Innovative User Group Conference Report

May 15, 2023

The library system NLLS and TRAC uses is called Polaris and is a product of Innovative Interfaces, Inc. An independent user group runs the conference. The company is present and involved in the conference at the request of the user group.

Sessions of note:

Updating Indigenous Subject Headings: applying and maintaining customized terms. Eleanor Crumblehulme of the Saskatchewan Information and Library Services (SILS) consortium presented this session. SILS has taken a huge lead forward in addressing issues with outdated, offensive, and incorrect subject headings relating to records with Indigenous content in their cataloged. They worked closely with the third-party vendor, Marcive. Correcting subject headings in our catalogue relating to Indigenous content has long been a goal of Northern Lights and TRAC. SILS has done some impressive heavy lifting that we can capitalize on. We now have a partner we can turn to as we do this work in our own catalogue.

Vega Discover Overview. Pat Cuff of Innovative Interfaces, inc. presented this session. Vega is the next-generation catalogue interface. It uses Bibframe to provide users with significant search enhancements. The system is not quite ready for prime-time in a consortia environment, but TRAC will keep an eye on this product. The ability to "roll-up" like records so patrons can more easily discover titles in a series or alternate formats will be an exciting future capability should we adopt Vega in the future.

LEAP for Public Services & LEAP for Cataloging. All of our libraries have access to LEAP, a web-based client for accessing the Polaris system. Nearly all functions currently found in the Polaris client are available in the web version. This is exciting news for our network. We currently rely on the Supernet and a closed network to access Polaris. As we move to LEAP, we will rely less on that infrastructure. Eventually, LEAP will supersede the current client; helping libraries transition away from the current client and onto LEAP is important. Where libraries can, they should begin the transition now. LEAP will allow for circulation functions away from library sites, it brings with it greater accessibility features, and in time will dramatically simplify our network requirements.

LXstarter. If there is one super deficiency in the Polaris system it is library notices. Someone cleverly compared them to book ransom notes. The LXstarter product will dramatically improve notices. It isn't quite ready for consortia but it should be soon. The good news, it should not come at any additional cost. TRAC must determine if we can open up customization of notices at the system or branch levels. If we do open customization to the branch level, we'll need to determine a management method. The possibility of professional and customizable notifications is very exciting. We'll be keeping a close watch on this space.

Vendors of note:

Mugo Web. Marigold, Yellowhead, and Peace have all transitioned their library websites to this platform. I had a chance to get to know the product's developer, Peter. The infrastructure he built here, should Northern Lights also adopt them, allows each system to take advantage of any custom web development requested by the other systems. As we review our web hosting environment, joining the rest of TRAC is a compelling choice. Yellowhead migrated most recently and has nothing but praise for the transition. 2024 is the year planned for big website updates, Mugo is looking pretty good at the moment.

Backstage and Marcive. These vendors help with cataloging, and I had some excellent starter conversations on the ability to buy catalog records from them. They had some very interesting ideas (you know, for a price) on cleaning up our database and improving our workflows.

Solus. This is the company that powers our TRACpac App. They've been working for 18 months on some new features. We will get the new app automatically when it is ready. Keeping up in this space is a priority.

People of Note:

Andrew McDonald, is the developer of the CCD tool. This is the tool that will refine our collection development and reduce the overhead in selecting new materials. We've seen some delays in this space as Peace decided to join us in coming on to the system. However, we should be rolling in the coming months. It was exciting to talk to Andrew about potential future options.

Rob Zylstra and the SILS Team, meeting the Saskatchewan team running Polaris for the province was very informative. We talked PowerBI/Kibana, system development, and even remote work. Their five-person team is located in Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina, and Toronto. I was very intrigued by the level of success they've attained with a fully remote team. The team has been remote for more than 5 years.

Tom McNamara, is our Polaris sales representative. It was good to chat with Tom over breakfast. Tom has done a good job of relaying the financial realities of TRAC and its systems to Innovative. We've recently signed a new multi-year contract.