

**SEMLOL**  
**Annual Fall Meeting Minutes**  
**“Tech on the Cheap: Open Source and Freeware Solutions”**  
**November 20, 2009**  
**Lawrence Technological University**

**Business Meeting:**

The meeting was called to order at 1:10pm. Gary Cocozzoli of Lawrence Technological University welcomed the SEMLOL members to the Annual Fall SEMLOL meeting. Adrienne Aluzzo, the SEMLOL Chair, also welcomed the members to the meeting and thanked George Libbey, the Past Chair for his service to SEMLOL.

The member libraries then gave reports on the current events at their individual institutions. The business meeting was adjourned at 1:45pm.

**Fall Program Presentations:**

**“Tech on the Cheap: Moving to a Liblime-hosted Open Source ILS.”**

**Margaret Danowski, IT/Reference Librarian and Katie Greer, Systems Librarian  
Madonna University.**

Margaret Danowski and Katie Greer from Madonna University presented on their library’s experiences with a migration to an open source system, Koha. Margaret began the presentation with background on the Madonna Library’s previous library systems. The original system was VTLS and was installed in the late 1980s. The switch was made to the Horizon system in 1998. Several factors led to the interest in finding a new library system to replace Horizon, including the following:

- Horizon was discontinued as a new product somewhere around 2007. Old installations would be supported and maintained for a time, but libraries were encouraged to switch to the new product, Symphony.
- A decreasing library budget shaped the move to find a more cost-effective system.
- There was an interest in providing more functionality to the patron.

Margaret then discussed why Koha was chosen as the new library system. Other systems were considered, including Evergreen and Innovative Interfaces. At the time that Madonna was examining library systems, Evergreen did not yet have a serials module or an acquisitions module. In addition, Evergreen as a hosted option, was three times more expensive at the lowest level of support, than Koha was at the highest level of support. This was significant, since Madonna would need to have a hosted system due to the small in-house IT staff available to the Library. Finally, Innovative Interfaces was out of reach of the Library’s decreased budget.

The following factors led to the selection of Koha as the new library system at Madonna:

- Major issues facing the Library at the start of the year included fading hardware, an obsolete system, and the Horizon contract up in late August.
- Koha is an open source system with a robust, supportive community.
- Unlike Evergreen, Koha is more fully developed and was already being used in several academic and special libraries.
- Open-source software is “free”. Costs for a library hosting their own ILS would be limited to hardware and staffing.
- Liblime-hosted Koha provided both a lower-cost solution and the support Madonna needed.

Katie Greer then reviewed the budget savings over five years for the hosted Koha system at Madonna. The initial startup costs for Koha would equal or exceed the regular support contract for Horizon the first year. But after that, in subsequent years, while the cost of Horizon would rise with each year, the support cost for Koha would remain the same and the savings would be significant. While Horizon would range from approximately \$18,000 a year to almost \$22,000 a year, Koha would stay stable over time at approximately \$3750 a year. This was a significant savings for the Madonna Library.

Katie then discussed the benefits of a hosted system, including the following:

- No hardware maintenance for the Library.
- Customer support packages.
- Migration organized and carried out by Liblime.
- Training provided by Liblime.
- Less staff hours required for maintenance than if the Library hosted its own system.
- Web-based system that can be accessed from any computer.

Katie reviewed the staff experiences with the new system, noting that in general the response to the new system had been positive. She remarked that the initial adversity to the system was the result of a resistance to change experienced by some of the older staff who were used to the old system. She commented that the web-based, more contemporary format of Koha was off-putting to some, but that a month of testing and two days of training from Liblime put a lot of fears to rest.

Katie then noted some of the specific experiences of staff with Koha, covering circulation staff, cataloging staff and serials staff. She highlighted the following for the circulation staff:

- The circulation staff felt that the circulation module was a much easier one to use than the one in Horizon.
- Staff liked how easy it was to get patron information, manage fines and manage patrons.
- Staff disliked that the title searching was very rigid (must make sure that everything is correctly spelled) and that patron notification emails would

go out without the ability to preview them first. It was also noted that the indexing was rather slow.

