UCLA Library Comments on the Bibliographic Services Task Force Report
3/31/06

These UCLA Library comments reflect broad input from the library staff.   The BSTF report was discussed widely in standing committees and councils, in individual library units, in senior management meetings, and in two open staff meetings. The Library's senior management team wrote this summary, amalgamating input from all of these campus discussions.

1. *Which 3-5 of the 15 major headings do you think are the most important for UC to address?*
   Choosing isolated recommendations to endorse has been difficult because of the interdependencies among many of the proposals, and also because the criteria for selection were not defined. The choices below were those which resonated with the most people in the Library and we believe would have the most far-reaching potential for positive change. We did not include items that are self-evidently good ideas, such as IV (support continuous improvement), preferring to spend our "votes" on less obvious choices.   We note also that the recommendations in sections II and III all seemed to us infrastructure changes that would probably be required in order to implement the recommendations in section I. As such, you could consider our high ranking for Section I recommendations by extension to reflect support for much of II and III.

   Top 5 recommendations from UCLA
   II.1   Create a single catalog interface for all of UC
   I.6   Deliver bibliographic services where the users are
   I.1   Provide users with direct access to item
   I.4   Offer alternative actions for failed or suspect searches
   I.5   Offer better navigation of large sets of search results

   Other highly ranked recommendations
   I.8   Better searching of non-Roman materials
   II.2   Support searching across the entire bibliographic information space
   III.1   Re-architect cataloging workflow
   I.2   Provide recommender features
   I.7   Provide relevance ranking and leverage full text

   Our overall suggestion is that the UC Libraries not restrict themselves to an arbitrary number of headings to be addressed.   For some of the recommendations, there will be good arguments not to pursue. For the rest, UC should consider moving forward on all of the recommendations, in a logical phased approach. In the short term, focus on the low-hanging fruit, items that are easy to implement and that are not dependent on other recommendations. In the longer term, pursue those with the highest impact after careful cost/benefit analysis.

2. For each of the 3-5 major headings selected above, which sub-recommendations should be given the highest priority; that is, which do you think UC should address first and why?

II.1   Create a single catalog interface for all of UC
    II.1.a   Create a single catalog interface.
        Important to give users a single place to go and to provide a common tool for managing shared collections. Challenging to deal effectively with non-textual resources. Important to be able to provide multiple "views" within the single catalog: limit to a local campus or library; interfaces and collection subsets tailored to different user groups such as undergraduates, faculty, citizens of California, and external research partners.

I.6   Deliver bibliographic services where the users are
    I.6.a   Integrate library content and services into campus virtual learning environments/course management systems
        This is where our undergraduate users are, our faculty expect them to be there and we need to take up residence in this space. Could be done at various levels of complexity, evolutionary implemention. Dependent on campus having a single CMS or all of the CMS systems having a standard interface, or the energy required to pursue may be too great.

    I.6.b   Embed library content and services into institutional portals
        If only institutional portals, would be lower priority. Should pursue links to discipline portals as well.

    I.6.c   Expose metadata to external search engines.
        Many of our users are on commercial search engines more often than library systems, and some to the exclusion of library systems.. If we can "do Google" but do it better with precision, results, and recall then we are giving what our users want and need. Because quite a few potential users are on commercial search engines

    I.6.d   Make our digital & unique collections available to all of UC and beyond
        Need to eliminate our "cabinets of curiosity," increase the use of these materials

I.1   Provide users with direct access to item
    I.1.a   Have UC eLinks take you to a logical default choice.
        In most cases, the full text link will be the right choice, and we should take users to it as quickly and conveniently as possible.

I.4   Offer alternative actions for failed or suspect searches
    I.4.a   Assess user's input for spelling errors, offer alternatives
        Would be a great improvement if it could be implemented effectively in a large multi-lingual research database.   If can

only apply to English language entries, would be less useful and could also be a negative unless it could reliably identify when the search entries were English.

