that would provide access to holdings of a library group as well as access to all library holdings in WorldCat. A pilot of the group catalog initiative is now being organized.

Discussion:

- **Timing of the service release:** OCLC is late bringing this to market, since many groups are already in the process of implementing this type of solution. Given this reality, how does OCLC plan to market the service?
 - Response: Based on the number of RFP's in the pipeline, OCLC believes that many groups have not yet selected this type of service. OCLC is developing a service that will meet the needs that have been identified by groups planning to issue RFP's.
- **Pilot:** The pilot should include a mix of OCLC members and non-OCLC members.
 - Response: One of the groups involved in the pilot includes libraries that do not currently use OCLC for interlibrary loan. OCLC has a variety of services to help these members make their holdings available to other members of their group.
- **Cataloging/Access to records:** Many small libraries do not have records in a format that can be loaded quickly. They have not yet converted their records to a machine-readable format.
 - Response: OCLC can help those libraries convert their records using its conversion services.
- **Authentication:** How will user authentication work?
 - Response: OCLC is currently working with SIRSI on a pilot of the NCIP protocol, and will explore options with other local system providers.
- **Interoperability:** The group catalog service must work with existing systems to be successful. For example, some larger groups include subgroups that have implemented a group catalog or union catalog, and will want a solution that integrates the existing system with a new system. In some cases, multiple systems are already in use, and groups will want to interface with more than one system.
 - Response: Catalogs that are Z39.50-compliant may connect using this protocol.
- **Database access:**
 - How will OCLC interact with existing contracts for third party databases to make them available through a group portal?

- Response: OCLC has a service in development that should help libraries manage these rights issues.
 - Is the FirstSearch database gateway in response to the Library of Texas RFP?
 - Response: OCLC responded to this RFP with a “proof of concept” version of this service.
- WorldCat positioning and marketing:
 - While it is feasible for WorldCat to be the database of first resort in the United States, this is probably not a realistic expectation outside the United States. For non-U.S. libraries, OCLC should concentrate on making WorldCat easy to access and position it as a “very important resource.”
 - Many libraries in the United States do not refer to WorldCat as the database of first resort; their local catalog fulfills this role. These libraries do often position WorldCat prominently so their users use it, however. Some libraries do this as a way to contain costs, because they know that their annual WorldCat subscription price will increase as their activity in the database increases.
 - One problem with using WorldCat as a database of first resort is that there is no automatic access to local resources.
 - Response: OCLC plans to automatically display local holdings in this service.
- ILL:
 - How will data from the group catalog service flow back into the Interlibrary Loan service if a library is not using ILLiad? For example, Fretwell-Downing moves ILL data back to the local system for ILL management purposes.
 - Response: This service will conform to ISO standards to insure interoperability with other systems.
 - Many librarians would appreciate marketing materials that include scenarios that show how the service will work in an environment where another ILL system already exists.
- Relationship with local library systems:
 - Given the work being done on the group catalog service initiative, is OCLC moving toward replacing local library systems? Does OCLC think that local system vendors will be threatened by this new service?
 - Response: OCLC does not intend to attempt to replace local library systems, but wants to partner with them. The service is intended to complement the functionality provided by local systems. For example, a local system interface could be used to access WorldCat and its holdings.
 - Is OCLC planning to create a circulation system?
 - Response: No. That is not the current plan.
- Future plans:
 - Many library users would like to create union catalogs on the fly, instead of relying on pre-established groups. Will this be possible?
 - Response: OCLC plans to implement this type of functionality following the implementation of Oracle. The service may also be enhanced to operate among different circulation systems.
 - Is OCLC planning to rebuild the analytics, etc. that have been stripped out of master records? OCLC should keep in mind that many libraries add a great deal of local data.
 - Response: With Oracle, OCLC wants to support customized access to this data.

Economics of 3rd party Databases: Issues for OCLC and Member Libraries. (Chuck Costakos, Director of Content Services and Chris Keyser, Manager, Product Analysis and Pricing)

Chris Keyser provided an overview of OCLC FirstSearch and OCLC FirstSearch Electronic Collections Online price changes that will take effect on January 1, 2003. Highlights included:

FirstSearch

- No increases for 15 of the 28 third party database publishers
- <8% increase for 12 of the 28 third party database publishers
- 11 to 16% increases for MLA Bibliography
- 50 to 75% increases for CSA databases at the 1 to 4 simultaneous user range.

