

Federated Searching – All Searching at One Place

We have witnessed a transformation of user base in recent years, extending well beyond the library's realm. This usage information is critical in decision to provide a federated search solution to the market. Statistics of access to databases, as well as simple observation of users' behaviour, suggested that a high percentage of electronic usage was taking place during off work hours and outside of the library.

Another factor is the research preference of younger library users who are more familiar with simple search models (ie Google) and found it difficult to adapt to complex vendor interfaces. On the other hand, institutional customers had been suggesting the need to increase the accessibility and profile of their licensed resources, in order to prevent their students from confining their research to the general web. The ultimate aim of the academic libraries is to provide quality, and quality of information on the internet is a known issue.

Based on this information, several companies made a strategic decision to develop a federated search product as a point of access to a library's entire collection of good quality sources. The objective was to provide one simple, easy-to-use interface that would combine search efficiency and simplicity. Some companies today are trying to address the problem of making searching easy, in different ways. Some felt that, rather than creating a large and general database, it was better to keep resource discovery and federated searching separated, yet linked to the full power of a bibliographic database on a vendor's interface. The other advantage that federated searching offers is the librarian's flexibility to create a customized environment for their institution, such as what to include in the common search frame, which can chose to integrate locally held resources, preferred portals and other items. The underlying value of a federated search solution is that the institution, not the vendor, maintains control over what resources are accessed for searching.

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