

## Discovery Services in Academic Libraries: An Overview

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**ABSTRACT :** This paper is an attempt to overview the usefulness of discovery services in the academic libraries. This overview is a study of discovery services, its features, facilities and its flexibility when retrieving search results from the point of end-user and librarian. Major libraries which have a vast number of researchers are applying discovery services in their resource centre or library so that the faculties and students both can take advantage of this. This is sometime also called single window search system as it provides a single window to search information from all the databases from the service providers as well as the contents from the libraries and other subscription from other content providers along with all open source contents.

**Key words** – Discovery; Discovery services;  
Web scale discovery; Single search box

### INTRODUCTION

In Indian universities it was found that the use of e-resources is increasing day by day by the researchers and faculty members of the institution to keep their selves updated and access up-to-date information in all fields of R & D or relevance. There are many content providers or publishers and they have their own databases to search for information separately by providing subscriptions to the institute on payment base. Any user or reader can access these subscriptions within the premises via its resource centre or library. Researchers accessing information but the tragedy is that the this accessing is mainly for the end-user but they are less informed person who knows very less about how to access and retrieve more from the facility they got from the institutes for the purpose of study. Here the difficulty comes of the searcher that whenever they search they don't know where and how to search specific information and hence the strike rate of accessing information was less just because of the unawareness. Now the new concept of web scale discovery has evolved the information world with its

discovery services and thus this service provides a platform to the users/searchers to give just a single window or dialogue box to search all the resources of the institution subscribe. This article is particular frames the web scale discovery services and trying to sketch the discovery services in academic libraries and also try to draw a clear picture of its features and use in academic libraries by keeping in view the end users.

### WEB SCALE DISCOVERY

“Web scale discovery refers to a class of products that index a vast number of resources in a wide variety formats and allows users to search for content in the physical collection, print and electronic journal collections and other resources from a single search box. Search results are displayed in a manner similar to internet searches, a relevance ranked list with links to online content.” (Hoy, 2012). The definition of Web Scale Discovery “allows organizations to scale, to increase and decrease capacity—to reach a broad, geographically diverse community, and at the same time scope services to focus on

meeting the specific needs of their users.” (OCLC, 2013). It is clear that web scale discovery services are employed in resource centres to provide facility which is seamless in result and have no geographical boundary and is meant primarily for end user. Tag line of OCLC for web scale discovery is “The definition of Webscale is simple—operating at the scale of the Web”. (OCLC, 2013) In another words we can say that discovery service is a type of service where any publisher can showcase their collection and put information in the hands of library users more efficiently, effectively, seamlessly with easy to retrieve manner using a simple single search box.

Web scale discovery services provide deep discovery to a library’s local and licensed content and represent an evolution – perhaps a revolution – for end-user.

Web scale discovery services have a great potential to transform any traditional library into a platform which provides its resources seamlessly hence can be called ultra-modern way to provide services to its readers/users. Web scale discovery service is capable to access information quickly and seamlessly across a vast number of databases any institution subscribe. There are four major vendors who provide discovery services such as OCLC, Serial Solutions, Ebsco and Ex Libris.

Web scale discovery is rapidly growing and adopted by the academic libraries all over the world. Web scale discovery services are able to index a variety of content hosted locally or remotely such as digital collections institutional repository content and content from locally developed and hosted databases. It can include other things such as e-books, publisher contents, open-access repositories. Due to this feature we can say that discovery services are much more flexible in nature in comparison to traditional way of accessing information electronically.

## PROMINENT FEATURES OF DISCOVERY SERVICES

Main features and its flexibility of accessing information with the use of discovery services makes it useful for the end-user. Here we are taking few features in consideration such as -

- It is search interface to pre-indexed metadata and or full text documents
- It provides Single simple entry point and also known as ‘single window system’
- It does not search live sources like federated searches
- It search pre-indexed data and return search result more quickly
- It is an evolution beyond the federated search
- It may provide integration with federated search or provide an API for others to do the integration
- It uses a unified index
- Pre-indexing feature of discovery services which allows the speed, de-duplication of records and unified search index available this service.
- Discovery services use a unified search index to search content from all sources they have access to from one index or access point.
- Unlike federated search that relies on limited access to remote resources the discovery service product will rely on pre-indexed content and metadata.
- It brings in detailed metadata like author-supplied abstracts, keywords, subjects from the collection.
- Discovery Service search results are pre-indexed using a controlled vocabulary.
- Discovery is complete OPAC loaded directly into EDS.
- It is easy to use by the end-user
- It uses Boolean search for searching

## DISCOVERY SERVICE AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Discovery services such as Summon 2.0, by Serials Solutions, Worldcat local by OCLC and Ebsco discovery service, their databases are searched at a regular time to provide standard in service for the end-user. This service would build up their own index of all the items in these other databases so when the user searches they are not sending the search out anywhere but right there on their own servers. The discovery service must deal with differences in the structure of metadata from different sources to produce the unified search index.

