

Dear MLA:

The Steering Committees of the International Group of Ex Libris Users (IGeLU) and Ex Libris Users of North America (ELUNA), represent a membership of over 4,000 institutions worldwide that use Ex Libris products. Our mission is to advocate for our members as we strive to optimize the value of the library for its users.

As librarians, we value freedom of choice and access, which naturally extends to how each institution makes licensed and purchased content available to its patrons. We believe it is critical that content providers maintain a neutral position and that all institutions are able to use their discovery products of choice.

Moreover, we need to ensure that our substantial investment (money and labor) in "content" is fully integrated into our library systems to actively encourage and facilitate its use. In short, it is not productive for providers to limit institutions, which in turn forces patrons to abandon the primary and recommended search platform in order to access material from limited, subject specific resources, simply because it is more convenient for the vendor.

After thoroughly reviewing your statement regarding the decision to advocate for EBSCO and the "sole use" of EDS for discovery of MLA content, we fail to understand, nor agree with, the logic behind it. ELUNA and IGeLU's substantial international member community uses a diverse array of discovery products besides EDS, including: Primo, Summon and WorldCat Local / WorldCat Discovery, Blacklight (open source), and others. This equates to thousands of institutions, representing millions of users that are not using EBSCO's discovery and, thus, will most certainly be negatively impacted. Our organizations have first-hand experience with the efficiency and effectiveness of accessing electronic resources within several of these discovery environments, as such, we request an opportunity to discuss some of the complaints you noted in the MLA announcement.

We would also like to ask if MLA has had any detailed discussions with vendors other than EBSCO - e.g. Ex Libris, ProQuest, OCLC (WorldCat), SirsiDynix, Innovative Interfaces, etc. - in order to address the performance issues cited in your announcement. If not, our organizations are uniquely poised and willing to facilitate or contribute to these discussions in any way.

ELUNA and IGeLU are confident it is not MLA's intention to create problems for its users or to mandate access options for institutions. However, your actions are in fact punitive for customers who do not use EBSCO EDS for discovery. Is it your intention to require current and future customers that they must select EDS, as opposed to any other discovery product on the market? If so, we would find that an alarming shift in business philosophy that would not only impact the academic/research industry, but also considered to be an ill-thought out strategy that will ultimately harm your current and future customer base. We further believe MLA underestimates the size of its

customer base that exists outside of both the EDS discovery product and the EBSCO database platform.

Further, we are dismayed and disappointed by the decision to limit discovery to EDS of its own customer's content that libraries have purchased from MLA. This action goes against the industry tenet that electronic content should be independent of discovery platforms and that institutions should be able to discover that content via discovery products of their own choosing.

Ironically and appropriately, this industry position was supported by Barbara Chen (representing MLA) at the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) Open Discovery Initiative Success Stories Event (Jan. 28, 2015) when she stated: "Database producers need to provide as many access points to their data as possible." Therefore, despite MLA's previous statements, it has now embarked on a path that actually limits access to MLA resources by making it more difficult to find and less available to users. We, as well as our members, are deeply concerned why MLA would make such a 180 degree turnabout on an established industry position and we request an opportunity to discuss the factors that led to such a change.

It is also important to note NISO has clearly stated its position on access and discoverability of content. We, as well as content providers with whom we have communicated with in the past, fully endorse NISO's RP-19-2014 Open Discovery Initiative (ODI): Promoting Transparency in Discovery and to our knowledge. MLA's current turnabout on this philosophy appears to have been made without any outside consultation. Specifically, section 3.2.1.1, indicates:

3.2.1.1 General Requirements

1. Content providers should make available to discovery service providers core metadata, and underlying full-text/original content for complete offerings, for the purposes of indexing to meet licensed customers' and authenticated end users' needs.
2. To this aim, all content providers should make available to discovery service providers, at a minimum, the core set of metadata elements (see 3.2.1.2) for each item they submit for indexing.
3. Content providers should provide the content item (full text, transcript, etc.) and additional descriptive content (abstract/description and controlled and/or uncontrolled keywords) (see 3.2.1.3), for as much of their content as possible.

(Source: http://www.niso.org/apps/group_public/download.php/14820/rp-19-2014_ODI.pdf).

ELUNA and IGeLU's user communities consider this an incredibly critical issue and therefore, would like to have an open discussion with MLA and include the Chairs of both the ELUNA and IGeLU Steering Committees.

We call on MLA to support the tenets of the Open Discovery Initiative (ODI) and to continue support MLA's numerous non-EBSCO customers.

Please let us know at your earliest convenience how we might arrange a timely and important discussion on behalf of our members that conforms to the spirit of the ODI and facilitates mutually effective partnerships between MLA and thousands of libraries.

Respectfully,

Michael North : Chair, Ex Libris Users of North America (ELUNA)

David Allen : Chair, International Group of Ex Libris Users (IGeLU)