January 2007

HELIN Consortium OPAC Report

HELIN OPAC Task Force

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HELIN WebPAC Pro Review

January 16, 2007

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I. Introduction

The HELIN Board created the OPAC Task Force to review WebPAC Pro and recommend to the Chairs Council "any changes deemed important and necessary for a fuller, more effective use of this public interface." The mandate also stated that the HELIN Executive Director would review the recommendations for feasibility of implementation by Central Office staff.

To this end, the Task Force began by identifying the possible and desirable functionalities in any OPAC. This process provides the underlying rationale for the Task Force's design recommendations. In the Functional Assessment Matrix (Appendix 1), the functionality is outlined in detail and mapped to features currently available in WebPAC Pro. Those items that are not available in WebPAC Pro are also identified. From this matrix, the Task Force has broken out a list of recommended changes prioritized in three categories:

- Changes that can be done quickly and easily
- Changes that require scheduling and a greater amount of work
- Changes that require enhancement requests of Innovative

The Task Force has located institutions with well-designed implementations of WebPAC Pro. The examples are included in Appendix 2. The last section includes recommendations about how changes should be implemented in the future.

II. Evaluation and Findings

In reviewing WebPAC Pro, the Task Force analyzed how patrons and librarians use the catalog for specific functions. Ease of use was an overarching consideration in all identified functions.

Patrons use the catalog to:

- Find items
- Locate and retain copies
- Obtain copies
- Manage citations
- Manage their library account
- Find information other than holdings (e.g., articles)

Librarians use it to:

- Communicate with patrons
- Promote and market library services
- Integrate with library Web sites and other resources
- Teach students
- Support other staff operations

HELIN Central also uses the Web OPAC to:

- Provide information about the HELIN Consortium
- Promote and market the HELIN Consortium
- Provide administrative information
- Serve as a portal to all HELIN resources

The Task Force found that these functional capabilities are currently available in WebPAC Pro.

The WebPAC Pro upgrade provides many significant improvements over the older version of the OPAC, including full Boolean search capabilities, spell check, RSS feeds, and a more customizable interface. However, the new "out-of-the-box" version of WebPAC Pro introduced some serious usability and design flaws.

The Task Force was positively impressed with the "tabbed" navigation for the search screens. The use of navigation tabs is a Web convention that can be seen on professional sites like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Netflix. But, the labeling and behavior of the tabs, and the particular selection of available screens, are not optimally implemented in the current HELIN WebPAC Pro design. For instance, the left-most tab, labeled "Advanced Search" is the tab for both "simple" and "advanced" keyword search screens. The tabs should provide comprehensive access to search screens by adding, for example, a tab for "Course Reserves." Users would also benefit from a reduction in the number of tabs. This could be accomplished by consolidating related searches (e.g. "Subject", "Number") under a single a tab or placing less-common searches under an "Other Searches" or "All Search Options" tab. Consistent and clear navigation that presents the user with all the basic search options on every search page will increase the usability of the entire site. Layouts, colors, and design on each tab can be adjusted and optimized for usability.

Another area where Innovative has made changes in the usability of the OPAC is in the search results display. One of the new features is RightResult, which introduces a new relevancy ranking algorithm. Relevancy ranking is used by all the major Web search engines and is an important tool in sorting through large results. With WebPAC Pro, there are inconsistencies in the relevancy ranking of RightResult and much discussion on the Innovative Users Group (IUG) listserv regarding problems associated with RightResult. The OPAC Task Force found that there appears to be a tendency to bring government documents to the top of the list as well as other problematic rankings.

For instance, if a user performs a keyword search for <u>A Tale of Two Cities</u>, the Dickens novel appears third on the list.

The display of additional information (item location/status; book jackets) and functions (request; WebBridge) on the results screen has resulted in a serious usability problem: these screens function poorly for browsing the results. Another issue of concern is the fact that only three holdings are displayed on the browse results screen. Furthermore, holdings displayed from serials are shown in alphabetical order instead of with the local institution first.

A detailed list of all the issues can be seen in the Functional Assessment Matrix (Appendix 1). Overall, WebPAC Pro has much to offer and with careful analysis and planning, a simple and easy-to-use interface can be designed.

