

## OPAC Round Table Discussion

NAAUG Annual Meeting  
University of Iowa  
June 1, 2003

Between 40 and 50 persons attended the session that was facilitated by Doug Archer, outgoing chair of the 2003 OPAC Enhancement Working Group.

The first item of business was a brief description of the enhancement process followed by a call for volunteers for next years Working Group. Several people volunteered and all available sign-up forms were distributed. During the presentation it was noted that two OPAC enhancements (persistent search statements and improvements to the Basket display) were voted in during the annual NAAUG institutional balloting.

Several people expressed concern that the enhancement process may work well for minor functional enhancements but does not do so for the larger issues -- where do they fit? Ezra Swartz, Ex Libris's OPAC designer, spoke up and indicated that he had come to the meeting for just this purpose and intended to turn his attention to the WEB OPAC as he completed work on the GUI interface redesign.

Ezra indicated that he had previously been told that there was no real need to work on the WEB OPAC design because people were going to customize it anyway. Attendees were quick to point out the need for a better out of the box design from which local customization could begin. Some of issues raised and discussed were:

- \* the WEB OPAC be standards compliant
- \* there's only so much time and expertise -- to design by EL and to customize by local institutions
- \* the market share of older browsers is diminishing
- \* Mozilla as one newer browser deserving testing
- \* it's unclear which new browsers are worth spending time on
- \* the trend is to be standards compliant

To indicate how EL is trying to think freshly (out of the box) Ezra mentioned the idea of using FLASH instead of HTML. While the idea provoked a lot of discussion and a great deal of opposition especially due to the proprietary nature of a program such as FLASH, it was generally encouraging to learn that EL was looking at the issues (especially the new means of catalog access such as PDAs, etc.) and seeking our input.

There was a discussion of the heavy use of JavaScript. Many do use it but wish they didn't have to in order to achieve a customized local installation. Ezra noted that people have come to expect a rich experience with the WEB and are beginning to expect the same rich experience with the library catalog. The environment is changing.

UC Davis indicated that they are doing extensive usability testing. Their biggest problem is getting a sufficient number of testers. People were much in favor of sharing test results. MIT noted that they were posting their results to the NAAUG list and that their tests are on the WEB.

Several people note how important it is to record both what people say they prefer and what they actually do which is successful.

Lastly, it was suggested that the various insights, suggestions, test results, etc. of our various institutions should be collected and Ezra expressed a strong interest in seeing them. Sacha (Alexander) Jerabek <[Alexander.jerabek@MCGILL.CA](mailto:Alexander.jerabek@MCGILL.CA)> of Magill volunteered to be the go between which was endorsed by those present.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Archer

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