  I.4.b Offer constructive suggestions for zero-results searches
    A very important issue if we are serious about having a user focus. The challenge will be to craft suggestions that are appropriate for sophisticated scholarly research. Options should leverage our rich existing metadata

I.5 Offer better navigation of large sets of search results

  I.5.a Implement FRBR concepts.
    Allows works to be grouped together.   Critical to better organize large retrieval sets in the online catalog. High degree of promise given the RedLightGreen example. Good results would be available even before the bibliographic data is corrected.

  I.5.b Follow linking fields in serial records to present variant titles
    It is low hanging fruit; though it affects a small amount of records, anything to make it easier to trace serials would be welcome to both users and staff

  I.5.c Implement faceted browsing
    Systems such as OpenWorldCat and subject databases do this already in many helpful ways. Faceted browsing is something we can offer in federated searching across many types of bibliographic data. The success of faceted browsing will depend on the quality of the metadata, will require continued investment in quality metadata for new records and may require enhancement of existing records.

Are there any recommendations that you think should be added? Why?
  Ensure bibliographic services are ADA compliant
  Provide rights metadata

Are there any recommendations that you think should NOT be pursued? Why not?
III.2.c Consider using controlled vocabularies only for name, uniform title, date, and place, and abandoning the use of controlled vocabularies for topical subjects; consider whether automated enriched metadata such as TOC, indexes can become surrogates for subject headings and classification for retrieval.
    This suggestion models the design principle in Appendix C to "Evaluate controlled vocabulary and authority control approaches and consider where the biggest value lies."   We agree that that there is a value in looking at all of our metadata practices, to be sure that their benefit still justifies their cost. Our analysis concludes, though, that we should NOT abandon controlled vocabularies for topical subjects, since authorized subject headings offer one of the important "value adds" we bring to the

information space. Authorized headings for subjects are valuable from the public service view, since we teach people to go from keyword to subject searching to enhance searching and retrieve quality results.   Research studies of online searching behavior support the value of controlled vocabulary for subjects when systems can present them properly. Also, it would be very difficult to implement some of the features suggested in the rest of the report (such as recommender features, alternative suggestions after zero results, faceted browsing, and FAST) without authority controlled subject headings.

3. *If we decide to create a single public catalog interface for all of UC, which of the 2 options that the Task Force analyzed would you recommend, and why?*
   We agree that UC should aggressively pursue a single public catalog interface, but we would need more clarification to make a well-thought-out decision about which option to recommend. It is difficult to recommend one over the other in the absence of selection criteria and principles, and an evaluation of the costs and benefits of each option.   Creating a single UC OPAC system would give us greater control but could be expensive and difficult to sustain. On the other hand, outsourcing the work to Google is appealing because of its familiarity to users and because of the benefit to our users from collaboration and partnership, but some expressed concern that the public interfaces currently on the market may not be flexible enough for a research collection. If we do pursue the option of creating a single catalog interface within UC, we recommend that it be open source and developed in partnership with other research libraries.

   If you agree that we should create a single point of entry for our users, are there other options we should consider?
   Consider a partnership with external providers in lieu of complete outsourcing, has the potential to give us the best of both options.

   If you disagree that we should create a single point of entry for our users, what alternative action would you recommend?
   Do not disagree

4. *a. Which of the 3 organization options for re-architecting cataloging workflow to view UC cataloging as a single enterprise would you recommend, and why?*
   We agree that UC needs a shared cataloging environment, in which decisions are made jointly, based on shared professional principles. The organization options presented are not mutually exclusive and options 1 and 3 could be combined – coordination for some proportion of cataloging work and outsourcing for as much of the standard cataloging work as is cost effective. In moving to a shared cataloging environment, we need to be careful not to compromise the unique needs of specialized materials and collections.

We do NOT recommend consolidating cataloging into one or two centers. This option would adversely affect our ability to meet local priorities, to provide timely cataloging if material itself must be shipped, to maintain local metadata expertise for assisting public service staff and advising campus digital projects, and to respond to rush processing needs such as reserves.

b. Which of the 3 organization options for re-architecting cataloging workflow to view UC cataloging as a single enterprise would you recommend, and why?

