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LIBIS-Net and CALIBRE

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Libis-Net

Historical background

The splitting of the university, when the Catholic University of Leuven became a separate institution, was the real take-off of the library automation.

After a market study commissioned in 1974, a co-operation contract was concluded with the university of Dortmund and with IBM, which lead to the development of the DOBIS/LIBIS system.

The production of the first modules, cataloguing and searching, started at the K.U. Leuven in November 1977.

Both universities transferred the software ownership to IBM, who sold the software successfully worldwide. There are DOBIS/LIBIS systems today operational in more than 30 countries on all continents on behalf of hundreds (est. 800) of libraries. Around 1980, DOBIS/LIBIS already provided a full and detailed functionality, covering all library activities in real time.

As the system was distributed from the beginning with the source code, not only the commerical vendor but also the installations them-selves continuously improved and modernised the system. This lead to various versions and releases.

Composition

Besides the installation of a modern integrated on-line library management system, it was extremely important for L.U.Leuven to have a system corresponding to the geographical decentralization of its libraries, which are spread over the city and the various campuses. At the same time the system had to accept and respect the different identity of these libraries.

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[1] Paper presented at the LIBER Annual Conference, Leuven 1995.

The software of Dobis/Libis allows very flexible networking facilities on 3 levels: the general system with the common shared catalogue, the institution-network library level and the branch library level.

LIBIS-Net, the DIS/LIBIS system based network installed by the university of Leuven attracted several academic, business, school and governmental libraries in Belgium which affiliated themselves with it.

(a) University Libraries

K.U. Leuven (Catholic University of Leuven)

U.C.L. (Universite Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve)

KUB (Catholic University Brussels/former UFSAL)

R.U. Gent (State University of Ghent)

FNDP (Faculties of Notre Dame de la Paix - Namur)

FUSL (University Faculties of St. Louis - Brussels)

(b) Special Libraries

BB - ABB (Belgian Farmers Union & Insurance Cy - Leuven)

IBM : IEC and EHQ (International Education Center - La Hulpe & European Headquarters - Paris)

IHE (Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology - Brussels)

Belgian Parliament - Brussels

Flemish Council - Brussels

Academia Belgica (Belgian Academy - Rome)

(c) Other Institutions of Higher Education

KVH (Catholic Flemish Institute of Higher Education, Antwerp)

KMS (Royal Military School)

ROLDUC (Catholic Seminary - Kerkrade NL)

(d) Documentation Center

KADOC (Catholic Documentation Centre, Leuven)

Organization and financial aspects

LIBIS-Net is a non-profit organization in which all member institutions are participating directly in the management of the network. They are all represented in an Advisory Council, from which delegates have a seat in the Board. The Board outlines the general policy and the managment directives.

A Technical Committee coordinates various Working Groups, which are responsible for solving common problems, policies, rules, manuals, training, etc. A central team of librarians and technicians takes care of the day to day running and production. This team is paid via a fixed contribution of the members in addition to the variable cost for 'system-use' of the users, which is destinated to hardware, software, maintenance and working cots.

LIBIS-Net is using a dedicated CPU, located at the Computer Centre of the University of Leuven. At the same time it takes advantage of the synergy with this Centre, resulting in a yearly decrease of costs for the members or in project reinvestment.

The aim of this organization is to emphasize and strengthen cooperation and partnership.

Standardization and local flexibility

The member-institutions have full independence for local catalogue creation and access and for all administrative functions via completely isolated and reserved local systems and files.

For the common shared catalogue however, an important standardization effort was made in format, cataloguing rules and access mechanisms.

The Database - some figures

LIBIS-Net provides access to various databases:

(a)   The LIBIS-catalogue, containing book and periodical descriptions of the network member institutions (close above 3.000.000 copy records)

(b)   The CCB (Collective Catalogue of Belgium), a yearly batch loaded national union catalogue of books, with exclusion of the LIBIS-Net records (1.500.000 copy records). This catalogue is also published on CD-Rom.

(c)   ANTILOPE, a national catalogue of periodicals description and holdings. ANTILOPE is maintained on the VUBIS-system at the UIA (University of Antwerp) and transfers regularly records into LIBIS-Net via a batch load (50.000 records which will soon be expanded with other external files up to 270.000 records).

(d)   The Bibliographic Pool is a 'reserve' of LC-records, mainly on behalf of precataloguing activities but also accessible in searching. The pool is monthly updated via a subscription to the CDS (Cataloguing Distribution Service) of the Library of Congress (2.500.000 selected records).

Latest developments

(a) Integration with other databases

LIBIS-Net intends to expand its services with other databases on the LIBIS host, on CD-ROM servers or via gateways to external servers.

K.U. Leuven gives integrated fast access to CD-ROM servers installed on many various LAN's at the University.

An evaluation of First Search of OCLC was recently concluded, an offer for a periodicals article scanning service has been negotiated with EBSCO and the best way of implementation is under study. A specific working group is evaluating other possible services.