Electronic Collections Online

- No price change for 51 of 71 publishers
- <8% increase for 6 of 71 publishers
- >8% increase for 14 of 71 publishers

Chris also mentioned the following database changes:

- NetFirst and the **World Book Encyclopedia** databases have been removed from FirstSearch.
 - Records for Internet resources in NetFirst are included in the WorldCat database, so OCLC eliminated redundancy by removing the separate NetFirst database.
 - There was very little use of the World Book Encyclopedia, and FirstSearch still provides access to the **Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia** (formerly titled the **World Almanac Knowledge Source**) in the World Almanacs database.
- The Ethnic NewsWatch and GenderWatch databases will soon be removed from FirstSearch.

These databases are due for significant format changes and they are used so little that OCLC can no longer justify the cost of maintaining them. In addition, these databases do not contain the ISSN information that is essential for linking to full text and library holdings.

Discussion:

- Several members mentioned the price difference between subscribing to a database through FirstSearch and subscribing to the same database directly from the database producer. In many cases, the direct price from the database producer is lower. One example given was a PsycARTICLES quote from OCLC that was higher than PsycARTICLES prices published on the American Psychological Association web site. Even some librarians who would prefer to provide database access through the FirstSearch interface have been forced to purchase fewer databases through FirstSearch because of the prices.
- Members asked why OCLC does not receive preferential pricing from the database producers. They frequently see lower prices on alternative services for the databases that are offered through FirstSearch.
 - Response: OCLC pays the same amount for databases as other online service providers such as DIALOG or SilverPlatter. Standard pricing models include paying a royalty for a database and marking it up to cover internal costs.
 - Chris illustrated the breakdown of a typical database subscription price for a familiar third party database. After subtracting costs such as OCLC member discount, royalty payment, OCLC operating expenses, network commission and internal costs, only \$28 dollars of margin remained. Members noted surprise at the costs required to maintain third party databases.
- Members acknowledged that even though librarians understand that there is overhead related to database access, they still feel that OCLC should be able to negotiate deeper discounts than other online service providers. What they see is higher costs on OCLC. They do not perceive enough value in the library holdings information that OCLC delivers to justify the higher costs.
- Some members suggested that OCLC add more information to marketing messages about the value they add to third party databases than they have in the past.
- The World Wide Web has changed the way some librarians approach their purchases of online access to information. In the past, the service interface influenced purchase decisions

a great deal because users had less experience in online searching. Now, many users move among different interfaces with little or no difficulty. It is no longer important to maintain access to a large number of databases through a single interface,

- EBSCO Academic Search is a preferred full text source by some libraries because it provides a good selection of full text for academic institutions at less cost than subscriptions to multiple Electronic Collections Online titles.
- Could OCLC subsidize the cost of third party content with revenue from WorldCat? It appears that this could work in the per-search environment, where WorldCat does not have royalty charges like other content.
 - Response: Remember that the **search cost** for WorldCat is higher than other databases due to the sheer size and record complexity of the database.
- Many medium and small libraries purchase a subscription to WorldCat plus per-search access because they cannot afford subscriptions to other databases.
- Many librarians are concerned about the move by some database producers from per search to subscription access. In some cases (RILM), this has meant a loss of database access for their users, because their libraries could not afford subscription prices.
 - Response: Database producers are looking for stable revenue, and often look more closely at their annual revenue stream than at the long-term use of their databases. They are happy to receive the same or more revenue from a few subscriptions than from per-search access.
 - Chuck noted that the per-search charge on OCLC is often lower than transactional prices on other services.
- Some approaches for future access to third party databases through FirstSearch that were discussed were:
 - Focus on databases with full text and unique content, including those that are most competitive in the market place.
 - "Weed" databases with little use that require a fair amount of staff time to maintain.

QuestionPoint Update and Next Steps: A report on QuestionPoint since its release, and questions for the group on its future (Jeff Penka, Manager, QuestionPoint)

Jeff provided an update on the current status of the QuestionPoint service. QuestionPoint was released in June and there are currently 200 active profiles for approximately 200 institutions. Over 100 of these profiles have been added since the June release.

