

## ***The slow end of the LMS***

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<http://ht.ly/2Nmblx>

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quickly became de rigueur. The breadth and depth of integrated functionality in a mainstream LMS were extensive. But just as the point of fullest breadth and integration was achieved things began to fall apart. Twenty-first century search is exemplified in most people's mind by Google. The deficiencies in the LMS were exposed. It wasn't just a question of a single 'user friendly' search box. Users

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knew that even a simple (usually keyword) search on an Opac was no match at all for the sophisticated 'page rank' approach by Google. Even today some Opacs out there expect an author name to be entered surname first! In 1997 Amazon, with its vision to be to be 'earth's most customer centric company,' demonstrated the value

of 'recommender' services. Such a plainly useful approach is still a rarity in library Opacs, especially public library ones.

By 2006 librarians were admitting that that 'the OPAC sucks'<sup>1</sup>. In consequence the search and discovery function is becoming 'decoupled' from the LMS. Increasingly libraries employ a separate vertical search/discovery solution, often from a non-LMS vendor such as Media

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Labs (Aquabrowser), Serial Solutions (Summon) or they implement an open source solution such as VuFind.

It not just the search side of the LMS that has been found wanting. RFID technology is making significant improvements to the circulation function; companies like Bridgeall and Nielsen provide services to enhance stock performance, in part because the management information function within the LMS isn't up to the job. Where libraries provide e-books, acquisitions, cataloguing and circulation are usually managed by what is, in effect a separate parallel 'LMS' from a vendor such as Overdrive. The LMS has failed to

effectively manage the growing range of e-resources and an array of systems has grown up to meet that need. Whereas, in the 1990s a library would have had one LMS vendor, it may now work with a handful of separate companies to meet its

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library system needs.

One vendor, ExLibris, has openly declared a move to a next generation approach—a 'Unified Resource Management (URM)<sup>2</sup>

framework to supersede the current generation of LMSs. Perhaps then we

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should call time on the LMS? When SCONUL asked me to give added life to their 2008 'LMS study'<sup>3</sup> by putting the information on a wiki to keep it up-to-date and expand its scope we avoided the 'LMS' label. Of course the *Higher Education Library Technology* (HELibTech) service<sup>4</sup> and its sister *Local Government Library Technology* (LGLibTech)<sup>5</sup> website include information about the LMS. But there is now so much more.....

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<sup>1</sup> The debate is summarised on the ALA Techsource blog: <http://www.alatechsource.org/blog/2006/03/how-opacs-suck-part-1-relevance-rank-or-the-lack-of-it.html>

<sup>2</sup> 'Unified Resource Management: The Ex Libris Framework for Next- Generation Library Services'. ExLibris 2009 <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/files/Solutions/TheExLibrisFrameworkforNextGenerationLibraryServices.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> 'JISC & SCONUL Library Management Systems Study. An Evaluation and horizon scan of the current library management systems and related systems landscape for UK higher education' 2008 [http://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/lms\\_report/lmsstudy/](http://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/lms_report/lmsstudy/)

<sup>4</sup> <http://helibtech.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://lglibtech.wikispaces.com/>

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*In 2010 Ken Chad Consulting helped establish two important community resources:-*

## Higher Education Library Technology

The [Higher Education Library Technology](#) wiki, HELibtech, provides data on library technologies used in UK HE and has articles on major library-related technology.

## Local Government Library Technology

The [Local Government Library Technology](#) wiki, LGLibtech, provides data on library technologies used in UK public libraries and has articles on major library-related technology.