The other partners in the network will be invited to participate in this integration, of course within the legal rules of shared use of database services, which is often very complicated due to site limitations.

(b) GUI (Graphical User Interface)

DOBIS/LIBIS was initially made for terminal usage (IBM 3270) and during many years the screen layout was never altered.

Today, a new GUI under OS/2 and Windows has been developed, giving access via windows, mouse steering and button clicking to LIBIS-Net.

A general overall implementation of this GUI is not expected.

It will take place selectively as the replacement of the old terminal-park is for many institutions an important investment. Other library applications requiring multi-functional PC-stations may speed up to the process.

(c) New searching tools : command in addition to menu driven access

The dialogue - menu driven with mnemonic instructions codes - was a concept maintained consistently throughout the product.

LIBIS-Net just developed a new OPAC with command driven possibilities for experts or other users familiar with this type of systems. The command driven approach may considerably speed-up Boolean searching expressions.

(d) Database enrichment from the bibliographic pool

The bibliographic pool was initially installed in order to improve cataloguing and acquisition functions.

At this moment a catalogue enrichment with LCSH (Library of Congress Subject Headings) takes place, based on matching LC and LIBIS-Net records.

(e) Testing of Internet library-access for end-users

A first experiment with free Internet-libraries access just started at the public catalogue room of the K.U.Leuven Central Library. A WWW-browser with specific library pages has been installed and users reaction and results will be evaluated.

(f) Link with IMPALA

A link with IMPALA, the leading Belgian document delivery system installed at the UIA (University of Antwerp), was a long-term requirement for many users. However, a technical link with a heterogeneous system was not evident. After development of a full-fledged document delivery system on LIBIS-Net the 'handshake' with IMPALA was successfully implemented.

(g) Image

Last but not least, LIBIS-Net closely follows the new trends and developments in relation to image handling.

ELiAS, the current owner of the DOBIS/LIBIS software, just developed a link between DOBIS/LIBIS and the so-called Digital Library project of IBM. Here a search in the catalogue can be expanded with displays of digitalized text or images.

LIBIS-Net is ready to function as a text-site for this development. KUL-Net, the new fiber-optics high speed network of the University could offer an excellent 'transporter' for this type of information, still requiring a very high telecommunications capacity.

(h) CALIBRE

DOBIS/LIBIS systems are important information providers and their common bibliographic potential is enormous.

CALIBRE (Common Access to Libraries in Europe) is a program initiated some years ago by a group of key DOBIS/LIBIS installations in Europe. Their intention is to link their systems via a specific network-structure and to set-up an

organization for efficient cooperation in making their information available to each other.

CALIBRE aims to be important for information distribution in Europe.

CALIBRE

Why CALIBRE?

Does it makes sense to connect library catalogues when millions of databases are available via Internet and other networks and various software tools organize access to these databases?

The answer is yes. I understand librarians' enthusiasm for these new tools, but are we not erecting new walls between end-users and these new possiblities? Are we not forgetting that we are still teaching them how to benefit best from one single system, the OPAC of our library, while carefully adding CD-ROM databases with another interface?

A universal library catalogue interface will never exist. The most important step forward is the development of Z39.50, but this protocol is mainly reserved for a new generation of systems. Its overall practical implementation can be expected many years from now.

And how do we obtain the document once we are lucky enough to find a valuable reference in this labyrinth of catalogues?

Can we obtain it? Where and how do we order it? Where and when is it delivered? What does it cost and how do we pay the provider?

Here CALIBRE intends to be a possible answer. It is now ready for production, being developed with existing technology. It uses an interface of today, familiar to our users and it can easily be implemented by every DOBIS/LIBIS library right now.

Via international agreements between the partners, the CALIBRE Network will guarantee swift document delivery under rules and conditions known by the user.

Specifications and Development

After a technical meeting on networking in Lueven the Spanish network RUEDO was investigated in depth and evaluated.

The Spanish DOBIS/LIBIS users wre indeed 'fore-runners', when they created a structure for cooperation around a union catalogue of various institutions installed at the computer system of the University of Oviedo. The model of RUEDO was used as a starting point for CALIBRE.

In December 1993, during a two days meeting at the Swiss PTT Headquarters in Bern, the specifications and the macro design for CALIBRE were drawn by the CALIBRE Project Group.

The Hoger Institut der Kempen (HIK) in Geel (Belgium) was an early partner in the project. It had recourse to external European financing for the development.

The specifications of the CALIBRE PROJECT GROUP were further worked out and developed by SOLID Automation, a spin-off company of HIK.

In May a first prototype was presented to the CALIBRE Project Group were further worked out and developed by SOLID Automation and the K.U. Leuven. The technical realization was also entrusted to SOLID Automation, a spin-off company of HIK.

In May a first prototype was presented to the CALIBRE Project Group. After this, the project partners had the occasion to test and evaluate the realization. During the following months some minor corrections together with some interesting new features were implemented.

