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Summon: research has never been so easy

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'SUMMON. ReSearch has never been so easy!' proclaim the banners and popup posters as this year's intake of new students approach the library at University of Huddersfield.

Eileen Hiller and Alison Sharman explain **how** the implementation of the resource discovery tool, **Summon** from Serials Solutions was successfully achieved and **why** it has already had an impact on usage of library resources.

A Review of Electronic Resources Provision in the library was undertaken during 2009 and identified a vision of the future of electronic resources which included four key objectives:

- **First class search engine**

Within the solution, the search engine must be capable of returning relevant, accurate results and provide a similar experience to users as the internet search engine, Google.

- **The 'one-stop-shop'**

Users should be able to go to a single interface (web page or portal) and be able to access all library resources via a single search but still have the ability to source specific resources if required.

- **Improved value for money**

The solution should provide better value for money in terms of any ongoing maintenance costs by reducing the time taken for administrative and system development tasks by University staff.

- **Improved system management**

The administration of the system should be improved so that issues surrounding access to electronic resources could be managed in a more productive way

Summon, supported by the Serials Solutions 360 Knowledge Base and Link Resolver, was the only product which ticked all of the boxes in the library technical specification. A contract was awarded following a restricted tender exercise to Serials Solutions in August 2009 and implementation began in earnest in September 2009. Progress during the autumn included:

- MARC records; MARC mapping; customisations to the interface; a Repository link and other technical information were provided to the company
- Library Technical Services staff worked together with Serials Solutions and the changeover from the previous link resolver and knowledge base was speedily effected
- The quantity of available material dramatically increased once the switch over to the Serials Solutions link resolver was made, to more than 50 million items
- In the early spring a link to interlibrary loans was added
- An A-Z list of databases in current use was revised and added to the front page of Summon together with an A-Z list of journal titles as a wikki
- New authentication scripts were devised to include a single sign on from the university portal and the library web site
- A feedback questionnaire was added to the Summon front page and publicity material prepared

Finally a 'soft launch' took place at the University Research Festival in March. Summon was then available to academic staff, researchers and students in a beta version, running alongside the existing MetaLib system until July, when Summon became the sole search engine.

This transitional period enabled users to give feedback, which has been extraordinarily positive. PHD student, Abdul Jabbar commented, "Summon is bloody brilliant. It blows Metalib out of the water! It gives fast, efficient and above all relevant research results." As a father of 2 small children, Learning Technologist; Part-time Lecturer and PHD student; Abdul has a busy life. It was the timesaving element of Summon that particularly impressed him: "I found on Summon in 2 days what would have taken 2 weeks on Metalib."

These comments were used in internal publicity in university student and staff newsletters.

Some academics were reticent about the new product as they were very familiar and comfortable with the databases in their subject area. However, once having seen the product demonstrated, their fears were overcome. One business lecturer admitted he was completely won over.

Focus groups were also held during this transitional period, which enabled library staff to understand the benefits of using Summon in their information literacy skills sessions. In most cases the time saved in demonstrating the use of a variety of databases could be utilised in developing students' information searching skills. Even where the subject required the use of specialist databases e.g. nursing or law, these tools were clearly made available on the Summon front page to facilitate ease of access.

Finally a huge publicity campaign was initiated for the start of term, including banners on the university campus, and life size posters in university school entrances as well as in the library foyer. Inspiration was acquired from the marketing campaign used by Arizona State University to promote Summon within their institution. Permission was sought to use and adapt two of their marketing slogans. The two slogans used emphasised the benefits of the product to both undergraduates and to university researchers:

Summon "Research has never been so easy"

and

Summon "A serious Research engine"

At freshers' fayre and in the library, pens and shopping bags were provided, the bags with the slogan:

Summon "Research in the bag"

Early indications are showing that all of this careful planning, consultation to overcome any perceived problems; and marketing, have contributed to increases in usage of library resources. Access logs for September/October 2010 show a five fold increase in usage from the same period in 2009.

September/October 2009 47816

September/October 2010 237413

It appears students **are** using Summon as their first search rather than going directly to native database interfaces, although we still need to check Counter Statistics for individual resources. There is however much still to do. More qualitative data is being sought via further focus groups for researchers; via feedback from information literacy sessions and more analysis of search results. The Universities of Northumbria and Huddersfield have secured joint funding from the JISC for a case study evaluating the implementation of Summon. This includes sharing any code developed as part of the implementation as well as the methodology used in the focus groups with the wider higher education community.

There is also much to feel positive about. Serials Solutions are continuing to develop the product, adding more content and features such as a 'Database Recommender' and Web of Science citations.

Dave Pattern, University of Huddersfield systems manager, has added a number of features locally including:

- a link to an inter library loan form where content is not available
- web 2 features, such as a journal article recommender
- cosmetic rearrangement of screens to improve usability
- a wiki which includes a list of locally subscribed databases and an A-Z list of journals

Above all else, however it appears that students love it - and that of course, except that better use of library resources may lead to higher student attainment, is all that matters!

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