

OPAC SUBCOMMITTEE QUARTERLY REPORT

November 15, 2006

Rich Bennett

SUL PSPC OPAC Subcommittee Chair

On November 8th a message was sent to the OPAC Subcommittee indicating that FCLA was ready for our group to begin looking at the Endeca OPAC interface they have been working on. The North Carolina State University Endeca catalog at <http://www2.lib.ncsu.edu/catalog/> has been used as their development model; NCSU shared much of their setup work with FCLA enabling them to progress this far rather rapidly.

Following FCLA's installation of some additional memory to the Endeca server in early November to improve response time performance that had been observed, the entire database (over 6,670,000 records) is available for our initial review. We are first looking at the Union Catalog view for the following reasons:

1. At this time the thinking is that the first public use of Endeca will be to fill this need/desire for a union catalog (since there is currently no union catalog for our Aleph OPAC data).
2. Focusing on this will have us all looking at (and discussing) precisely the same thing while we get used to how this new approach to discovering and accessing our library catalog records will work.
3. Problems identified and corrected in the Union Catalog will likely apply automatically to the individual SUL views as well.

After a short period to familiarize ourselves with how the system works and identify (and possibly have FCLA solve) any significant problems, we'll be announcing it's availability to the LIBOPAC-L listserv where other SUL colleagues that have expressed an interest in this development can also participate in the discussion. There are now 171 SUL staff signed up for LIBOPAC-L; this includes all PSPC and OPAC Subcommittee members, key FCLA staff involved with the Endeca and Aleph OPAC interfaces, as well as many more individuals that have asked to be on this list. We will aim to centralize OPAC development discussions in this single forum as much as possible.

Initial response from the OPAC Subcommittee members that have provided feedback so far has been very positive about the potential for users being able to discover library resources using this "guided navigation" approach more easily. Several questions asked -- and observations (and potential problems) reported -- are now being researched.

As we are familiarizing ourselves with the Endeca OPAC, two tools to help introduce staff to the interface are in the process of being developed that should be available when we introduce other SUL staff to Endeca.

1. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page
2. An introductory tutorial -- Providing a structured approach to examining this new way of accessing library records should be helpful.

At the moment it seems likely to me (as chair) that we will be announcing the availability of the Endeca Union Catalog to LIBOPAC-L by December 1st.

There have not yet been any discussions about how quickly we might be ready to introduce the Endeca interface to library users. We may want to work toward an initial release early in Spring Semester -- perhaps just of the Union Catalog (especially since its introduction will fill a need since there is not currently an Aleph Union Catalog for the SUL).

Prior to any release to the public we will want to have identified any significant problems; this would involve some "stress testing" during which we would ask many SUL staff to participate during selected periods so we can approximate the reality of many people performing searches concurrently. It seems important for the system response time to be fast when introduced.

At the moment, FCLA is not capturing any new or updated Aleph records daily; the most recent update (as of 11/15/06) was done on November 2, 2006. It may seem best to delay introduction of any of the individual SUL views until the routines are in place for daily data updates.

There will be much to discuss as we move forward with planning for initial implementation of -- and eventual dependence on -- Endeca as our primary (or only) OPAC user interface. It's exciting to now have something concrete on which to base our discussions!