The result is a new module for DOBIS/LIBIS, perfectly integrated as a new main function in the standard software. It has been developed completely in 'DOBIS/LIBIS style' and it includes several easy to learn subfunctions.

The Architecture of and the Access to the CALIBRE Network

The basic principle of CALIBRE is the establishment of several union catalogues in Europe. DOBIS/LIBIS installations belonging to a specific geographical area are connected to a DOBIS/LIBIS node system in which they download regularly their data. These node systems are interconnected.

CALIBRE will give all connected libraries or even individual authorized users from office or home the possibility to search all these union catalogues, containing the data of their member systems.

Important is that access will take place via one local system, via one single logon and through one identical DOBIS/LIBIS user interface.

This means that the learning curve is minimal. There will be no skipping around from system to system. The same search techniques can be used on all node systems. Document delivery will in most cases be successful. These are important advantages compared to unorganized browsing Internet systems.

Communication

The international 'CICS to CICS' communication between the nodes currently uses X-25; but this is totally application independent. When necessary there is no difficulty in switching to other communication techniques.

Main objectives and functionality

(a) end user searching of remote catalogues

The authorized user can call up all node installations using its own DOBIS/LIBIS application. All standard searching facilities of DOBIS/LIBIS (single search and browsing, truncated and boolean) are available.

In addition, the inclusion and accessibility of a special file containing the 'collection strengths' provides the users with a better orientation.

(b) Interlibrary Lending and document delivery

After identifying the requested document(s), the library or the authorized end-user can order the document in its orginal form via interlibrary loan or in a copy form by mail or by fax.

The system automatically generates order forms and includes the descriptions of the desired documents in the faxes automatically printed in the library where the item sought is stored. A screen template the fax editing of a reference which is not present in the database, e.g. for articles.

(c) record & file transfer

Descriptions, even large collections of records, can be saved and immediately downloaded int he users' bibliographic pool for cataloguing or acquisition purposes. It is also possible to download only selected fields of the description.

(d) improved (electronic) communication for library staff

The communication functions allow generation of faxes from the user-station, also for the communication of information not directly related to the standard CALIBRE activities.

Guaranteed Document Delivery

Due to organizational agreements between the participating libraries, CALIBRE can - in most cases - guarantee to the users a successful delivery of the requested document.

This is another major advantage compared over many other bibliographic databases or library catalogues where finding a relevant bibliographic reference is often the start of a long and painful process, ending with a frustrated user....

Other Functions

(a) Online proces follow-up for requester and provider

CALIBRE allows its users to follow-up the document delivery actions step by step, from requester and providers side, via functions for status access and order adaptations.

Management functions give overview of all CALIBRE orders by user, all orders sent out on behalf of a specific person or institution, all orders from the ILL department etc.

These orders can also be retrieved by status code.

These status code tables contain stardised information such as 'more information needed', 'executing', copy sent', etc.

(b) Accounting

CALIBRE is, like most document delivery services, a paid service. The national and international communication, the delivery of the document by mail or fax copy are, in most libraries, entireley or partially compensated by the user.

CALIBRE keeps track of all these cost elements, which can be individualized per institution, while maintaining an accounting system for the whole. The price of a transaction can be determined per country according to a number of parameters. Every institution can, if it wishes, open an account for applicants who are then charged automatically.

Libraries are free to apply their own charging policies, as the accounting is maintained on the local system.

There are also provisions for the use of all types of credit cards. So, CALIBRE is really future-oriented and ready to be used from office or home, without going to the library.

(c) Authorization and security

User authorization to CALIBRE is a responsibility of the local system, while the node system protects the access to document delivery and library functions in accordance with the information about the user received from the local system.

Software Distribution

The software, developed by 'SOLID Automation" consists of two packages : one for the node systems and one for the connected installations. It has been made available for free to the node systems and to the institutions participating in the project.

Participation in Calibre

As node-systems, following institutions take part today in the project:

for Spain : Universidad de Oviedo

for Belgium : K.U. Leuven

for the Netherlands, Iceland and Scandinavian countries : T.U. Delft

for Germany : the Deutsche Telekom

for Hungary : the National Library of Budapest

for Switzerland and Austria : the Swiss PTT

for Italy : the Instituto Superiore de Sanita

Next steps...

Implementation in the various node systems is ongoing. The realization period to set-up the entire interconnected network will depend of the speed of delivery and the loading process.

We know that uploading data into the node databases is a process that takes time. The last quarter of 1995 is a provisional target date for full implementation. In the meantime the Project Group intends to set up a legal body and an organizational structure to define the conditions and terms for cooperation, to standardise and improve the content of the database where possible, to open CALIBRE to non-DOBIS/LIBIS systems and to streamline the operational actions.

If all DOBIS/LIBIS installations in Europe implement the software, CALIBRE will become one of the larger interconnected library networks in Europe, comprising more than 25,000,000 documents available on request via other document delivery projects and the implementation of Z39.50 may contribute to the openess of CALIBRE to other systems and users.