



**AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY: ONE LIBRARY’S EXPERIENCE WITH
DISCOVERY SERVICE EVALUATION
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Abstract: Recognizing the potential benefits to users of discovery tools, Auburn University Libraries formed a committee to explore acquisition of a web-scale discovery service that would be in keeping with its values, vision, and institutional mission. As part of this process, the Libraries conducted an extensive literature review, offered informational workshops, held three onsite vendor presentations, gathered feedback from library staff, and interviewed other libraries with discovery systems.

Our Vision of Global Discovery: Global discovery enables the holistic and intelligent pursuit of information and is inviting and intuitive for all users. It is built upon standards and cooperative efforts that promote a sense of order, topical exploration, relevant and quality retrieval, and efficient access to information. Such a discovery system helps guide the research process and promotes understanding of our increasingly complex global information economy.

Global Discovery Vision	What We Found
Global unified index	Multiple versions of unified indexes
Designed for both the novice and expert researcher	Targeted at undergraduate use
Easy, intuitive user experience	Inconsistent, non-intuitive user experience
Context aware (e.g., by topic or discipline)	Non-context aware
Open & collaborative discovery architecture	Both open & closed discovery architecture
Deeply linked, full text plus (i.e., links for name and/or subject thesauri)	Links only to full text when available or to library holdings for physical objects
Normalized metadata & harmonized topics/subjects	Mixed metadata & non-harmonized topics
Universal interface (e.g. common terminology for information objects)	Unitary interface—Single search box
Granular & normalized metadata	Basic/broader & non-normalized metadata
Supports development of information literacy skills	Geared towards quick “get in-get out” searches
Less duplication of systems, data & cost	Duplication of systems, data, & cost
Shared financial cost	Institution assumes full financial cost
Common, cooperative	Proprietary

The following is a select list of articles we found helpful as we set out to learn about and evaluate web-scale discovery systems.

Overviews and Literature Reviews

Cornell University Libraries (CUL). (2011). Discovery and access: recommendation and report. Retrieved from <http://staffweb.library.cornell.edu/system/files/DiscoveryandAccessReport06-2-2011.pdf>.

The appendices in this report provide background on the basics of discovery and information architecture. Included is CUL's definition of "the ideal system."

Hoepfner, A. (2012). The ins and outs of evaluating web-scale discovery services. *Computers in Libraries*, 32(1): 6-10, 38-40.

Nicely illustrated and contains clear definitions of all aspects of web-scale discovery; includes two short lists of features to evaluate for the central index and the discovery layer.

Kornblau, A. I., J. Strudwick and W. Miller. (2012.) How web-scale discovery changes the conversation: The questions librarian should ask themselves. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 19(2-4): 144-162.

Covers a variety of important questions libraries should ask regarding the implementation of web-scale discovery and its place within all library service--from collection development to electronic resource management.

Luther, J. and M. C. Kelly. (2011). The next generation of discovery. *Library Journal*, 136(5): 66-71.

Includes a concise checklist of features (e.g., content, search, fit, and cost) with which to evaluate web-scale discovery services

Moore, K. B. and C. Greene. (2012). Choosing discovery: A literature review on the selection and evaluation of discovery layers. *Journal of Web Librarianship*, 6 (3): 145-163.

A synthesis of elements useful for evaluation. This paper contains a table comparing evaluation criteria used in four selected articles on web-scale discovery.

Thomsett-Scott, B. and P. E. Reese. (2012). Academic libraries and discovery tools: A survey of the literature. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 19(2-4): 123-143.

A general overview that includes some discussion of metadata and information literacy challenges. Their summary of current state hits at the heart of discovery: "Discovery tools offer mixed blessings to librarians and library users. Valuable characteristics are ease of use, one stop shopping, limiting by facets, and citation information. Concerns center around too many results, lack of relevancy, not all content included, loss of catalog specificity, loss of database functionality, and user knowledge" (p. 138).

Overviews and Literature Reviews (cont.)

