

To Boldly Go... InfoSoup: The Next Generation Making the Discovery Layer Choice

by Gerri Moeller

The decision making process

Over the past few months, AAC has been discussing adding a Discovery Layer. We've pondered whether or not this is the right thing to do, questioned the timing, and wondered if we could afford it and how to pay for it.

After much discussion, we decided to implement a Discovery Layer in 2015, and then narrowed the choices down to BiblioCommons and Encore. But how do we decide between them? That's a tougher question than it might seem.

Traditionally, AAC makes most decisions by consensus. In some cases, all AAC members enthusiastically agree with the decision; in others, some members consent to the decision for the good of the group, despite reservations. When a consensus cannot be reached, but a large number of libraries still wish to make a change, AAC votes on the proposal. The OWLSnet bylaws require a proposal to be approved by 2/3 of the libraries and 2/3 of the fee shares in order to pass.

It's possible that we'll be able to use our traditional process to choose between two discovery layers, but we do need to have a backup plan. Even if most libraries decide that one product is a superior choice, it's unlikely that we'll have true consensus. I've already heard from several libraries on their preferences, and it's clear that while everyone agrees on the issues, we don't all assign them the same priority. Following our traditional voting procedure, the vote could fail to meet the 2/3 libraries and 2/3 fee shares threshold for either product, leaving us with no Discovery Layer.

Because of this, it's important that we either come to a consensus, or agree to a different voting procedure for this choice. Here is the process that I recommend:

- We do our best to come to a consensus decision.
- If a consensus cannot be reached, we agree to a vote. If the majority of libraries agree on a discovery layer, the group then confirms the decision by consensus.
- If the majority of libraries do not agree on a discovery layer, we continue to discuss until a majority can be reached, voting again and eventually confirming the decision by consensus.

Recommendation of the Discovery Layer Committee

In preparation for the upcoming decision, I've talked to all of the Discovery Layer Committee members and asked them, "If this was your decision, which Discovery Layer would you choose?" (Please keep in mind that while most of the committee members have discussed this with their co-workers, these are their personal recommendations, and may not necessarily reflect the decision of the library.) The

responses were nearly unanimous. All but one of the nine committee members felt that Encore was a better choice for OWLSnet.

For some, the choice was clear, while others were very nearly on the fence. All of them felt that either Discovery Layer would be a big improvement over the current implementation of InfoSoup, especially with the ability to place holds and check out ebooks in both products.

Those who felt that Encore is the best choice for OWLSnet cited the following reasons:

- Encore will work more seamlessly with our current Innovative system. It does not require any special interventions to work.
- Encore does not require patrons to create another user account. While this may seem trivial, front desk staff in particular felt this would be an additional burden for patrons who often struggle to remember their current PINs.
- Encore will allow patrons to search BadgerLink databases, including Consumer Reports, from within the Discovery Layer. Many staff felt the current process is too difficult, even for staff.
- While not currently in the scope of the project, Encore offers the *ability* to search OAI-compliant databases, such as the InfoSoup Memory Project.
- While they love the social features of BiblioCommons, it isn't clear if patrons will embrace another reviewing location. Patrons who already review on Amazon or GoodReads may not want to move to another site.
- Encore offers the ability to add series information through an enhanced content vendor. Encore has more flexibility in adding enhanced content, while BiblioCommons works with a smaller set of vendors.
- Encore seems to have more flexibility. For example, Encore allows libraries to rename scopes, while in BiblioCommons the scope names are the same from library to library.

Those who felt that BiblioCommons is the best choice cited the following reasons:

- Patrons are likely to be excited by the social and book recommendation features of BiblioCommons.
- While searching for journal articles and digitized content appeals to librarians, this isn't the way that patrons currently use the library.

Because of this strong preference by the Discovery Layer Committee, I recommend that we choose Encore as our Discovery Layer.

If you cannot attend the AAC meeting

Since we'll be making the decision at the next AAC meeting, it's important that we have input from as many libraries as possible. **If you are unable to attend the meeting, please do one of the following:**

- Send a staff member in your place, and let me know in advance that they have voting/decision-making privileges for your library on this issue.
OR
- Ask another library director who will be attending the meeting to be your proxy, and let me know in advance that they have voting/decision-making privileges for your library on this issue.
OR
- Let me know, in writing, what your preferences are on this issue, keeping in mind the potential decision-making scenario outlined above.

The decision

The Discovery Layer Committee members all felt very strongly that whichever product we choose, it will be a big improvement for OWLSnet and our patrons. With that in mind, I think the most important thing we can do at this next AAC meeting is to be prepared, have a full discussion and make an informed decision that can be supported by all libraries.

If you have questions about either of the products, or questions about the process, please let me know as soon as you can. I'll make every effort to have answers to the questions so we can make the best decision possible.