III. Quick and Simple Changes

As stated earlier, the Task Force identified changes that could be done relatively quickly and easily. These recommendations are identified in the table below:

No	Change	Description	Rationale
1	Formatting scopes list	This involves organizing the list similarly to Brown (http://library.brown.edu/) by inserting dashes, bullets, or other distinguishing characters. *The specific organization of the list (e.g., institutions first, collections, formats) should be referred to the Reference Committee*	This is a long list of terms that differ in function from location to format to collection. When presented in a long list it is difficult to read and understand.
2	Standardize naming on buttons and other links	▪ The advanced search labels the scoping mechanism *Collection* but when you do certain searches and the Limit/Sort button is available the scopes are called *Location* Other inconsistencies may exist and should be changed when identified. *Terms for specific labels should be referred to the Reference Committee.*	Consistent conventions and terms are important throughout any design and is standard Web design practice.
3	Browse screens ▪ Omit holdings display ▪ Omit WebBridge link ▪ Omit request ▪ Retain material type (format)	This involves removing the *request button*, *search other places button* and the book cover. The icons for the formats should be retained, but the graphic can be improved. The goal is to limit the list to just *title* and *format* as represented by the new icons. If this is unacceptable to HELIN members, the Task Force recommends redesigning the buttons to reduce their size and display inline vertically.	1. Support effective browsing by removing visual 'clutter' and allowing more results to display on the screen and reduce the scrolling required. The Task Force felt the icons for the formats were important to retain because they help users assess the need to explore the item further. 2. Eliminate the misleading display of some, but not all holdings (max. 3)

4	Disable the "OR" function of search results when there are no results	This is a problem when searching a phrase such as "copway chippewa dogs" and it returns 32,000 results because it changed the search to "copway OR Chippewa OR Dogs"	This provides nonsensical results of no value that generally relate to nothing of interest. Instead it should return the result "No Entries Found" or a similar phrase to be determined by the Reference Committee
5	Change all search buttons to have the text "Search" instead of "Submit" On the Limit screen, change "submit" to "set"	Simple modification of the text on existing buttons	Clarify the button function (which button to click to initiate a search). Style consistency: label from user perspective, not in application terms.
6	Distinguish the following buttons better with coloration and/or text - Start Over - Modify Search - Other Libraries - Another Search - InRhode - Request - Save Record - Marc Display - Return to List - Similar Records - Other Libraries - Another Search	A color scheme could be used to visually organize buttons relating to similar functions like Modify Search, Another Search, InRhode and Similar Records. Members of the Task Force are also willing to create button designs for use. *The Reference Committee should identify the organization scheme.*	The functions will be more quickly identified and understood if color patterns and icons are similar.
7	Add login on all pages for My Millennium	This would be a matter of adding a login for My Millennium to every page and calling it either "Login" or "My Library Account" as determined by the Reference Committee	There are some important features in My Millennium and providing more opportunities to access it will increase its use.

8	Change "Home" button to "Catalog Home"	*The ultimate wording should be determined by the Reference Committee. However, it should be indicative that one is returning to the Web OPAC home and not one's own library home.*	This is important to clarify when users click on "Home" they are not returning to their home library Web page.
9	Purchase spell checker		This is an important feature that can assist users if designed properly.
10	Provide HELP text explaining 'Right Result'	*The Reference Committee should provide some help text to explain results found.*	RightResult is a good idea but bugs exist. Individuals on the IUG listserv have documented many strange rankings in searching. The Task Force recommends that RightResult should be reviewed regularly to see if it has improved and update the help text as required.
11	Investigate III RSS implementation and functions	RSS functions require an additional purchase or purchases and it is unclear what these services will do.	RSS has the potential to provide valuable additional services.

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IV. Larger Changes Requiring Scheduling

The Task Force identified a number of other changes that would produce a more professional and usable catalog. These changes cannot be implemented immediately because they will require significant input from HELIN members, modification of style sheets, and study of WebPAC Options. We found two academic consortiums with excellent WebPAC Pro designs that take good advantage of the tabs feature, creating interfaces with consistent navigation schemes along with displays that clearly show users what their options are.

- Tripod (http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/search~/)

  This consortium includes Bryn Mar College, Haverford College, and Swarthmore College.

- CLICnet (http://webpac.clic.edu/)

  This consortium includes Augsburg College, Bethel University, College of St. Catharine, Concordia University, Hamlin University, Macalaster College, Northwestern College, and the University of St. Thomas.

We have spoken to the Executive Director of CLICnet and they are willing to share their style sheets and information about the settings they used to create the design. CLICnet recently upgraded to WebPAC Pro. Their tabs design has features we consider important; however, the results lists is no longer a compact list as we would recommend. The Systems Librarian indicated that they made no special modifications of the Innovative interface and used out-of-the-box functions. We have contacted Tripod and they have not done any unusual modifications except for a little javascripting.

Specific Recommendations

The details can be reviewed in the Functional Assessment Matrix (Appendix 1). The following is some more generalized organization of the broad changes recommended.

