

# Technically Speaking

**2005: Confirming the Promise of 2004**

**by Andrew K. Pace**

**T**his report from the Exhibit Hall of the ALA Midwinter Meeting will try to stick to themes, rather than verbose details about specific vendor offerings. It's affirming to see so many of the promises from last summer's Annual Conference in Orlando come to fruition on the vendor floor in Boston. This column could have easily been filled with those fruits, punctuated with the flavor of so many colorful press releases. Press packets were filled to overflowing this winter with some grand (and grandiose) announcements.

Making sense of new products, vendor changes, alliances, and acquisitions is a daunting task for a single column. This month I will highlight three themes in evidence at the Exhibit Hall.

## *Nostalgia*

Who isn't nostalgic once in a while? Luddites long for the days before computers, technophiles wax poetic about the days of 64K hard drives and 300-baud modems, and librarians everywhere recall those mythical library patrons and researchers who knew exactly how to use a library and were forever grateful for the bountiful resources provided for their consumption.

But nostalgia and technology are not mutually exclusive. In fact, I'm calling one trend the nostalgic application of library automation. Rather than introducing a dozen new products with bells and whistles, several



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Curtis Compton

**With Midwinter attendance totaling 13,232, the exhibit halls enjoyed heavy traffic despite the Hynes Convention Center's split-level arrangement.**

vendors are going back to basics.

Raising the bar on user-centered design, **Endeavor Information Systems** announced a new usability initiative intended to create clear and simple interfaces for public and staff users of the Voyager ILS. As part of an ongoing collaboration with their parent company, they are capitalizing on Elsevier's User Centered Design Team and building on the experience gained from usability testing on **Encompass**, Endeavor hopes to improve both the end-user experience and patron satisfaction.

Arguably first to market with a reinvented OPAC, **TLC** proudly demonstrated its own improvements to the traditional online catalog. Technology from search and discovery software companies **MediaLab** and **Endeca** (*AL*, Feb., p. 48–49) are completely reshaping the look and feel of the traditional online catalog for a more graphically oriented and commercially savvy patron base, who have come to expect more from

an online resource discovery experience. **VTLS** has also announced a partnership with **MediaLab** to distribute **Aquabrowser** as part of its **Vectors** portal. **Sirsi** launched **Rooms 2.0**—revamped as an “enterprise portal solution”—for one-stop library resources and services.

Not to be outdone in the OPAC arena, several online databases are also rethinking their searches. Several features of faceted searching—the ability to narrow or sharpen searches using different elements from a record's metadata—can be found in several of Elsevier's new product offerings, including **Engineering Village 2**, the free **Scirus** search engine ([www.scirus.com](http://www.scirus.com)), and Elsevier's latest offering, **Scopus**. Endeavor's new usability engineering will certainly incorporate some of the functionality found in other Elsevier products. One wonders how long it will be before the Elsevier name is used interchangeably for Endeavor.

Of course, search and discovery

is only the first step in the traditional library experience. Self-checkout and RFID have gone from marginal technologies to mainstream in just a few years. Self-checkout stations certainly don't look like they used to. Bulky and clumsy hardware has been replaced by ergonomic and aesthetically pleasing machines like the new V-Series system from 3M.

Notable on the floor were **Libramation's** stackable multiformat self-checkout stations, with intuitive interfaces and quick receipting. Libramation is also reportedly working with **Comprise Technologies** to devise a method for online payment from self-checkout stations. Comprise's SAM continues to integrate computer-session management, cash handling, and print-recovery systems in a comprehensive access-management system.

TLC is also getting into better PC management with its distribution of **Reclaim It** (from **Leapfrog Software**), an alternative to **Symantec's** Ghost software for system-image recovery, an increasing problem for libraries battling corrupt files, spyware, and malicious internet attacks on public computers.

**Bibliotheca**, the largest RFID company in Europe, is enjoying some success with its newer **BiblioChip** for CD and DVD media, as well as with its partnerships in North America, namely with **Bibliomondo**, **Dynix**, and **Sirsi**. Similarly, **Checkpoint Systems** has introduced **DiscMate** for securing and circulating DVDs and CDs. Multiple format checkouts are no longer the barrier to self-checkout stations that they used to be.

