

# Web-scale Discovery Services: An Overview

Emily Scharf  
Webster University Library

This poster examines web-scale discovery services from four major database vendors. It compares and contrasts their offerings.

## Discovery Services - what exactly does that mean?

Web-scale discovery services are centralized, pre-aggregated indexes searched by the end user. Discovery services are the next generation of library searches that pull various resources together into one interface. Users can find books, trade publications, articles, journals, DVDs, CDs, dissertations, newspapers, eBooks, and more using discovery services. Some on the market incorporate federated search and some do not. See below for comparisons between federated search and discovery services.

### Ebsco Discovery Service

Pros:

- Familiar EBSCOhost interface
- Branded by you for your library; can pick a new name
- Users know which databases they are searching

Cons:

- Integrated federated search on the side
- Few non-EBSCO resources at this time

### Summon from ProQuest Serial Solutions

Pros:

- Only discovery service currently used by universities in Missouri
- Delayed log-in; only to access full-text articles

Cons:

- Limiters on the side are helpful, but too wordy
- No subject searching (only a con for librarians, users do not seem concerned by this)

### Encore from Innovative Interfaces

Pros:

- Recently implemented by St Louis County Library
- From Innovative Interfaces, which is used by MOBIUS libraries

Cons:

- Integrated federated search
- Advanced search lacks subject searching

### WorldCat Local from OCLC

Pros:

- Price
- Integration with WorldCat resources (book catalog)

Cons:

- Tends to change library workflow at first due to more interlibrary loan requests. Users search "Libraries Worldwide" and do not know they are finding resources outside the library.
- KnowledgeBase still does not allow library staff to set e-journal holdings, so false positive full-text articles appear in searches.

### Student likes:

- Different types of resources combined into one search, streamlined research process
- Ability to easily narrow search
- Ability to email books & articles to themselves and others
- Discovery services save time

### Student desires:

- Ability to evaluate or rate resources
- Make it easier to retrieve a specific result or article
- When viewing search results, users want to know resource format; i.e. is this a book, article, eBook, etc.
- More prominent access points for help from librarians
- Integrated ILL request forms or ability to place ILL requests

### Federated search vs. discovery

- Vendors marketed federated search like discovery is marketed now: as a mega-search that retrieves and displays abstracting and indexing of full-text databases from remote information hosts.
- Federated searches take much longer to generate because data is not pre-aggregated. The search is not using a central index, like discovery services do. Instead it is retrieving data from remote hosts and bringing it back to the user.
- Federated search is similar to web-scale discovery at the full-text level because accessing the full-text requires users to go outside the search interface.

Works cited:

Ekins, A. & Koster, L. (2011). United Resource Discovery Comparison. <http://sites.google.com/site/urd2comparison/home>

Majors, R. (2011). Usability of next-gen interfaces and discovery tools. Presentation at American Library Association Conference.

Steiner, H. (2011). Personal correspondence.

Contact info:

Emily Scharf, Instruction and Liaison Services Librarian

Webster University Library, St Louis

emilyscharf99@webster.edu, (314) 246-7818