Users can search using a simple window (interface) to search all the pre-index materials including catalog, subscription databases and web contents more quickly than the existing meta-search tools and with many more possibilities for the refinement of search results. Discovery services are very useful for university libraries, large public libraries and libraries at par excellence of high education standards. Within a library, discovery services can be used by students, faculty, any user, novice users easily.

Some powerful features of discovery service, by Ebsco, are that “it brings in detailed metadata like author-supplied abstracts, keywords, subjects from the collection of primary publisher partners as well as it brings results from databases to which an institution subscribes with historical abstracts. It also show book jacket images, book records, entertainment records, annotations, family keys, subject heading demand information review citation etc. from a long list of publications and it will include non EBSCO host databases like British library, Newsbank and Alexander Street Press etc.” (Ebsco discovery service, 2013)

Ebsco discovery service is complete OPAC loaded directly into EDS with real time availability checks and daily updates. Its ability to include institutional archives

and repositories makes it one of its class to provide end user service. It's another feature is that it consolidate the search result and does not show duplicate records. Its ability to limit the search to full text (both electronic and print), references available, academic journals, searched items electronically or physically in the library, filter by date of publication etc. is very fruitful for the searcher. “Web Scale Discovery Services increase accessibility of resources and will definitely on the whole increase full-text downloads.” (Tay, 2013)

All resources in discovery are pre-index using a controlled vocabulary for ease in searching. All resources are assigned by subject and the thesaurus provides like terms and it sorts results by type like academic journals, books, monographs, magazines, newspapers etc. “Web-scale discovery services are able to index a variety of content, whether hosted locally or remotely.” (Vaughan, 2012).

Discovery services are very easy to use and it uses Boolean search, visual search techniques. It searches by subject clustering, sort results by its relevance or by date. When a user searches using keywords and sometime these keywords are spelling mistakes etc. but discovery services forgive mistakes and provide alternative list of words by relevance to choose from so that a user can choose appropriate word for search

Another provider is OCLC which provides discovery services. It is very clear that the prominent features of discovery services are that it provides the search results gather. It finds materials quickly and easily and can explore relevant material from 1.298 billions of items. OCLC gave it name ‘WorldCat Local’ which is webscale discovery solution which retrieve results from a single search-box from the library and world's library collection in single click to access full text as well as other forms too. “OCLC's discovery service includes 37+million digital items from trusted sources, 15+million eBooks, and

238+million books in libraries worldwide.” (OCLC,2013).It does not matter in web scale discovery that where is end-user is physically present and searching online, it’s a global web visibility provided in discovery service. Discovery services enables a user to search using login id to get connected and searched the collection of library as well as provider’s database seamless and effortlessly without knowing its actual reach and process.

Summons, is a web scale discovery service by serials solutions introduced in 2009, was the first web-scale discovery service in the market and now it is called Summons 2.0. “It’s the only discovery service which is designed around a single, unified index of content. Unlike the other services, Summon service is not a repurposed database platform or next-generation catalog. Rather it is built-to-purpose discover engine specially designed to satisfy end-user and their needs and connects more with the more users.” (Serials Solutions, 2013)Summons service include all publication without making any difference of contents from other publishers or vendors or other content types to provide seamless service to end-users.

Primo is a one stop solution for the discovery and delivery of local and remote resources by Ex libris. It assists libraries in exposing the information and deliver results seamlessly. “It changes the library environment into a new information system architecture. The special feature of Primo discovery service is that it can be embedded in commonly used applications and can be access be mobile devices which

enable libraries to provide the top ranked service to its end-users.” (Ex Libris, 2012). Like other discovery service Primo discovery service offers users a single interface (single search box) to find all the information they need with speed ease Users can access local and institutional resources as well and of many formats like books, e-books, print and electronic articles, digital media etc. If searched keyword does not match then it provides user a sort of help same what you see in Google “did u mean ....” to assists user and provide more relevant keywords to search again. Primo discovery can rerun saved queries, sends notifications via e-mail or via RSS and even user can place an order for an item from their library or through the ILL module. Users can tag, share, reviews and can give it ratings too.

### CONCLUSION

In this study it was found that the discovery services are very useful due to its easiness to use and its flexibility to search items of different types and from institutional database to provider’s database and include types from print to electronic and in many forms without making any difficulty for the end user. It also gave the free to the end user that they can access without any geographical boundation and a lot more facilities comparatively the traditional way of searching data. Here we saw the comparative features of top four providers of discovery service and found that the difference is very little from the point of end user and hence can say that academic libraries must avail such services where the R & D is in top priorities.

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