### *Content still reigns*

Make no mistake, there's still a lot of new—and newly packaged—content out there. While we tend to think of library automation as a way to enable access to content, the lines between technology and content are increasingly blurring.

Following its efforts to reorganize, **Swets Information Services**



Curtis Campion

### **The Harvard Glee Club Lite performs a cappella during the exhibits opening reception.**

has expanded its content with several new publisher partnerships that include Peter Publishers, PNG, New Statesman, and others. They have also branded **Openly Informatics' lCate** OpenURL resolver as **Swets-Wise Linker**, improving **Swets**' links to local library holdings.

**Thomson Scientific's** ISI Web of Knowledge is also expanding. Its coverage now includes **Zoological Record**, as well as direct links to over 800,000 articles in the **Highwire Free Archive**. The aforementioned **Scopus** is also getting a lot of attention from academic librarians. Touted as the "world's largest abstract and indexing database," **Scopus** is a direct challenge to not only **ISI's** Web of Knowledge, but to several small abstract-and-index providers on the market.

In a major power play for content, **Google** announced that it will partner with **Harvard University**, **Stanford University**, **University of Michigan**, **Oxford University**, and the **New York Public Library** to digitize portions of their holdings (see p. 40–43). **Google's** ambitious plan to digitize millions of volumes over the next several years has sparked more conversation than there is room for in this column. But while **Google** made its mark on the conference in Boston, more interesting is the effect **Google Print** has

had on library reaction to e-book content. Still hotly debated less than a year ago, e-books now present themselves as the sine qua non of the library collection. Several companies seem poised to capitalize on—lest they be overshadowed by—the grandiose plans of **Google**.

**Ebrary** can boast over 500 library clients in 60 countries, while also adding 20 new publishing partners and boosting usage of its content 200% in 2004 over the previous year. Along the way, **Ebrary** has created some very good technology that will serve as the foundation for a new product, code-named **Isaac**. The beta product being tested by several libraries will serve as a server platform for any and all pdf-format documents that an institution cares to provide access to—from **Ebrary** content itself to journal pre- and post-prints, and even institutional repositories. **Isaac** is slated for release in the third quarter of 2005.

The **American Council of Learned Societies** had a presence in Boston this year to support its fledgling **History E-book Project**. The project, which includes digitizing over 1,000 books in various fields of history, was started with **Mellon** grant funding. This major initiative deserves much more attention than it has gotten, not only for its high-quality content, but also for its hu-

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#### Effective Name and Title Authority

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**Preservation of Library Collections: An Introduction (Morning Only)** Speaker: Thomas H. Teper.

#### Electronic Resources Management

*Systems: Opening a Can of ERMS (Afternoon Only)* Speakers: Tim Jewell, Adam Chandler, Marda Johnson, John Weble, and Scott Wicks.

*For more information or to register, go to [www.ala.org/alcts/events](http://www.ala.org/alcts/events), or write to [alcts@ala.org](mailto:alcts@ala.org).*

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Curtis Compton

### Jeff Penka, product manager for QuestionPoint-24/7, OCLC, speaks at the Exhibit Hall Technology Showcase during Midwinter.

manities subject focus, an area that has received less attention in the e-book space to date.

Ebooks Corporation's E-book Library (EBL) made its second floor showing in the exhibit hall, touting even more content in the Science, Technology, and Medicine subject areas. Cooperative deals with Dawson's Books and Blackwell's Book Service makes EBL very attractive to academic libraries wishing to add a simultaneous user model to their e-book repertoire. Overdrive has also expanded its e-book content by offering audio books from Blackstone Audible Book, which distributes over 2,500 spoken-word titles.

OCLC's NetLibrary also continues to grow in use, titles, and available formats. NetLibrary now offers over 80,000 titles from 500 publishers. In addition to offering new audiobook titles from Recorded Books, NetLibrary has also expanded its alliance with Baker and Taylor by making its titles available from the B&T acquisitions platform.

