

## **Library Information Technology Association (LITA) 2006 National Forum Conference Report**

Kurt W. Wagner  
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This year's LITA National Forum was held in Nashville, October 26-29. Its theme: "Web Services as Library Services" needs a brief footnote. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has a well-defined web services activity area. "Web services provide a standard means of interoperating between different software applications, running on a variety of platforms and/or frameworks. Web services are characterized by their great interoperability and extensibility, as well as their machine-processable descriptions thanks to the use of XML. They can be combined in a loosely coupled way in order to achieve complex operations. Programs providing simple services can interact with each other in order to deliver sophisticated added-value services," (<http://www.w3.org/2002/ws/Activity>).

My interest in attending this year's Forum was to see what work is being done at bringing such services to operation. My association with Jim Robertson, who has done extensive work bringing such added-value web services to NJIT's Voyager OPAC, along with the stated commitment to web services voiced by Endeavor President and CEO Roland Dietz at last year's EndUser conference underscore the importance of such work. Here at the Cheng Library we are taking the first steps to bring web services to our users: the ColdFusion reports created by Ray that tap the Voyager database for information about fine & fee activity, acquisitions fund information, and media services scheduling are initial examples of the way disparate software applications interoperate to provide additional service. The goal of web services is to standardize and simplify these activities and make new combinations of applications possible.

At the LITA Forum I attended the opening session, which featured Alan Stoker, Steve Maer and John Rumber of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Their remarks did not address web services, however, they provided an interesting account of the CMHFM's efforts to preserve rare acetate and vinyl recording transcriptions. They sometimes have to salvage crumbling recordings in order to record them for archiving. They record on digital reel-to-reel tape using a very large sampling algorithm to ensure that they are getting an optimal copy. They said that they use little or no sound editing, wishing to capture the music as it was recorded. Though peripheral to the theme of the conference, the presentation was interesting from an archival/cultural heritage perspective.

Next, I attended "Unbundling the ILS @ NCSU: implementation of an e-commerce search solution." Emily Lynema and Andrew K. Pace of North Carolina State University Libraries discussed their library's move away from the traditional OPAC, whose inherent limitations have become increasingly unacceptable (they are a Voyager customer). Their work echoes a major theme of the W3C definition of web services. They have detached the OPAC from their ILS and rebuilt it from the ground up. They partnered with commercial search vendor Endeca (powering walmart.com, HomeDepot.com, Boeing and IBM) to provide the underlying technology to provide their users with a more useful search result. Pace listed a number of existing OPAC problems including poor search results, user distrust, hard to understand relevancy ranking, and no accommodation for search tools our users expect, such as spell-checking, stemming, and the 'faceted browsing' evident in their results windows. Pace called the traditional OPAC a 'black box' with little in the way of user-customization possible other than superficial formatting (e.g. color).

They implemented the Endeca powered search tool for keyword searching only. Author, subject and other searches still require use of the Voyager OPAC. They extract their entire bibliographic database daily (with incremental loads of changed records) into their new system, which provides search results and holdings/availability information gathered on-the-fly.

They did pre- and post- Endeca usability testing. Their results indicate that tasks completed easily increased from 43% to 59%. Tasks completed with difficulty decreased from 23% to 7%, and for all but

one task, students were able to complete tasks more quickly on average in the Endeca catalog than the old OPAC. They reported that all 5 participants using the Endeca catalog understood the behavior of the faceted results display intuitively, even if they did not use them.

The work of Pace and Lynema is more fully described in "Toward a Twenty-First Century Library Catalog." Antelman, Kristen; Lynema, Emily; Pace, Andrew K. *Information Technology & Libraries*, Sept 2006, Vol. 25 Issue 3, p128-139.

(<http://ezproxy.wpunj.edu:2654/ehost/pdf?vid=4&hid=2&sid=de98e28f-35dc-4ee9-8d50-c7cc3de75336%40SRC5M1>). In my opinion, this is a first-order example of the promise of web-services. It shows how the heritage applications of ILS vendors can be displaced by more agile and user-centered services. It does not necessarily lend itself to replication by individual, smaller libraries, but it is still an important vanguard in these efforts.

See search results example in appendix.

Next, I attended "Building a Web Service for the Library World, from the Ground Up: The NISO Standardized Usage Statistics Harvesting Initiative (SUSHI)". Cornell University librarians Adam Chandler and David Ruddy discussed their use of SUSHI, which provides a standardized format for communication of database usage statistics. They described the burdensome process of wading through numerous vendor interfaces in order to gather use stats, and then aggregate them locally to create results for analysis. There were problems with stat type mismatch as well, so that the same variables were not always being measured. SUSHI, combined with an Electronic Resource Management application (such as Endeavor's Meridian or other vendors' products) allows this information to be easily downloaded and ensures that the information is uniform as well.

