June 2002

The Virtual Selection Process -- The ILS Perspective

Ted Fons
tfons@iii.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fons, Ted (2002) "The Virtual Selection Process -- The ILS Perspective," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 14: Iss. 3, Article 7.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3980>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

The Virtual Selection Process – The ILS Perspective

by Ted Fons <tfons@iii.com>

Introduction

Book reviews, book jacket images, synopses, tables of contents, author biographies, publisher profiles, up-to-the-minute vendor inventory snapshots, first chapters, and many other tools of the selection process can be made available to library selectors and collection development staff via the Web in an integrated way. Integrated in the sense that while the selector is considering a new title, these extended metadata elements can be consulted from a single integrated library system interface and a Web browser.

Imagine a selector retrieving a title under consideration for purchase inside the **Integrated Library System (ILS)**. At the time that the title is retrieved, the **ILS** can build a set of hyperlinks to all of the resources mentioned above and launch the Web browser when any of the links are selected. To determine the scope of the title under consideration, the selector might want to click on the link for a synopsis offered by Informata. The selector might be curious about the background of the author, so a **Bowker's Books in Print** link is selected to retrieve an author biography. To dig deeper into the intellec-

tual content of the work, the selector might refer to the table of contents, or the first chapter of the book offered by **Syndetics Solutions**. For a title published outside of the United States, **Bowker's Global Books in Print** on the Web might be used. When other sources fail, a **Google** search might be used to cast a wider net. Because this selector is involved in a cooperative collection development project, the next choice might be a direct search link to the Web-based catalog of a nearby college, which is also the selector's collection development partner institution. Finally, when the selector is getting closer to a selection decision, **Baker & Taylor's** Web-based inventory service might be consulted to determine if the title is currently available from **B&T's** local distribution warehouse. All of these sources are available with content-specific hyperlinks from within the **ILS**. Many **ILS** vendors are offering links from the patron-focused Web **OPAC**. **Innovative Interfaces** is offering these links in both the patron and staff interfaces.

Sound judgment, subject expertise and experience are still among the most important characteristics of a selector, but con-

venient access to the enormous variety of resources now available on the Web adds efficiency to the process of making an informed selection decision. Linking to these sources from the **ILS** makes sense because the selector already uses the **ILS** to check for local holdings and may refer to the acquisitions system to check on the availability of money for new purchases. The scenarios described above work for a both an approvals review workflow where bibliographic records have already been loaded onto the **ILS** for bibliographic control and payment purposes, and in the firm order workflow where the selector is using the **ILS** to determine local holdings. In the case where the title is already held by the library, a trained selector can refer to circulation statistics to make a decision about ordering additional copies of a title. In the case where the title is not held locally, the **ILS** can also make connections to coop-

continued on page 28

ONIX

from page 24

There are two larger questions, both addressed I am sure within this special issue of **ATG**. First is whether booksellers, vendors and libraries will ever want to take individual publisher feeds, rather than rely on aggregators. The **Cambridge** view is to hope for a mixed economy, where a few (maybe a dozen in each country) of major publishers will deal with a few major users (again, maybe a dozen), while most data exchanges will continue within aggregated services. Second is whether the target, in the library sector, for such new publisher **ONIX** services, is actually the vendor's approval specialist or the individual acquisitions librarian.

There is one final dimension — which I will call “intrinsic” metadata. Most (nearly all...) book MARC or **ONIX** elements are at the same time metadata *and* content. Title, subtitle, series-name, author-name would be obvious examples, but the same is true of table-of-contents, book description (as jacket “content”) and all the text on the copyright/imprints page (dates, imprint, CIP and all its LOC/BL coding and

components). These are the *content* elements which are transcribed into *metadata* at book-in-hand, but they are actually one and the same thing.

Cambridge, in common with many publishers, is now “typesetting” using XML, so that each book becomes, effectively, a consistently structured database, with tagged elements that recall the structure of **Microsoft Word** mentioned earlier in this piece. Development work is in progress at **Cambridge** electronically to extract the elements needed by **ONIX** as a routine part of the production process, thereby obviating any duplication of data entry at the publisher end and eliminating transcription error. With **ONIX** being “harvested” dynamically from work-in-progress, we can now envisage a situation in which a proofing correction to digital “galleys” made by a copy-editor — perhaps to a chapter title — would be reflected in real time on **Cambridge DataShop** outputs, and via **ONIX** messaging instantaneously to the wider community of our bibliography consumers worldwide. Richer data, months earlier than is possible today, and with 100% accuracy (or at least a 100% match with the book itself!).

Savvy publishers will soon be able to offer this scale of virtual experience, either on their own Website, or via **ONIX** feeds supplemented with sample text access, with these feeds enriched with all the LOC and BL CIP components and author-authority. What value-added elements will then be left for the vendors and aggregators? Even subjective elements, such as subject-coding (on any choice of industry-standard set), may be better left to the publisher's specialist academic editors. From both the publisher's and the data consumer's perspective there seems nothing to lose here but redundancy, delay and potential error. **ONIX** has the potential to free up resources — within libraries for better acquisitions management, and within vendors for better service — a win-win all round.

At the same time, in the online retail environment for which it was always intended, **ONIX** allows Internet bookstores better to recombine and present families of products — by author, by subject, by theme, by level — in their continuing pursuit of that perfect marketing match: the right book for the right customer. 🐾

erative collection development partner institutions for holdings determination. The integrated nature of the modern ILS offers those advantages to the selector.