Experiences for the cataloging staff included:

- The catalogers like the Z39.50 cataloging capability. They have reacted very positively to the cataloging module.
- The catalogers like the automatic spell-check function, the ease of use and the MARC framework customizations.
- The catalogers also noted some frustration with the slow indexing and search capabilities within the cataloging module.

Experiences for the serials staff included:

- The serials module is the newest and least-developed module in Koha. The serials staff find the serials prediction very rigid and not user-friendly.
- Received issues must be checked in separately.
- Navigation is not as easy as in the other modules.
- The design of the system does not work well on older, smaller computer screens.
- The serials staff like the Z39.50 capability and the easy MARC editing.

Margaret reviewed the experiences of the reference librarians with the OPAC. She noted the following:

- Title and subject searching are not precise. These searches act more like keyword searching and search the contents notes as well as title or subject. Irrelevant items are retrieved.
- Due to a lack of authority records that were migrated from Horizon, the Madonna Koha catalog doesn't have a Subject Browse search. This makes it difficult to do efficient Subject searching. The librarians have to get used to using the Topics list which appears on the results screen once a search has been made.
- The print function doesn't launch the print dialog box. Items need to be saved to the cart to print without using the control keys.
- The serials holdings display is not standard with Koha, but is a customized XSLT style sheet done especially for the Madonna Library. The gray text of the serials holdings on the style sheet doesn't always print out, especially if the printer is low on toner. In addition, when you print the serials record from the cart, you don't get the holdings display, but the bibliographic record.
- The librarians would like to see an Edit Search function and improved navigation.
- The librarians like the cleanness of the interface, the Advanced Search screen, the Sort function, the ability to search precise subject headings

from the detailed record and the functions that allow students to login and manage their own accounts.

There was a brief question and answer period after the presentation. Then the group adjourned for a refreshment break.

**“Library 2.0: Quick and easy tips for libraries exploring social media.”**

**Natalie Zebula, Reference Librarian, Lawrence Technological University.**

Natalie Zebula from Lawrence Technological University presented on libraries and social networks. She first discussed why libraries might be interested in using social networks. She noted the following:

- There are many social network services that are free and fun.
- Using social networks builds community and the services are all about sharing.
- Your library can connect with users and others.

Natalie remarked that Lawrence Tech has a presence on Flickr, YouTube and Twitter. She noted the following tips for using a social web:

- For your first try, pick one social network to explore.
- Try a personal contact first.
- Be open to sharing.
- Interact with others (make comments and add contacts).

Natalie then addressed Flickr and what can be done with that network. Flickr is a photo-sharing service where you can post pictures. You can use Flickr to virtually document what’s happening at your library. You can digitize your archives there and search your own photostream as well as post to your own photostream. You can create digital special collections and can add notes to pictures and make links to your website or catalog. In this way, you can promote books and activities at your library, as well as make connections to other libraries.

Natalie then reviewed the possibilities of chat, highlighting the chat program that Lawrence Tech employs, Meebo. She noted that Meebo is an easy way to experiment with instant messaging. She remarked that Meebo can manage multiple accounts and the chat widget for Meebo can be embedded on your library’s homepage or in a blog or on a toolbar. It can also be embedded in a Facebook page.

Natalie next demonstrated how a library can create a customized toolbar via an online service called Conduit. The toolbar can include links to the catalog and databases and can have social web buttons with dynamic Twitter updates. The chat widget can also be embedded in the toolbar. A library can customize the toolbar specifically for their needs or can make multiple toolbars with specific purposes.

Natalie then showed how libraries can use blogs to create polls, share news and promote the library's collection. She demonstrated the Lawrence Tech blog that she maintains. She also demonstrated how Twitter could be used by libraries. She noted the following uses for Twitter:

- Can share interesting, real-time news.
- Can set up RSS Alerts for saved searches.
- Can interact with others.
- Can find lists for a particular person or institution.
- Provides a link to the College Directory (Global Quad).