The day two keynote session was very interesting. Thom Gillespie, creator and designer of the MIME program in interactive communication in the department of Telecommunications at Indiana University provided an animated discussion of the role of citizen-created media. He said that it is obvious that services such as YouTube have gained international prominence and that this is reflective of the new demographic cohort that produces new sorts of media and remixes older sorts in large numbers. Gillespie is interested in computer game design and uses this as a tool for creating user interfaces and tapping his students' interests in gaming to teach them. He said that a student of his was interested in applying usability guidelines to a Lucas Arts video game and that led to the person being hired in turn by Lucas and then Microsoft. He said that Microsoft has called him to ask for more people with interest in the area of user-centered design. Gillespie said that libraries now exist in a world of 'contagious media' where everyone is encouraged to have a voice, take part, and publish as much as they consume and that this is a very different world. He provided examples of citizen media where gaming takes place in educational and social contexts: Darfur is Dying (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/30/AR2006043001060.html>), Food Force, a game about global hunger (<http://www.food-force.com/>) and the Serious Games Initiative (<http://www.seriousgames.org/index2.html>) focused on games that have social or healthcare benefits.

Session three was a bit disappointing. "Improving Library Services with AJAX and RSS" promised to be a significant session, echoing the major themes of the conference. AJAX, shorthand for Asynchronous Javascript and XML, is a web development technique intended to make web pages feel more responsive by exchanging small amounts of data with the server behind the scenes, so that the whole web page does not have to be reloaded each time the user makes a change. AJAX applications are at the core of many "web services" applications. Hongbin Liu of Yale University provided definitions and examples of AJAX and RSS but did little to show how these can be leveraged to provide new library services. His main example of the use of RSS was that of Google/ig, the personalized interface which supports RSS feeds. He said that library services need to be as easily customizable and user-centered, but did not show anything new to illustrate this.

Session four, "Designing Interoperable Modular Web Applications for Library Instruction" by Debra Riley-Huff of the University of Mississippi, provided some excellent examples of some innovative library instruction efforts using web services. Most of these efforts require the use of some sort of programming to develop the applications (PHP and ColdFusion, commonly) and an underlying database. She referred to "The Magnificent 7" as key principles: Usability, Security, Accessibility, Scalability, Modularity, Portability, and Interoperability as guiding this development. She provided examples, such as that of the

University of Kansas Libraries Art & Design Tutorial

[http://www.lib.ku.edu/artlib/tutorials/2006\\_artdesign\\_swf.html](http://www.lib.ku.edu/artlib/tutorials/2006_artdesign_swf.html) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries Campus Library User Education (CLUE) tutorial <http://clue.library.wisc.edu/> . Please take a look at these.

Session five, "How to build a faceted searching and browsing interface for your library catalog," was another presentation by University of Rochester's David Lindahl and Jeff Suszczyński, who are preeminent in the area of web page usability. Lindahl is Director of Digital Library Initiatives and administers a team consisting of an anthropologist, 2 computer scientists, a librarian, 2 software engineers, a graphics designer, a web developer and 2 student workers. They are part of a user-centered-design process that also includes a design team, an implementation team and a usability testing team who operate in a development cycle to create web pages. They have completed a two year study of undergraduates and the paper writing process that includes interviews and videotaping students at work (in the dorms as well). Their process is based on iterative development: develop>test>study>develop. Their prototype search interface, Cupid 3, produces a result similar in some respects to the Endeca-powered search. An example is in the appendix.

The concluding keynote was by Stephen Abram, VP Innovation, SirsiDynix. I've seen Abram at other conferences and his presentation is always good. He said that collectively, libraries distribute more material each day than does Amazon.com and that there are more people with library cards than with driver's licenses. He used this to illustrate the continued importance and relevance of traditional library service. He talked a great deal about the rise of Google and said that as a part of our user education we need to make sure our patrons realize how much information Google harvests about us, and how custom-tailored their advertising is to our personal demographic profile they amass. He said that our millennial-cohort young adult user base is very different than we are and grew up with the technologies that we saw evolving. He said that we need to be aware that the changes we see now in our young users will be even more magnified in five years. He said that ultimately, delivering information is not what we are about, but rather improving the quality of the questions our patrons ask. He talked about redesigning not only our systems and interfaces, but also our selves and the sorts of services that we're willing to supply.

In conclusion, I feel that this was a very good conference. It presented "Library 2.0" applications and concepts that are at the leading edge of information technology for libraries. It connected exactly with the VALE Open Library System exploration meeting that followed the day after the conference. The idea that the integrated library system has indeed plateaued and in coming years will find its ascendancy has given way to smaller, detachable applications that users can rearrange according to their needs will come very hard to libraries and will take time to fully embrace. The potentials and promise are enormous.

# APPENDIX

## NCSU "Endeca-powered" OPAC search results

Note – LC subject 'facet' showing matches by subject. Topic, genre and format facets on left-side bar.