During the first four months, over 20,000 questions have been handled through the QuestionPoint service. The Library of Congress experienced approximately twice as much activity on the service during the month after official release than they had during the same period last year. Approximately 3,000 questions are now active in the Knowledge Base.

In November, OCLC plans to survey to QuestionPoint users about their experience with the service.

In response to the Interest Group's request for information about alternative virtual reference services at the May 2002 meeting, Jeff distributed the article "Live, Digital Reference Marketplace", by Buff Hirko, from the fall 2002 issue of **netconnect**. This article compares key characteristics of several available services.

Discussion:

- Configurations available for groups:
 - The two configuration options are:
 - 1 profile for the group with seats for individual librarians
 - Separate profile for each library in the group

- Jeff confirmed that libraries and groups may make changes as needed. For example, a library or group may start with a few profiles and expand as their use of the services grows.
 - In the future, a library may belong to multiple groups
- Knowledge Base:
 - Non-librarian access to the Knowledge Base is planned for later this year. The Knowledge Base is currently available to librarians.
 - The Knowledge Base is built for scalability. It will continue to grow as use expands.
 - The Knowledge Base includes approximately 150 questions from the CDRS Knowledge Base.
- Mac access:
 - Mac users may access standard QuestionPoint functionality. They cannot currently use the Convey functionality.
 - Members confirmed that few libraries use Macs. Usually, it is end-users rather than libraries that use this type of computer. A direct-to-end-user service such as QuestionPoint which promotes remote use should take multiple operating systems into account.
- QuestionPoint and LSSI:
 - An Oregon group has investigated both LSSI and QuestionPoint and has concerns about the ease of use of QuestionPoint. They are optimistic that QuestionPoint will continue to improve in the future.
 - Alaska trialed LSSI and purchased QuestionPoint. Many librarians still prefer LSSI, even though the state has purchased QuestionPoint. They are also trialing Docutek (<http://www.docutek.com/>)
- Implementation timeframe:
 - Some libraries implement QuestionPoint in as little as 2 weeks. Many libraries begin using the service for walk-up reference immediately following their training, and gradually expand their activity.
- Sharing information about participating libraries:
 - The Request Manager uses library profiles to find appropriate libraries to respond to questions.
 - Does OCLC plan to publish a directory of QuestionPoint users?
 - Response: This information can be shared only at the discretion of participants.
 - A member suggested surveying participants about their interest in potential partnerships for live networking.
- Use of licensed databases:
 - Many database producers do not allow the use of their databases to answer questions for people outside a library's defined user population. Some are beginning to change their license agreements to accommodate this type of service.
 - Convey features let librarians push pages from databases to a user during a live session, but do not leave the user connected to those resources beyond the session. This type of consultation is comparable to onsite use of a library's licensed electronic resources by walk-in users that is frequently already allowed by a library's database licenses.
- Training:
 - Many librarians appreciate access to online training, but also value face-to-face training with a real person.
- Automatic routing of questions:
 - QuestionPoint is currently the only virtual reference system that automatically routes questions to the most appropriate library, based on profiles in the service. Many librarians value this feature.

- Outside the United States, many libraries are interested in the collaboration and automatic routing that QuestionPoint provides.

Future Discussion Topics (Lynne King, Chair, Cooperative Reference Interest Group)

Outstanding topics from the list prepared last year, including initial discussions on pricing of third party databases and QuestionPoint pricing; comparison of QuestionPoint with competitive products; and group catalog features, have been addressed thus far.

Continuing and new items:A. Pricing

1. FirstSearch price increases
2. Continued discussion and update
 - a. 3rd party databases
 - 1) Long term viability
 - 2) Scenarios for subsidizing from other revenue and/or reducing mark-up
 - b. QuestionPoint – for-fee supplemental coverage

Group catalog – subscription pricing specificsB. WorldCat phased development: Include an update in FebruaryC. WorldCat library access programD. Gates public library portal (Refer to <http://stayingconnected.oclc.org>)

This could be a topic for the full council.

E. Invite a QuestionPoint user to share experiences at the next meeting. F. Ask OCLC staff to share information about projects that are in their early stages, so the Interest Group can provide feedback.

G. Group services – report on pilots

H. E-learning and integration of libraries in courseware offerings , e.g., QP inside courseware (Pat Stevens).