Vaughan, J. (2012). Investigations into library web-scale discovery services. *Information Technology and Libraries*, 31(1): 32-82. *One of the best articles on web-scale discovery services. This formed the basis of our review and evaluation. The appendices are excellent and contain survey and interview questions.*

Information Literacy and Instruction

Buck, S. and M. Melliinger. (2011). The impact of Serial Solutions' Summon™ on information literacy instruction: Librarian perceptions. *Internet Reference Services Quarterly*, 16(4):159-181.

This study administered an anonymous online survey of 21 quantitative and qualitative questions to instruction librarians at 60 institutions that used Summon . Their conclusion: "At this point, most librarians are not viewing Summon as a replacement for other tools, but as a supplement, and they are teaching it in combination with other sources" (p. 177).

Cardwell, Catherine, V. Lux, and R. J. Snyder. (2012). Beyond simple, easy, and fast: Reflections on teaching Summon. *College & Research Library News*, 73(6): 344-347.

Three instruction librarians reflect on their use of and users' experiences with Summon. They concluded: "We developed a more nuanced, sophisticated understanding of its capabilities and limitations and , in the end, learned that Summon can be much more than a simple tool for novice users" (p.347).

Fagan, J. C. (2011). Discovery tools and information literacy. *Journal of Web Librarianship*, 5 (3): 171-178.

An editorial that focuses on the difficulties inherent in these systems with respect to supporting information literacy

Fawley, N. and N. Krysak. (2012). Information literacy opportunities within the discovery tool environment. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 19(2-4): 207-214.

Naming these tools, "transdisciplinary tools," this article suggests the following best practices for instruction: focus on developing search terms, teach limiters or facets, emphasize critical thinking, use as a scaffold for subject-specific databases, develop supplemental subject guides, and emphasize interlibrary loan.

Metadata Details

Han, M. J. (2012). New discovery services and library bibliographic control. *Library Trends*, 61(1): 162-172.

This article is mostly geared toward MARC catalog metadata. The need for consistency and completeness of metadata and for further research to determine future directions for cataloging practices and discovery services are discussed.

Metadata Details (Cont.)

Newcomer, Nara L. (2011). The detail behind web-scale: Selecting and configuring web-scale discovery tools to meet music information retrieval needs. *Music Reference Services Quarterly*, 14: 131-145.

This article, while focused on special concerns with music, succinctly describes key aspects of these services and the need for careful attention to, and understanding of, the metadata that flows through these systems.

Use and Usability Studies

Asher, A. D., L. M. Duke, and S. Wilson. (2012). Paths of discovery: Comparing the search effectiveness of EBSCO discovery service, Summon, Google Scholar, and conventional library resources. *College & Research Libraries*, Pre-print retrieved from <http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2012/05/07/crl-374.full.pdf+html> .

This is the only study so far to look at comparing more than two systems. Problems highlighted center on problems inherent with the complex information ecosystem, understanding how various discovery systems work, and evaluating results.

Fagan, J. C., M. Mandernach, C. S. Nelson, J. R. Paulo, G. Saunders. (2012). Usability test results for a discovery tool in an academic library. *Information Technology and Libraries*, 31(1):83-112.

This study illuminates problems with refining searches within discovery services and offers questions for future research, particularly the role of these services in libraries.

Foster, A. K., and J. B. MacDonald. (2013). A tale of two discoveries: Comparing the usability of Summon and EBSCO discovery service. *Journal of Web Librarianship*, 7(1): 1-19.

Problems are noted with relevancy and search refinements. Common to both discovery systems "is the need for instruction in resource discovery systems" (p.17).

Gross, J. and L. Sheridan. (2011). Web scale discovery: The user experience. *New Library World*, 112(5/6): 236-247.

This study revealed the difficulty users have in deciphering search results.

Way, D. (2010). The impact of web-scale discovery on the use of a library collection. *Serials Review*, 36(4): 214-220.

This study compares Summon and native database use and hypothesizes that individual resources may be getting more use due to the implementation of Summon.