How Does it Work?

In the Innovative Interfaces ILS, a tool called **WebBridge** is used to build hyperlinks from local records to Web-based content. The **WebBridge** resource management table manages the links for each available resource. Each library enters the technical details of the no-charge and subscription-based resources that they have access to, and indicates which modules are appropriate for the links. When selectors then retrieve a record, information from the **WebBridge** management table is combined with information from the bibliographic description of the record and the relevant links are presented to the user embedded in the bibliographic display. The same method can be used when the selector's search does not produce a positive search result — in that case, the selector's search itself, (e.g., the title or ISBN), is combined with information from the **WebBridge** table and used to build the search. This dynamic link building model is in contrast to a static link storage model where links are stored in the bibliographic description itself. The dynamic links are built when the selector retrieves the title and because the library can regularly update the **WebBridge** management tables, the links always use the most current search syntax for a given resource. Thereby providing "just-in-time" links for each record in the database, or useful links for records not found in the database.

Linking for Library Staff

In offering this tool to the staff modules, the selector receives the bulk of the benefit. Resources appropriate to selectors and acquisitions staff such as inventory links, or links to a book vendor's Web-based order management database like YBP's GOBI or Blackwell's Collection Manager may not be appropriate for patrons in the Web OPAC. But these resources can be quite useful in the selection process. The embedded display of book jacket images are also facilitated by **WebBridge**. Their value to selectors is probably minimal, but there are some intriguing applications in staff modules like Cataloging where identifying a book from a large group of in-process books can be facilitated by the visual clue a book jacket image provides.

Doing collection development work from within the ILS allows the selector to examine the existing collection while at the same time building the future collection. All of the relevant data is there: current holdings, current circulation statistics, patron recommendations, patron search statistics, financial data relevant to current budgets and available funds, vendor data and performance

statistics — all of these things can be useful guides to the selection process. When the possibilities of Web linking are added, the ILS-based collection development process is enhanced significantly.

Challenges

Integrating linking technologies into practical workflows is a challenge for the ILS. Links must be offered in the appropriate displays and ILS functions. For example, the no-hit search is an indication to the selector that the title under consideration is not currently in the local system. From there, the selector may wish to use Web-based resources to explore the nature and availability of the item. Links at that stage of the selector's workflow are quite useful. If the ILS provides a view of new title recommendations made by patrons, then the links at the patron recommendations review stage are quite useful. Ubiquity is the goal in offering Web linking. The ILS should strive to offer links on all of the paths the selector's workflow takes.

Another significant challenge to facilitating collection development is the need for easily accessible selection tools for non-library staff selectors. In many library settings, faculty, faculty proxies, staff and other authorized members of the library community serve as selectors. These selectors may not be fully trained in the ILS interface or authorized for ILS access. The ILS could provide Web-based tools such as browser-based html interfaces to their non-library selectors as a way to facilitate the remote selection process and to offer the same Web-based selection tools that are offered to library staff from within the ILS.

Finally, the variety of Web server technologies provides a challenge to offering linking to a wide variety of sources. Linking tech-

nology frequently relies on a predictable URL structure as a method to create links. **Amazon.com** is an example of a resource that offers predictable URL. Their URL always has the same structure. For example, an ISBN search at **Amazon** always looks exactly the same. It contains the IP address of the server, some specific search commands used by the Web server and the specific ISBN. However, some Web servers don't offer predictable URLs — instead, the full URL syntax is hidden within the Web server's search and display routines. This makes the work of building on-the-fly links more difficult.

It is possible that the **OpenURL** framework could offer relief from that challenge. The **OpenURL** idea offers the potential for predictable URLs for each Web server, and each resource held on the server. Products such as **SFX**, which depend on target resources being "OpenURL-aware," have addressed this challenge for the patron following reference links, but as yet has not been extended to staff-side displays and resources. This is an example of where a technological convention provides clear benefits for efficient information access.

Conclusion

Because of the critical role the ILS plays in the library's work to organize and manage its current collection, it is logical to think of the ILS as useful in the process of building its future collection. The possibilities of linking technologies further enhance the ILS-based selection workflow. Far from making the ILS irrelevant, the enormous variety of Web-based resources now available to selectors, makes a common interface and a facilitated workflow more important than ever — and the ILS is a logical place for that to happen.

The Virtual Approval Shelf: A Look Towards the Future?

by Amy McColl and Amy Morrison (Swarthmore College),
Eric Pumroy (Bryn Mawr College), Norm Medeiros (Haverford College),
and Linda Bills (Tri-College Consortium Office)

Introduction

The libraries of the **Tri-College Consortium** (Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore Colleges) have been involved in a planning grant funded by the **Mellon Foundation** from Summer 2001 through Spring 2002. As stated by the three library directors in the proposal, the main emphasis of the project has been to "conduct a study that should provide the consortium and the wider research community with grounds on which to plan for large and growing collections in a physical environment with little or no on-campus space for growth." A large

portion of the project task force's time has been spent in exploring ways in which collection development in the three libraries can be done more collaboratively and effectively without diminishing the inherent value of either the joint or individual collections. Each of the three colleges has built a strong undergraduate library collection that satisfies the research and teaching needs of both students and faculty; however, there is a high rate of duplication of monograph titles. By minimizing duplication of these titles and streamlining the process by which we select books

continued on page 29