

**North American Aleph Users Group
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Union Catalog Round Table

Facilitator: Michelle Newberry, Florida Center for Library Automation

Recorder: Katherine Marschall, Saint Mary's College/Michiana Academic Library Consortium

As everyone introduced themselves, it became clear that there are multiple configurations of Aleph for consortium and union catalogs. From Cologne, Germany's large installation that also functions as a bibliographic utility for Germany to the 4 library consortia in northern Indiana, no two systems had the same configuration. Approximately 15 people were present, representing some 8 different installations. Some systems ran a separate union catalog, uploading records from the individual catalogs, some systems share one or more files, and some ran parallel, but separate catalogs on a single server, sharing only the maintenance.

Maryland had a 'true' union catalog with a single bibliographic record, single admin file, single patron file, and multiple holdings. They use a 'super holdings' record to retain information unique to an individual library, such as important local notes from the bibliographic record. By using logical bases, the individual libraries are able to search and display their own collections. The union catalog adds the individual libraries' holdings to OCLC, so that interlibrary loan requests can still be processed directly by the individual libraries. This installation was very difficult to set up, since it involved working out compromises between all the libraries, but has advantages in maintenance, since there are fewer iterations of data to control.

Germany's system used a single bibliographic record, and multiple holdings records. The union catalog can be used as a web OPAC, and ILL requests can be automated, and patron generated. Some libraries are running their own OPAC software, or different versions of Aleph. Each institution can search the main catalog and download records; if they don't find a record, they catalog the item in the main catalog and then download that record. This system was started in the early 1970s and consciously modeled after OCLC.

South Dakota united libraries of various sizes and backgrounds: medical libraries, university libraries, and libraries for Native America schools, as well as military libraries. They had all migrated from a union catalog running on another software package. They had to be particularly sensitive to the more careful requirements for security of some information for the military libraries. (For example, they could not use a single patron file.) Each library in the system has its own bibliographic records with their local information and separate patron files. They use what has been called the 'virtual union catalog', where a search can be run on the entire system, and de-duped on the fly.

Florida had similar considerations; there it is considered illegal to share the patron database. (Local interpretation of state privacy laws) Florida is running a union catalog of 11 different systems, including 2 ARL libraries, 3 medical libraries, and 4 law libraries.

Some of the individual libraries are well established and some are new. Some libraries requested features that would work in a single configuration, others demand a different configuration. The solution for them was to use an 'umbrella record' as the designated union record, and filter what the patron sees in 'their' catalog based on 'own' fields. They maintain a single copy of authority files, and local files only for exceptions, such as locally created authority records, or records without an LCCN.

SUNY runs what is surely one of the more complicated installations, comprising some 60 libraries, and 18 bases in a shared server environment with separate catalogs. The union catalog is created with automated timed batch loads from the individual catalogs. The goal will be a union catalog of 14 million records. Records to be loaded have to be extracted from the local databases, since some local records are not to be up loaded. (For example, one library uses brief catalog records to keep track of keys!) Multiple 852s are used to keep track of individual holdings, a bibliographic record will not be uploaded if it does not have a holdings records linked, and it can not be deleted as long as there is one 852 linked to the record. They also wanted to use patron initiated holds and intercampus interlibrary loans and use single admin file for this purpose. They tried to use the circulation module to do this, but it has not been very successful. They were wondering whether using the ILL module would work better, or whether patron placed holds worked better in version 16.