No	Change	Description	Rationale
1	Create a persistent tabbed display	The tabs would allow navigation from simple to advanced search as well as other functions or specific searches within the catalog. To see potential options, review the catalogs for Tripod and CLICnet. *The Reference Committee needs to review what would appear on the tabs. Also, they would need to review which items might appear on a submenu on a tab or above the tabs in a header menu.*	Consistent navigation schemes are very important for usability. Providing information about user options without having to scroll or click through a set of screens is very important for ease of use.
2	Separate limit to libraries/campus and collection type formats	This was done on CLICnet. However, this does require changes in cataloging and CLICnet had some specialized work completed by III in the catalog to execute the function. (The CLICNET Systems Librarian's email is available for review that states how they accomplished this.)	Scope limits are an important function of the catalog. However, with a large consortium, they become long and confusing to users with scopes that limit results by institution, collection, and format.
3	Browsing screens should be made to look as much the same as possible with a clean interface. It is suggested that all browsing displays should only show: ▪ Title of the item ▪ Format icon		A clean browsing interface that allows the user to see as many results as reasonably possible on the screen was determined to be most valuable. It allows users to quickly navigate to the title of interest.

V. Changes Requiring Enhancement Requests

The Task Force also identified changes it would like to see that are not currently available in the product and therefore would like to see the following changes submitted as enhancement requests.

- Improve RightResult - HELIN needs to identify some of the specific problems associated with the relevance ranking and submit them to III. Barbara Herzog at the New England IUG indicated that they are aware of problems associated with RightResult. She indicated that it is best to provide specific examples of anomalies.

- Stack live records above checkin records. Andrée Rathemacher at URI has documented some of these problems. The Serials Committee is reviewing this issue and will be taking action.

- Make the text "there are additional copies available" on the results screen clickable when on a results list.

VI. Suggestions for the Future

A standard practice in systems analysis and design is to implement a change management system. The Task Force recommends that a schedule be established so that change requests to the OPAC can be submitted to the Reference Committee by all member institutions using a standardized form and reviewed and tested before implementation.

HELIN Central should review this process with the Reference Committee and other appropriate committees in order to set appropriate deadlines for committees and HELIN institutions to follow. A flow chart diagramming the process appears in Appendix 3.

It is also recommended that changes go through usability testing whenever feasible. In addition to this, we recommend that usability testing be done by the HELIN institutions in the spring of this year to identify additional issues and concerns as well as verify and prioritize issues identified in the functional assessment matrix.

The Task Force also recommends segregating the OPAC server address from the HELIN Consortium information. This means that HELIN set up a separate URL (e.g., http://www.helin.org) to maintain HELIN marketing, promotion and organization information so it is not confused with the OPAC. The Web address http://helin.uri.edu can become purely a server for the Innovative application and the OPAC. The Task Force felt this would not be an expensive process given the cheaply available Web space and the low cost of registering a domain name. An entire new site would not be needed but information pages about HELIN could be migrated to the new server and point to the OPAC server where appropriate. This would assist in delineating between what is HELIN (the organization) and HELIN (the OPAC).

Finally, the Task Force recommends that new products affecting the OPAC be carefully reviewed by an appropriate committee or task force of HELIN librarians before final selection

and implementation. One such product is ENCORE, Innovative's new "discovery services platform" with "faceted searching". While these products may prove to be valuable tools for finding information, sometimes little is known about them besides their marketing material. A closer analysis is needed to ensure that products selected meet the needs of our patrons at reasonable cost, with a minimum of adjustment and maintenance by HELIN staff.

APPENDIX 1 - Functional Assessment Matrix

KEY: B=function behavior L=layout   N = navigation   P= performance   T= text (labels, etc) V=visual (graphic id)