#### Money still matters

Despite the altruistic nature of the library profession, making a profit still drives the vendor world, and always will. This column regularly addresses the integrated library system marketplace and its dedica-

tion to expanding its market with new products and services. Some 25 years ago, there was a lot more entrepreneurial spirit sparking innovation; today, much of the impetus for new products and services comes from a desired return on capital investment in the ILS market, which often occurs through partnerships and acquisitions. Innovation will continue from ILS vendors, but librarians must have a much more critical eye to discern exactly who created the technology they purchase.

GIS has joined the data-mining craze with a new suite of reporting services provided through the Microsoft SQL database in Polaris. The embedded reporting capabilities will be available with Polaris version 3.2 due out early this year. GIS is also doing its part to integrate wireless in public libraries with Wireless Access Manager (WAM). Using a number of ILS systems other than Polaris for authentication, WAM authenticates users, measures bandwidth usage, and prevents after-hours access for single and multibranch wireless access providers.

When it comes to managing some of libraries' most expensive content—namely journals, e-journals, and electronic databases—it

appears that electronic resource management (ERM) is coming of age in 2005. Still enjoying its first-to-market status, **Innovative Interfaces** has introduced version 2.0 of its ERM solution. The Library of Congress is Innovative's latest high-profile customer. But Innovative is no longer alone in the market: **Ex Libris** has introduced *Verde*. Sleek and functional like its companion products, *SFX* and *Metalib*, *Verde* extends the ERM functional requirements as set out by the Digital Library Federation (DLF) by extending use to consortia and building in new cost-analysis tools. *Verde* can stand alone or be integrated with the *SFX*, *Metalib*, and *Aleph* databases.

**Endeavor** has already sold its ERM solution, *Meridian*—slated for a June 2005 general release—to two of its library customers. **Endeavor** is partnering with **Cognos**, an information management company, to integrate reporting capabilities into *Meridian*. The **Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries** is also expanding its offering of *Gold Rush*, a centralized digital registry of databases and e-journals, to small-to-medium-sized academic and public libraries that have expressed an obvious need to manage electronic resources. Though not officially launched, **Dynix** is also promising a fully functional ERM system in the near future. **EBSCOhost** and **Serials Solutions**—who both offer e-journal subscription and A–Z list services—are also well poised to offer hosted ERM solutions in 2005. These less comprehensive, yet lower cost, solutions will likely be an essential part of ERM for smaller libraries.

**Sirsi** has acquired **Docutek**, furthering its goal of integrating comprehensive library technology into its product suite. **Docutek** is best known for its electronic course reserve product and its virtual reference software. **Docutek** will be a wholly owned subsidiary of **Sirsi**, maintaining its base of operations and personnel, and reporting to the

**Sirsi** board and its CEO, Patrick Sommers. Following a growing trend—Elsevier's purchase of **Endeavor** and **Isacsoft's** acquisition of **Bibliomondo**—**Sirsi** and **Docutek** have mutual customers without any competing products.

Coming off the success of 23 international sales of *Virtua* and the *Fastrac* RFID system, **VTLS** has made a number of announcements in 2005. **VTLS** has chosen **TDNet** for its link-resolver technology. Partnering with one of the leaders of digital library development, **VTLS** and the University of Virginia will work to develop *Vital*, **VTLS's** client software for *Fedora*, an open source repository software.

#### **Best in show**

Combining the transactional data of more than 300 North American library systems with collections valued at a combined \$1 billion, the **GeoLib** program at Florida State University and **Sirsi** are partnering with participating libraries to create the **Normative Data Project (NDP)**. The goals of **NDP** include linking transactional data in public libraries to geographic and demographic data on communities served by libraries, empowering library decision makers with real-world data. The **NDP** data, available in the second quarter of 2005, will certainly help libraries optimize operations with a view of detailed national data never before available. More details are available at [www.librarynormativedata.info](http://www.librarynormativedata.info).

With a conference floor filled with bells and whistles over the last few years, libraries should be very happy with the return to “doing simple things well” exhibited by so many vendors. Moreover, recognition that **Google** has raised the bar not only on search and retrieval technology but also on content will inspire libraries to look up to that bar, rather than pass under it without noticing. Finally, that libraries, their vendors, and their content providers can still innovate is without question—how we will do it in the next five years is up to all of us. ❖



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