A single ILS would offer the cleanest solution though we would need to carefully evaluate feasibility of this option. There are many tricky implementation issues to be addressed, including links to campus financial systems and directory services, supporting holdings information for a very large number of locations, and the cumbersome nature of working within an enormous database. We would also lose the current ability for Melvyl and the local ILS to serve as backup systems for each other, thus putting all of our eggs in one basket.

If a single ILS is not feasible, or if it will take a long time to implement, a shared single file would be a viable interim solution. It should be noted, though, that merging records into a single file could be problematic for rare book records.

We do NOT recommend relying on OCLC as the database of record. The interconnection between OCLC bib records and local holdings, items, orders is unproven, as are links to circ status and the provision of user-initiated services like renewals, recalls, etc. For audit trail reasons, we probably would need a copy of the relevant WorldCat record stored locally and linked to our order record. Local edits for special features of special collection materials need to be recorded somewhere; it is futuristic to imagine that data could reside in OCLC's implementation of the MARC holdings format and be indexed there. Some records (analytics from vendors) and parts of records (TOC data, for example) are proprietary, and we do not (yet) have permission to store that data in WorldCat. If we merely want automatic access to the latest copy of each WorldCat record used within UC, then we could incorporate this in one of the above options

5. *Are there any other comments or suggestions you have with regard to the next steps that should be taken in following up on the recommendations of the report?*

Talking to users is an important follow on step that should take place before making final decisions on which recommendations to implement.

Before final decisions are made about which recommendations to pursue, the University Librarians should agree on a shared set of assumptions and a

shared set of criteria to govern the choices.   Draft assumptions and criteria can be intuited from the design principles in Appendix C. Other input that could inform the assumptions and criteria:

- All of the services scenarios in the report feature undergraduate students, but our bibliographic systems must address the need of scholars. Comprehensive, well-organized access to sometimes rare and obscure materials is not attempted by any other provider of bibliographic services, and so is our most important "value add." In making decisions about our bibliographic services, remember this unique duty and role of research libraries.
- We should agree on a common definition of the ideal user experience we should provide. To do so, we must also define our user categories (Faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, library staff? Users by discipline? Others?), since we may need to define a different user experience for each category.
- We should consider how to appropriately surface the complexity of a research collection to our users while still making our systems intuitive to use. How can we create systems that allow for sophisticated research, but are still accessible and convenient to use?
- We need to balance ease of implementation with cost/benefit. When do we go for the low hanging fruit, and when do we invest instead in high cost/high impact projects?

The assumptions and criteria should also define measurement criteria against which the enhancements will be assessed. After making any change, we should be able to answer the questions:
(1) Are our users better off now that the change has been made?
(2) Are staff better off (e.g., able to work more productively)?

The recommendations in Section I (Enhancing Search and Retrieval) have strong implications for the design and delivery of information, reference and research services on our campuses and system-wide. There are several underlying issues re: user services that should be referred to HOPS for discussion. For example, what do the Task Force's recommendations in this area suggest for the future for information literacy instruction? How might these recommendations impact the design and delivery of reference services? How might they impact the design and delivery of our Web space and our Web services - - locally or UC-wide?   HOPS could develop its own set of scenario planning exercises to complement those provided in the report.

Implementation planning should address concerns as well as perceived benefits. Implementers should take care to solicit & track disadvantages as well as advantages & look for ways to address concerns.

We must craft a compelling story for users and campus administration, to generate support and funding for the major resource investment needed to transform our bibliographic services.

6. *Is there anything else you think UC should be doing in pursuit of improving bibliographic services?*

The BSTF report does not sufficiently address the role of authority records in bibliographic services. Authority records are already an essential part of providing good bibliographic services, and they have the potential for playing an increasingly central role. "FRBRization" of our catalogs will rely on authority records. There are international developments that should make authority records even more valuable than they are now for the efficient provision of well-organized access to materials. The current and potential uses of authority records should be thoroughly explored and considered as additional high-impact changes to pursue.

The BSTF report identifies a lot of new tasks that libraries need to take on in responding to user needs. It will not be enough to examine cataloging and technical services workflow alone to free up resources to address this new work. Every functional area in libraries should be looked at for work that could be done differently or discontinued.