

Scott Garrison on putting the Summon™ unified discovery service to work in Western Michigan University Library...

BUILDING A 21ST CENTURY LIBRARY



Western Michigan University brings the future forward

Western Michigan University (WMU) Libraries had a 21st Century problem: its 20th Century catalog wasn't meeting user or library needs. The growing wealth of the library's resources was not exposed or easy to find. Pinpointing the right piece of research required multiple searches – a process that trips up and intimidates students.

Other libraries were adopting federated search, but WMU found it wouldn't work for its vast collection, filled with hundreds of databases. "We held off on federated search because it wasn't a good match for our library," says Scott Garrison, Associate Dean for Public Services and Technology. "But, while we waited, our aging catalog got even older."

The wait is over at WMU as the library's search interface is propelled headlong into the future. Later this summer, the Library will launch the **Summon** unified discovery service, a technology breakthrough from Serials Solutions that provides single search box access to the breadth of the library's collection. Relevant items – regardless of format – are returned in a single results list that allows users to experience the richness of the library's resources simply.

"You can just put in [the search box] a string of words without any Boolean operators and get useful content," says Garrison. "Both basic and advanced searching look and feel much more like Google, which users have come to expect."

The launch of the Summon service is the second stage of the library's discovery strategy. To update the OPAC, WMU has already adopted VuFind, which will interface seamlessly with the **Summon** service. Garrison likes VuFind's open source underpinnings, faceted searching, and the fact that it's designed by libraries for libraries. However, he says the library was still missing a true discovery layer that would get users into the full scope of the library's holdings beyond just the catalog, without relying on federated search.

Enter the Summon service. With its centralized index of pre-harvested content – nearly half a billion records at last count – it delivers a lightning-fast search result in true relevancy ranked order. "It's a giant pre-coordinated index with great scholarly content, from such sources as ProQuest, Gale, IEEE, Alexander Street Press, and Springer. We have all this great stuff that was hard to get to, but now users will find it much more easily," says Garrison.

Indeed, more than 4,800 content providers are represented in the **Summon** service's growing index of data. Providers, intrigued by the service's ability to surface data in the right context, continue to sign on, creating an ever-growing content pool. Their participation enables Serials Solutions to stay ahead of rapid publication schedules and allows libraries to enjoy the service with little maintenance by staff.

The speed, simplicity, and sophistication of the **Summon** service are the icing on the cake for Garrison. He's intrigued with a number of the service's features. Like VuFind, the **Summon** service is built with set of Open APIs that allows Garrison and Libraries staff "to leverage the most valuable parts of the metadata we've so painstakingly built and maintained over decades." Further, its facets allow users to very simply narrow or broaden their searches. "Essentially, it lets you include or exclude terms, topics, dates, languages, and more, to get more relevant information faster. With a few clicks, you can go from 160,000 to 52 hits, to zoom in on what you're after," says Garrison.

Garrison is excited by the prospects of the library's new 21st Century face to the world. At WMU's Day at the Capitol in Lansing in May, he showed off the technology to university and state leaders. "This approach, using Apache Solr indexing and open APIs, is powerful, state-of-the-art stuff," he says. "We're ready to blow some minds with this."

Visit the Western Michigan University Libraries at www.wmich.edu/library/.

Learn more about the **Summon** unified discovery service at ALA by visiting Serials Solutions booth #3026. Or visit www.serialssolutions.com/summon. Serials Solutions is a ProQuest company.

Hear more from early library partners and adopters of Summon unified discovery service in the free Webcast series, "Returning the Researcher to the Library," hosted by Serials Solutions and *Library Journal*. Parts 1 and 2 of the series are archived at www.libraryjournal.com/nextgenuser. Parts 3 and 4 will be Webcast in Fall 2009.



Summon™
Unified Discovery Service

One search box... your library discovered.