USER NEED	OPAC Feature supportive of need (existing or possible)	Feature exists in III	Problem	Type	Recommended Action	Example	Line #
Find Items (unknown / known)	Query forms	Y	Scopes : combines location & format	L, B	Make list easier to read (indent campuses)	http://library.brown.edu/	1
					Improve labeling, explananatory text		2
	Limit search (format, language, date, etc)	Y	Collection format differs from material types	T,B	Have separate "Limit to libraries/campuses" and "Collection type/format"		3
					Review scopes and material types; adjust as needed		4
			Limits once set should persist until removed. Query form on results screens executes a new search, so there is no convenient way to refine a search.	B			5
	Field search (title, subject, call #, etc)	Y					6
	Navigation between query forms	Y	Presentations of many options ineffficient/confusing		Use *most popular* queries for tabs and drop-downs + provide "All (or "Other") Search" page	http://webpac.clic.edu/screens/allsearch.html	7
			Unavailable queries (e.g. find: kw + location + govpub)	B,L			8
			ISSN/ISBN search on tabs is problematic		Use *most popular* queries for tabs		9
			MESH not needed on quick search	N/?B	Decide necessary options (if any) for quick search		10
			Query options not pervasive	B,L	Standardize list		11
	Query help (generic)	Y	Not visible / scrolling down is problematic		Provide jump link or 'pop up (child window or dhtml show/hide div)		12
	Results display	Y	Difficult to scan, browse results	L	Browse screen: omit holdings, webbridge & request; retain m-type	http://webpac.clic.edu/search/X?(fish)&searchscope=27&Da=&Db=&SORT=D	13
					Review brief and full displays, use as appropriate		14
			On keyword null results, query is auto changed to 'OR'	B	Disable		15
			Relevance ranking unreliable	L,B	Request III enhancement: option to disable or fine-tune RightResult		16
	Item descriptive info – bib record	Y			Review order/fields in bib record		17
	Item descriptive info –	Y			Ref Committee should review options		18
	Table of Contents						19
	Book Jacket Images						20
	Reviews						21
	Item descriptive info: patron ratings	Y			Determine if this function should be enabled		22
	Saved queries	Y					23

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USER NEED	OPAC Feature supportive of need (existing or possible)	Feature exists in III	Problem	Type	Recommended Action	Example	Line #
Locate/Retain Copies	Limit search by location	Y	Inconsistent locations ('location' vs 'collection')	B	Review scopes and locations		25
			Scopes : combines location & format	L, B	Make list easier to read	http://library.brown.edu/	26
					Improve labeling, explanatory text		27
					Have separate "Limit to libraries/campuses" and "Collection type/format"		28
	Sort results by location	Y	Sort options inconsistent		Determine correct placement		29
	Display results	Y	Max. 3 holdings displayed, when there are more	L B	Browse screen: omit holdings		30
	Holdings display	Y	Holdings display for print journals		Prioritize order of appearance: sort by location when patron affiliation/point-of-use is known. Otherwise, alpha sort		31
			Check-in displays do not stack live records above back-file records	B	III to fix?		32
	Search other libraries	Y					33
	InRhode		Confusion between InRhode and Helin as shared catalogs	T	Indicate that it is Brown (and allow for future potential with CLAN); Review when and where this option most appropriate		34
	Clan						35
	WorldCat						36
	Course Reserves	Y	Only available from homepage		Add as tab in persistant navigation	http://webpac.clic.edu http://qcat.quinnipiac.edu/search/X	37
	Physical location information (e.g. call letter stack locations)				Activate capability if not currently available to all libraries	http://library.muhlenberg.edu/search/X?t:Lake%20Ilo%20National%20Wildlife%20Refuge&m=&l=&Da=&Db=&b=&p=&SORT=D&=&=	38
	Renewals	Y					39
	Help						40
							41
Obtain Copies	Request items (HELIN/INRHODE)	Y	Request on browse screen, when full holdings not visible		Browse screen: omit request		42
			Request button not always obvious		Determine placement; Highlight button		43
	ILL form	Y					44
	E-reserves	Y					45
	Help	Y					46
Manage Citations	Print/email/download citations	Y					47
	Format specific export (e.g. Refworks)	Y					48
	Direct export to Refworks						49
	Help	Y					50

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USER NEED	OPAC Feature supportive of need (existing or possible)	Feature exists in III	Problem	Type	Recommended Action	Example	Line #
Manage Library Account	Current Borrowing	Y					51
	Borrowing History	Y					52
	Modify Personal Information						53
	Help	Y					54
							55
Find other than holdings (e.g. articles)	Portal to external resources (e.g. Web bridge periodical indexes)	Y					56
							57
Ease-of-use	Persistent sign-on (within III services)	Y	Only available from homepage		Add "login" to header	http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/search/	58
			Purpose unclear		Add text re functions on homepage? OR, if on tab, provide roll-over annotation for all tabs	http://qcat.quinnipiac.edu/	59
	Single sign-on (cross-application, institution-wide authentication)	N					60
	Accessible				Test		61
	Consistent, understandable navigation		No link to library homepages	N	Place in page footers		62
			"Home" links to OPAC home, not library home or HELIN home	T	Change label: "Catalog Home"		63
			Limit/Sort Search should be available on all results screens	N	Add button to simple keyword results screen		64
			Fewer choices enhances usability	L,T	Reduce number of tabs: Use "most popular" queries for tabs and drop-downs + provide All Search page		65
			After login, "Home" is replaced by "logout"	B	Have separate, persistent login /logout button	http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/search~/	66
	Where-am-I is clear		HELIN and CLAN catalogs have same visual design		Change HELIN design to make more distinctive		67
			Z39.50 catalogs		Design with distinctive look to avoid confusion		68
							69
	Understandable functions		Purpose of "search other places" unclear	T,L	Distinctly locate and label item-related and query-related functions		70
					Webbridge default should only link to other catalogs. Individual libraries may customize as desired.		71
			Purpose of check boxes unclear		Align under heading "Mark"	http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/search~/?searchtype=d&searcharg=dogs	72
			Purpose of "My Reading History" unclear	T	Add help text (or help link) on the "My Record" screen		73

