

Library e-strategy: search and discovery 2011-15

Context

In line with the Library's mission to deliver an enhanced experience for students, faculty and staff, we are continuously seeking to improve the tools and services with which our users search for and discover our collections. We are looking at both what our online presence should provide and how our users can make use of our services while using a broader set of tools on the web.

For searching our content and other online scholarly material a new generation of search and discovery tools is now available offering a single search function for a diverse range of data sources and also providing the functionality for user generated content, such as tags, reviews and ratings.

These tools are interoperable with a variety of Library Management Systems (LMS), reflecting a decoupling of search & discovery from the rest of the LMS. An increasing number of universities in the UK have one of the new generation of search and discovery tools. These are part of a range of rapid changes in the information environment to which we need to respond for the quality of our library and information services to remain commensurate with our aspirations and ranking in UK HE. Furthermore, a number of applications we currently use are nearing the end of their service life. There is a need for a set of strategic goals within which future developments in the infrastructure that supports electronic provision can be discussed.

Library e-strategy: search & discovery

The service we provide for searching, discovering and accessing Library owned and licensed content will demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Simplicity
- Openness
- Currency

Through these principles the Library's search and discovery services will support the following strategies from the Library Strategic Plan 2009-15:

- 1.4 Establish an effective online research environment that supports research activity throughout the University (*Making the Future 1.7*)
- 1.6 Provide effective support as appropriate for the University's research output (*Making the Future 1.6*)
- 2.3 Ensure that the delivery methods of information resources and related support meets the needs of an increasingly diverse student body (*Making the Future 2.5*)
- 2.4 Work with the University community to develop mechanisms for effective provision of resources (*Making the Future 2.1*)
- 2.5 Support the development of technology-enhanced teaching and learning (*Making the Future 2.4*)
- 3.3 Utilise the latest technology to deliver flexible, user focused services (*Making the Future 3.3*)
- 6.2 Work with appropriate bodies (e.g. RLUK and JISC) to provide and establish a range of specific, educational initiatives with other HE providers (*Making the Future 6.3 and 6.4*)

1. Simplicity

The principle of simplicity will be met through adopting the following strategic goals:

1.1 Providing a unified search environment to all content owned or licensed by the Library

We will promote and help our users to discover all formats of material relevant for their research without having to access different systems or identify which formats these might be before performing a search.

Users will be able to find resources relevant to their research from within a single search environment with the ability to refine and control what is included to meet their requirements.

1.2 Providing a single search interface that meet a multiplicity of needs

Our services will present a simple and quick to use search interface while allowing for more sophisticated searching when required. They will allow for searching of specific collections and interest areas, for example 'just physical books' or 'medical resources and subject matter'.

1.3 Providing different search interfaces that serve a diversity of users

While providing a consistent overall experience, the systems will allow for different interfaces to support the specific requirements of different groups of users, such as distance learners, or specific needs such as only searching for a particular subject or format of material.

Alongside a unified search interface, we will continue to provide and support specialist abstracting and indexing services and other databases.

1.4 Providing quick and direct access to content

We will simplify the journey between discovery and access, reducing the number of clicks required before gaining access to content.

1.5 Being intuitive to use

We acknowledge that users expect to use online services with a minimum of guidance. Our aim therefore is that users should be able to make use of our resource discovery services without requiring initial training. However, we do recognise the need to support our users in the use of new systems and this will be provided in a variety of ways, through service points, online guidance and as part of our information skills/literacy provision.

1.6 Using a standard integrated authentication system when required

Users will not be faced with multiple authentication processes and passwords. The systems which deliver our resource discovery service will integrate with Sussex based authentication systems (e.g. Shibboleth, ActiveDirectory etc).

2 Openness

The principle of openness will be met through adopting the following strategic goals:

2.1 Using open standards, APIs and flexible architecture

The underlying systems will be open with documented and free to use APIs to allow the University, users and third parties to develop innovative services tailored to their requirements. This will include web standards such as RSS, JSON and RDF and search and bibliographic specific standards including SRU, COinS, OpenURL and Z39.50. Common exporting formats such as Endnote, Refman and BibTeX will also be supported together with APIs specific to the service they provide.

The underlying architecture will allow the front end of a system to be bypassed so that custom solutions can be provided.

2.2 Underlying systems will be delivered as *software as a service* where possible to ensure high availability and allow the Library to focus on improving the user experience and facilitate regular updates using widgets and apps

The Library will seek to develop widgets for popular online services, allowing our services to be used within third party systems. We will work with others to develop apps, especially for mobile devices.

2.3 Ensuring our data is exposed as widely as possible

We will ensure that it is possible to access our services through third party applications such as Google, Google Scholar and PubGet.

As well as supporting information seeking the Library is also a producer of information. This ranges from traditional web based information to the opening up of our bibliographic and circulation data, and information such as resource lists created by our academics. To ensure the maximum use of our collections and to enable others to develop new tools and services we will endeavour to release our own data, including circulation data, reading lists and bibliographic metadata. We will also aim to expose our bibliographic records through Linked Data. This will help us work with the wider community and allow third parties to create services for our users.

High quality metadata is essential to support these services.

2.4 Being able to link in and draw information from other systems and services

To enrich our services, we will draw in information from other respected third party services and link out to those providing additional information or related services.

2.5 Being able to participate in Shared Service initiatives

We will participate in Shared Service initiatives with other universities and national bodies - for example, shared catalogues.

3 Currency

The principle of being current will be met through adopting the following strategic goals:

3.1 Being familiar to those accustomed to using Google and social networking sites

The search environment will have a contemporary look and feel which will include features such as a single search box, relevance ranking, faceted search and results clustering, 'Did you mean ...?' as well as link through to relevant services and the facility to provide feedback and make enquiries using popular web sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

3.2 Facilitating customisation and personalisation

Our service will allow users to create lists of saved items and resources for working with and exporting. Functionality will be customisable to meet varying requirements amongst users.

3.3 Allowing and promoting user generated content

We acknowledge that users are no longer consumers of services but are active participants and collaborators. We will support and encourage user generated content such as tags, ratings and reviews provided it can be clearly distinguished from Library generated and purchased content.

3.4 Supporting mobile devices and other non-traditional search tools

Our services will support mobile interfaces. Other access routes away from the traditional computer are likely to emerge in the next few years and the underlying architecture will support developments for such systems.

3.5 Supporting integration with the University's learning, teaching and research environment

Where possible, search and discovery tools will be seamlessly available from within the University's learning, teaching and research environment.

3.6 Supporting serendipity and innovative browsing systems, such as recommender services

We acknowledge that search is only one facet of discovering content. Traditionally users have always relied on personal recommendations and browsing to find relevant material. The Library aims to cater for this in the digital environment by providing personal recommendations, ratings, related content, sharing and innovative browsing options.

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