The last service which Natalie presented was YouTube. She noted that it was easy to make videos which could be posted to YouTube. A free screencasting tool called Screenr can be used to make a video which can be uploaded to YouTube. She commented that all that was needed was a microphone and a screen you were interested in recording. She demonstrated a small video she had created.

### **“Google May be Trying to Take Over the World.”**

#### **Joshua Neds-Fox, Library System Webmaster, Wayne State University.**

Joshua Neds-Fox from Wayne State University presented on Google and its goal to create the ultimate operating system. He first reviewed the mission of Google, noting that this was basically “to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.” He also discussed the traditional search products of Google, including web searching (google.com), desktop searching (desktop.google.com), geography searching (maps.google.com), book searching (books.google.com) and article searching (scholar.google.com).

Joshua then reviewed how Google is branching out into both traditional and non-traditional software. Included amongst the traditional software is a calendar (calendar.google.com), email (mail.google.com), office documents (doc.google.com), a browser (chrome.google.com) and a mobile OS (android.com). Non-traditional software includes an OS (Google Chrome OS), an Internet Explorer plug-in designed to get around problems with working with IE (Chrome Frame) and a new office project manager and an alternative to email (Wave).

Joshua discussed Google Chrome OS, noting that the system was a lightweight Linux operating system. The launch of the product is set for next year. The browser will be the operating system when the Chrome OS is loaded. Each application will be operating in a separate tab. Each application will be isolated in its own tab and will be running its own process. Chrome OS is open source as is the Chrome browser. The operating system is meant to be a conduit like your radio or TV. It will direct you to the web. There will be no hard drive on your NetBook, data will live on the web. All the applications will be on the web. The Chrome browser supplies little snapshots of the sites that have been most visited. It also shows recent bookmarks.

Joshua then reviewed the attributes of Google Chrome, the web browser. He noted that it is the base for the Google Chrome OS. It is very fast and the interface is very simple. The tabs simplify browsing and the address bar is now omnifunctional. You can type a URL, a search term, etc. in the address bar. The browser will autosuggest entries. The tabbed browsing is drop and drag functional. He noted that privacy with Chrome is an issue. Google is notorious for data collection and anything that is input on the web via Google will be collected. He remarked that there is no indication that Google Chrome will be any different in regard to privacy.

Why would Google want to create Google Chrome? Joshua noted that from Google's standpoint, it is the wise thing to do. Chrome will be the base for the upcoming Chrome OS. Google services run better on Chrome. Google plans on providing more services and without a native Google browser, Google would not be maximizing its potential.

Joshua then turned to Google Chrome Frame. He noted that this is a plug-in designed by Google for Internet Explorer. It overlays IE's native Javascript/HTML rendering engine with Google's. It provides access to HTML 5 elements like <video> and <canvas> that IE doesn't support. It is only designed to work in IE. The use of Chrome Frame is triggered by a webpage when it needs to display HTML 5 elements.

Finally, Joshua presented Google Wave. This is a hosted conversation with only one copy to which anyone can contribute. It is an alternative to email. It is currently in beta and Google hopes that it will be the next gen email application and the default project manager or workflow manager. Like a wiki, anyone can edit anything in the conversation. It can be played back, both rewind and fast forwarded, to see what and when additions were made. It can be embedded in a website like a video. It has extensions like gadgets (i.e. apps) or robots (i.e. automated "smart" conversation). It is open source and can be developed and extended. It is a real-time communication platform. Joshua noted that Wave is editable, conversational, extensible and exportable. It was developed to be the email for the social software set.

After the final presentation, Adrienne Aluzzo announced the topic for the Annual Spring SEMLOL meeting. Fundraising for libraries would be the topic. She thanked the members for attending the Fall meeting and the program adjourned at 4:00pm

**Submitted by:** Margaret L. Danowski  
December 10, 2009