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USER NEED	OPAC Feature supportive of need (existing or possible)	Feature exists in III	Problem	Type	Recommended Action	Example	Line #
Ease-of-use (con't)	Error-free display and navigation		CLAN, InRhode, and OCLC via webbridge: poorly designed frames with redundant navigation.	L,B	Fix coding errors		74
	Save/re-run search	Y					75
	Consistent terminology; Icons; Home page		On simple keyword screen -- "advanced search" should be link, not button (match "simple" link on advanced search page)	V			76
			Purpose of inRhode unclear	T	Change to "Search inRhode"		77
					Indicate it's Brown [how?] (and allow for future cross-search of CLAN)		78
					Improve buttons		79
					Use Search vice Submit where appropriate		80
	Spell check	Y			Evaluate		81
Privacy			Persistent login may result in accidental exposure of patron record		Add text on "My Record" screen to emphasize the need to logout		82

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INDIVIDUAL LIBRARY/ LIBRARIAN NEED	OPAC Feature supportive of need (existing or possible)	Problem	Type	Recommended Action	Examples	Line #
Communication						
Announcements	RSS					1
To patron from circulation (e.g. overdue notices)	Email notices					2
Patron to library: e.g. update contact information						3
Promotion and Marketing	Featured lists					4
Integration with library site	Link from OPAC to library			Add links in footer		5
	Consistent information (e.g. available e-resources)					6
Instructional support						
OPAC functions/labels/ display consistent with, reinforces information literacy principles and best practices		Webbridge linking to periodical indexes may be inconsistent with individual library recommended search strategies		Webbridge default should only link to other catalogs. Individual libraries may customize as desired.		7
How to use my library						8
How to find an item						9
Support for other library staff operations	Selectors function					10

HELIN NEED	OPAC Feature supportive of need (existing or possible)	Problem	Type	Recommended Action	Examples	Line #
Information about HELIN		Confustion between OPAC and HELIN consortium		Develop separate server for HELIN at www.helin.org domain		1
Promotion and Marketing		Ineffective marketing pages (copy, visual design, branding, message)				2
Administrative information				Develop separate server for HELIN at www.helin.org domain		3
Portal to all HELIN resources (e.g., Digital Commons)				Develop separate server for HELIN at www.helin.org domain		4

Appendix 2 - OPAC Examples

Academic Consortia
- CLICnet - http://webpac.clic.edu
- Tripod - http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/

Academic Sites
- Bob Jones University - http://library.bju.edu/search/X

Public Library
- Green County Public Library - http://library.gcpl.lib.oh.us/search/

Appendix 3 - Change Request System Flow Chart

```
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Submit a Change │
                    │    Request      │
                    └────────┬────────┘
                             │
                             ▼
                    ╱─────────────────╲
                   ╱ Reference Committee╲
                  ╱  and appropriate     ╲        No        ┌──────┐
                  ╲ committees determine if╱─────────────────▶│ End  │
                   ╲ change is desirable  ╱                  └──────┘
                    ╲─────────────────╱                        ▲  ▲
                             │                       No         │  │
                            Yes                       │         │  │
                             │              ╱──────────────╲    │  │
                             ▼             ╱ Final Approval  ╲   │  │
                    ╱─────────────╲        ╲   by committees  ╱──┘  │
                   ╱  HELIN Central╲        ╲────────────────╱  Yes │
                  ╱    Reviews      ╲              ▲            ┌──────────────┐
                  ╲   Feasibility    ╱  Yes        │            │ Implement on │
                   ╲───────────────╱──────▶ ┌──────────────┐   │ Production   │
                             │              │Schedule and  │   │ Server       │
                            No              │implement     │   └──────────────┘
                             │              │change(s) on  │
                             │              │test port with│
                             ▼              │HELIN wide    │
                    ┌──────────────┐        │review        │
                    │Make Enhancement│      └──────────────┘
                    │Request         │────────────────────────────┘
                    └──────────────┘
```

21