

FROM PAPER TO ELECTRONIC

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ABSTRACT: In the past five years we have moved from paper volumes of a number of Abstracting subscriptions to CD-ROM and now On-line Web Editions. We are implementing a unified search engine for all subscribed web databases (OCLC's SiteSearch, USM web version, identified as MdUSA) and will compare use as individual book marked sites vs. unified search site usage. I intend showing: 1) What being an active member of a larger consortium (The University System of Maryland) has cost and relating the cost to benefits and services derived. 2) The price variations, use statistics and an evaluation of use, potential and benefits or loss.

Introduction

The USM Libraries purchased OCLC's SiteSearch software in January 1998. SiteSearch is a Z39.50 compliant web interface developed by OCLC that allows users to search multiple databases using a unified search interface and search strategies. It also provides an authorization capacity. An electronic resource committee (USMERC) was established to implement SiteSearch. We named the USM SiteSearch product MdUSA. MdUSA is a multiple play on words to reflect the wide extension of service throughout the State as well as including that it is a Maryland University System Access project.

Implementation

While the implementation plan was getting underway by the USMERC committee Betty Day, Manager of Electronic Information Services at College Park and Chair of the Committee, was working on a list of databases that multiple campuses desired. The goal was improved negotiated consortial pricing.

We started with version three of SiteSearch and in July we migrated to version four nearly three months after the original implementation date of April. As with most computerization projects I have encountered, the implementation time is significantly longer than proposed.

We have experienced some disappointment in implementation. It seems there are varied interpretations and implementations of Z39.50 standards even to the point that some vendors still do not even plan implementation. Our ITD staff has had to do a great deal of work implementing access to some of our databases. It is disappointing that even a few of the databases purchased through OCLC are not compliant. We all have some databases that require direct connections which subvert our goal of unified searching.

For the future

As of September 15, 1998, we did not have statistics to do any use comparison. Our first month of summary information (September) has not given very detailed information for decision making. The Columns of information in this first report were: Database names, # of Query, # of Hits, # Fetch and Scan, without campus designations and search histories. We now know that implementation of a project of this magnitude is still a mammoth undertaking but anticipate that the arduous task will provide many benefits in use statistics and ease of access to a wider audience of patrons.