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Next Generation – On MetaLib

By Lukas Koster, IGeLU SC

From the perspective of MetaLib customers, the IGeLU 2008 conference in Madrid can be characterised as the “Next Generation” meeting.

First, there was the unexpected announcement by Ex-Libris product manager Karen Groves at the MetaLib Product Update session that MetaLib minor release 4.3, scheduled for spring 2009, was to be the last official release for the MetaLib product. The future lies in a “next generation metasearch tool” with a completely re-designed metasearch engine, and Primo, with meta-search or “remote search” option only, as user interface.

OK, we could have seen it coming: there was talk of this new “URM” project, and there were also some MetaLib User interface enhancement requests that received the official ExLibris comment “not on MetaLib’s roadmap; functionality is provided in Primo”. But nevertheless it still took us by surprise.

To be honest, a complete re-design of the metasearching back-end appears to be a very welcome and useful step. And Primo offers front-end functionality that MetaLib customers have been dreaming of for quite some time now.

Second, in the customer presentations during the break out sessions, there was considerable emphasis on extending MetaLib with either front-end Web 2.0-like functionality, or back-end usage data reporting tools, as well as several integration issues. Here we also see evidence of users’ needs for “next generation” functionality.

A third indicator can be found in the Report on the first MetaLib Enhancement Request Procedure, presented at the MetaLib PWG Business Meeting. Although 11 requests will be implemented in release 4.3, or have already been implemented in service packs, a large number of enhancements were designated “too large”, “not on roadmap”, etc.

As a matter of fact, Karen Groves explicitly stated that the nature of the enhancement requests was one of the reasons for deciding upon the “next generation metasearch tool”.

Finally, we are also facing a “next generation” MetaLib Product Working Group. In Madrid the current PWG Coordinator Lukas Koster was elected as a new mem-



Next generation (Flickr, Ocean.Flynn)

ber of the IGeLU Steering Committee. This means that the PWG needs a new Coordinator and preferably also one or two new Working Body members.

Fortunately, after the conference current PWG Working Body member Meg Bate (AARLIN, Melbourne, Australia) agreed to take over as Coordinator, and two new people have joined the team. They are:

Stefan Lohrum, KOBV Berlin, Germany

André Keyzer, Library of the University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Together with the two other current Working Body members, Jeremy Acland (Queen Mary University of London) and Ari Rouvari (National Library of Finland), they will make a great team.



Entrance to the Conference Venue