Discovery Layer

Team Summary and Recommendation

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Background

For many years, libraries have relied on out-of-the-box online catalogs provided by their management systems. These online catalogs were – and still are – less than ideal for finding library material because their behind-the-scenes structure is modeled on the old physical card catalog. In a Google age, people expect to find what they're looking for online and find it quickly. In the library world, there are now new online catalogs, called "Discovery Layers," that can provide that kind of service to customers. In June 2012, PCCLD formed a team to study and evaluate the Discovery Layer marketplace:

- Amy Martin, Librarian with Literacy Emphasis
- Andrew Bregar, Lead Reference Librarian
- Maria Kramer, Interim Youth Services Supervisor
- Kim Young, Outreach Supervisor
- Michelle Vigil, Website Editor
- Sharon Foote, Library Assistant
- Kirsten Dees, Library Assistant
- Abby Koehler, ILS administrator

At the time, there were seven Discovery Layers available.

- VuFind
- BiblioCommons
- SirsiDynix Enterprise
- OCLC WorldCat Local
- Ebsco Discovery Service
- Innovative Encore
- Serial Solutions Summon

The team systematically considered several factors during their evaluation:

- **Cost** (approximate)
- **Compatibility** with current and future library system
- **Stability** in development / operates consistently
- **Ease of use** for customers
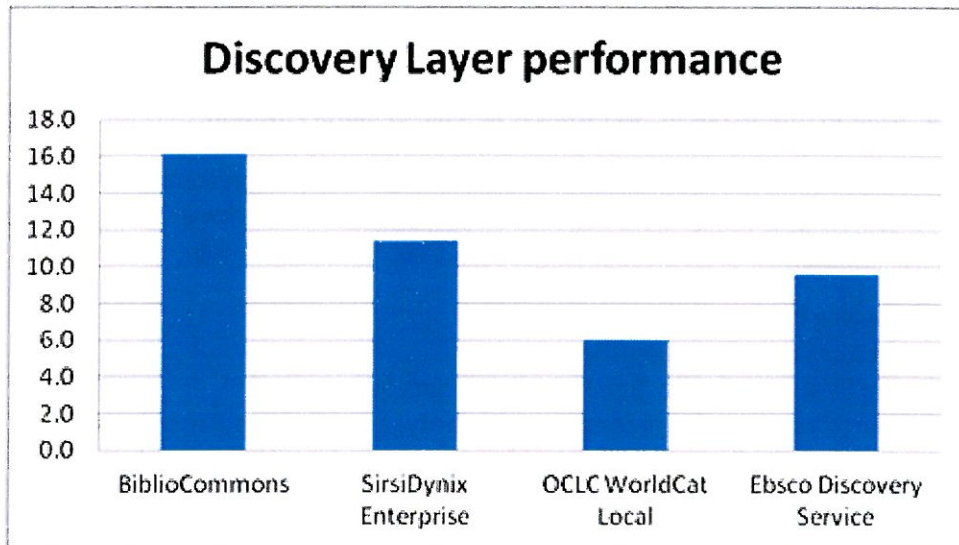- **Other libraries** use the Discovery Layer

Summary A

Discovery Layer	Cost	Compatible	Stable	Ease of Use	Other libraries
VuFind	$30,000	Yes	No	Very good	Yes
BiblioCommons	$28,000	Yes	Yes	Very good	Yes
SirsiDynix Enterprise	$23,000	Maybe not	Yes	Fair	Yes
OCLC WorldCat Local	$18,000	Yes	No	Poor	No
Ebsco Discovery Service	$15,000	Yes	No	Poor	No
Innovative Encore	NA	No	Yes	Good	Yes
Serial Solutions Summon	NA	No	Yes	Good	Yes

Based on the comparison in Summary A, the team eliminated three Discovery Layers as possible candidates at PCCLD: Innovative Encore is not compatible with our current system; Serial Solutions Summon is now only available to academic libraries; and the open-source Discovery Layer VuFind would

require significant ongoing support from our IT department in order to remain compatible with other library web services.

The team then evaluated the performance of the four remaining products by visiting the websites of other libraries with that Discovery Layer in place.

Summary B

Discovery Layer performance

A bar chart titled "Discovery Layer performance" with a vertical axis from 0.0 to 18.0 in increments of 2.0. Bars: BiblioCommons approximately 16.0, SirsiDynix Enterprise approximately 11.3, OCLC WorldCat Local approximately 6.0, Ebsco Discovery Service approximately 9.5.

Side-by-side comparison

SirsiDynix Enterprise will only work with a SirsiDynix library system. Should the library decide to change its system in the future -- and another project this year will consider this -- the library must purchase a new Discovery Layer. In contrast, **BibilioCommons** is system-independent and can work with any library system. Like BiblioCommons, OCLC WorldCat Local and Ebsco Discovery Service are also system-independent.

Unfortunately, neither **OCLC WorldCat Local** nor **Ebsco Discovery Service** is a well-developed product. They were the least expensive of the Discovery Layers reviewed, but they offered little improvement in searching and discovery compared to our current catalog, and these products are not predicted to become significantly improved in the near future.

Further, there are only two small public libraries using **OCLC WorldCat Local**, most likely because the company has redirected their development efforts toward an online library management system instead of in their Discovery Layer. Similarly, the public libraries that use **Ebsco Discovery Service** are in New Zealand, and the company is no longer investing resources in the improvement of their Discovery Layer, opting instead to lease their technology to companies for integration with other products.

Finally, the difference in performance between **BibilioCommons** and **SirsiDynix Enterprise** is significant. BiblioCommons was far more powerful in searching and was much easier for everyone to use.

Recommendation

Having thoroughly considered all aspects of the Discovery Layers, the team unanimously recommends that the library district adopt **BiblioCommons** as the new online catalog.

Summary C

BiblioCommons

Cost	• rated 2nd among all Discovery Layers at $28,000
Compatible	• system-independent: will work if we change library system
Stable	• multi-tenant: we benefit for development paid for/ suggested by other libraries • software-as-a-service: company 'keeps' system and service at their location and will maintain it for us
Ease of Use	• spelling helper • Amazon.com-like suggestions tools • can limit searches to 'just Juvenile' or 'just Non-fiction' • search result rankings consider popularity; great for popular collections • easy to build lists of things you like, recommend, and have checked out • easy to share titles and authors online through Facebook and Twitter
Other libraries	• New York Public Library, Chicago Public Library, Seattle Public Library

BiblioCommons

Based in Toronto, BiblioCommons has been a major player in the Discovery Layer world for several years. Institutions as large as New York Public Library chose BiblioCommons to provide their customers with a solid foundation for searching their physical collections.

This is of importance to PCCLD because BiblioCommons is a multi-tenant, software-as-a-service Discovery Layer. Every library using BiblioCommons routes online catalog traffic through a personalized BiblioCommons webspace. Upgrades and fixes are provided regularly by BiblioCommons staff, and BiblioCommons' developers push out added features, new integrations, and the like for all customers at the same time.

BiblioCommons will improve the quality of search results by offering spelling help and suggestions. It will allow staff and customers to limit catalog searches in greater detail than now. BiblioCommons' search is powered by a sensitive algorithm that considers how popular material is to others searching in the catalog. Customers will be able to build lists of the things they've checked out and liked and staff will be able to build recommendation lists around topics of high interest to our community. Customers will also be able to share library titles with their friends on social media websites.

The Discovery Layer team respectfully submits this recommendation to upgrade and extend this most essential of library services, our online catalog, by adopting the BiblioCommons Discovery Layer.