Catalog Search:    [Start Over](#) Send search to:

**Search 'french revolution':**  
We found **1471** matching items. Limit results to [currently available items](#).

**Narrow By Call Number Range:**

A - General Works (7)	L - Education (8)
B - Philosophy, Psychology, Religion (55)	M - Music (10)
C - Auxiliary Sciences of History (11)	N - Fine Arts (43)
D - History (General) and History of Europe (562)	P - Language and literature (209)
E - History: America (83)	Q - Science (15)
F - America: local history (29)	R - Medicine (10)
G - Geography, Anthropology, Recreation (9)	S - Agriculture (2)
H - Social sciences (113)	T - Technology (5)
J - Political Science (82)	U - Military science (General) (18)
K - Law in general, Comparative and uniform law, Jurispruden ... (8)	Z - Bibliography, Library Science, Information resources (ge ... (12)

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**Narrow Results By:**

**Subject: Topic**

- History (1078)
- Politics and government (188)
- History and criticism (121)
- Influence (87)
- Causes (61)

[Show More ...](#)

**Subject: Genre**

- Biography (75)
- Congresses (38)
- Broadside (32)
- Primary Sources (31)
- Early works to 1800 (28)

[Show More ...](#)

**Format**

- Book (1307)
- Microform (141)
- Online (52)

**Brief View | Full View** **Sort By:**

1. [The French Revolution of 1789 and its impact](#)  
**Published:** c1995.  
**Format:** Book  
**D.H. Hill Library**  
DC158.8 .F695 1995 Stacks (3rd floor) [Capture Image](#) [Print Screen](#) Checked Out

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2. [Intertextual war : Edmund Burke and the French Revolution in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, and James Mackintosh](#)  
**Author:** Blakemore, Steven.  
**Published:** c1997.  
**Format:** Book  
**D.H. Hill Library**  
DC150 .B9 B54 1997 Stacks (3rd floor) Available

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3. [Crisis in representation : Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, and the rewriting of the French Revolution](#)  
**Author:** Blakemore, Steven.  
**Published:** c1997.  
**Format:** Book

University of Rochester CuiPID 3 search result

**CUIPID 3 - Results - Microsoft Internet Explorer**

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites Refresh Print Mail Stop

Address  Go

**Search type:** subject **Search term(s):** austen Results: 1-10 of 353 records.

**Results:** Page [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [10](#) [Next](#) [>>](#)

**Sort by:**

**Narrow Results By:**

**Format**  
[Books](#) (347)  
[Videos, DVDs, etc.](#) (2)

**Subject: Topic**  
[Austen, Jane, 1775-1817.](#) (79)  
[Austen, Jane, 1775-1817 Criticism and interpretation.](#) (77)  
[Women and literature](#)  
[England History 19th century.](#) (26)  
[Novelists, English 19th century Biography.](#) (19)  
[Women in literature.](#) (16)

**Subject: Genre**  
[Love stories.](#) (12)  
[Domestic fiction.](#) (5)  
[Historical fiction.](#) (4)  
[Humorous stories.](#) (4)  
[Mystery fiction.](#) (3)

**Subject: Region**  
[England Social life and customs 19th century Fiction.](#) (6)  
[England Social life and customs 19th century.](#) (6)  
[England Social life and customs 18th century.](#) (5)  
[England Fiction.](#) (4)  
[England In motion pictures.](#) (4)

**Author**  
[Austen, Jane, 1775-1817.](#) (24)  
[Southam, B. C.](#) (7)  
[Le Fave, Deirdre.](#) (5)  
[Chapman, R. W. \(Robert William\), 1881-1960.](#) (5)  
[Johnson, Claudia L.](#) (5)

1. [Jane Austen and private theatricals.](#)  
**Author:** Rosenfeld, Sybil Marion, 1903-  
**Imprint:** 1962  
**Location:** Rhees Stacks  
**Call Number:** PR5 .E58e new ser., v.15  
Availability: **Not checked out**
2. [Jane Austen, a lecture \[by\] A. C. Bradley.](#)  
**Author:** Bradley, A. C. (Andrew Cecil), 1851-1935.  
**Imprint:** 1911  
**Location:** Rhees Stacks  
**Call Number:** PR5 .E58e v.2  
Availability: **Not checked out**
3. [Some characteristics of Jane Austen's style ...](#)  
**Author:** Lascelles, Mary.  
**Imprint:** 1937  
**Location:** Rhees Stacks  
**Call Number:** PR5 .E58e v.22  
Availability: **Not checked out**
4. [Jane Austen : Mansfield Park / edited by Sandie Byrne.](#)  
**Author:**  
**Imprint:** Palgrave Macmillan, New York : c2005.  
**Location:** Rhees Stacks  
**Call Number:** PR4034.M33 J36 2005  
Availability: **Not checked out**
5. [Life after death : widows and the English novel, Defoe to Austen / Karen Bloom Gevirtz.](#)  
**Author:** Gevirtz, Karen Bloom, 1969-  
**Imprint:** University of Delaware Press, Newark : c2005.  
**Location:** Rhees Stacks  
**Call Number:** PR858.W5 G48 2005  
Availability: **Not checked out**
6. [Virginia Woolf's nose : essays on biography / Hermione Lee.](#)

<http://126.151.244.58/index.cfm?page=3546&searchtype=subject&criteria=austen> Internet