
M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries: Search25 and E-BASS25

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BACKGROUND

The M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries (<http://www.m25lib.ac.uk>) is a collaborative organisation geared to improving library and information services within London and the south east of England. The Consortium has 57 members including small colleges, large universities, national institutions, museums and societies. During 2011–12 and 2012–13, the M25 Consortium was successful in two bids to Jisc for funding projects in the areas of resource discovery and e-books. The purpose of this paper is to summarise the deliverables of the Search25 and E-BASS25 projects.



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SEARCH25 (STRENGTHENING ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO RESEARCH CONSORTIAL HOLDINGS IN THE M25)

The Search25 project was funded by Jisc during 2011–12 as part of its Resource Discovery Programme. It was led by Royal Holloway University of London on behalf of the M25 Consortium, who worked with other designated partners: Birkbeck

College, University of London; the British Library for Development Studies; the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex; the Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London; and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. SERO Consulting was a commercial partner. The University of Sheffield Information School was engaged as a partner with a specific brief around quality assurance, usability and evaluation. The project ran from November 2011 until August 2012. Overall costs were about £130,000, of which Jisc provided £107,000. All deliverables were ready by September 2012, when the new Search25 service was launched.



The Search25 team; left to right standing Graham Seaman, John Gilby, John Tuck; front James Riding, Amy Warner

What is Search25 and who is it for?

Search25 has been described succinctly by Paul Clough and Paula Goodale (University of Sheffield) as 'a virtual union OPAC (online public access catalogue) which is capable of retrieving records from the individual OPACs of member institutions of the Consortium. In terms of users, these vary from undergraduate and postgraduate students, to academics and research staff, and library professionals, with varying degrees of subject, domain and search expertise, information needs and patterns of search behaviour.'

The best means of seeing how the service works is to view the three-minute video that was produced as part of the project and which shows Search25 in action (see < <http://www.search25.ac.uk> > and click on the film box). The service encapsulates the concept of library-hopping, whereby library users can identify an item they need in another library; then, by activating the user options section of the service, they can identify whether they are eligible to use the library that has the required item – and then they go and get it. The library-hopping concept is particularly valuable in central

London where so many M25 Consortium libraries are in close proximity.

Search25: Personal view

The Search25 experience has been described in a more personal way by a user, the project's communications officer, James Riding, who was responsible for the film and tested the service in connection with his own research.

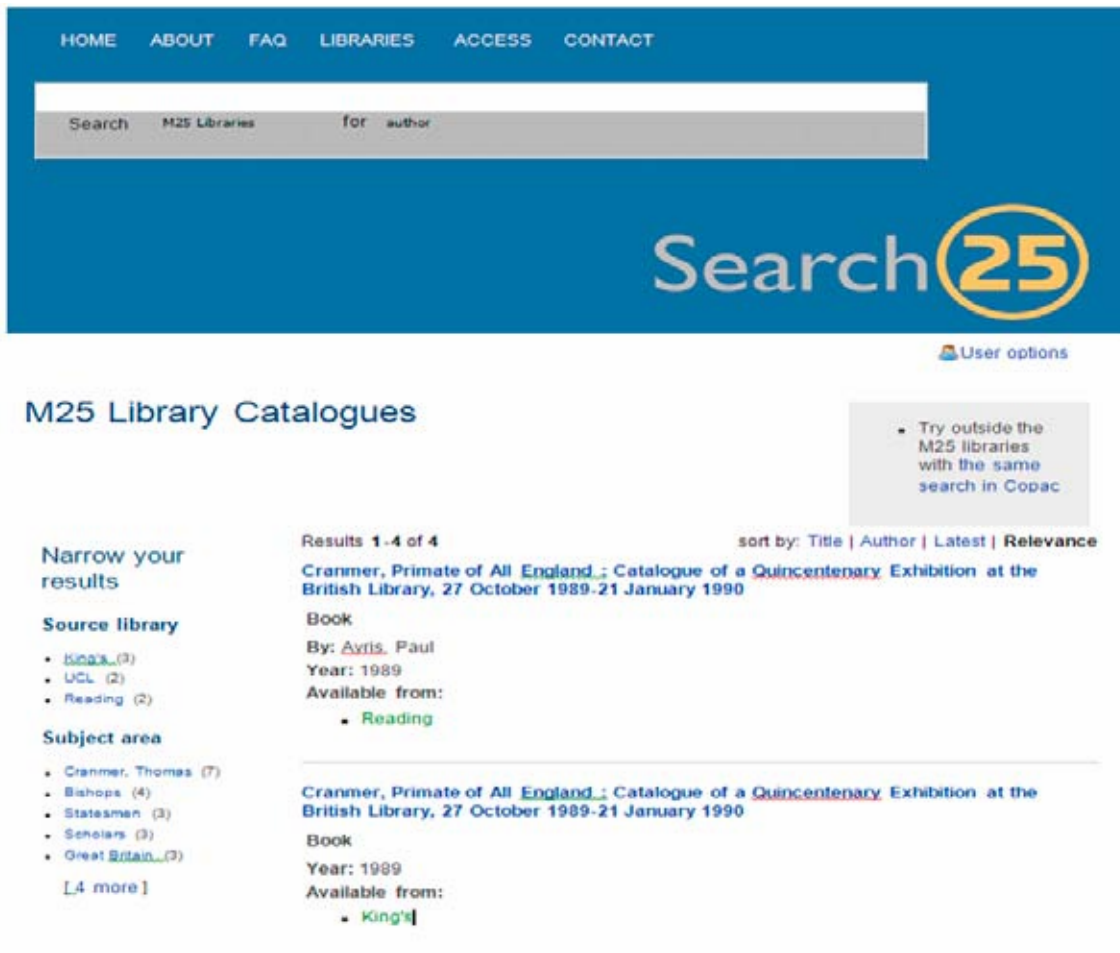
I have been meaning to read Campo santo by W. G. Sebald for a number of years. On Wednesday I had the opportunity to get my hands on the book... The prose section – a series of excursions about Corsica at the beginning of the book – especially seemed to speak to my own work over the past few years... There was a reason for finally being able to borrow the book – the recently compiled library information that has now been inserted into the Search25 prototype. I found browsing Search25 remarkably intuitive... Enabling me to search for all of Sebald's works held at libraries across London and the south east of England. I found it extremely useful for doing a literature search, even finding things I had not come across before. Campo santo was available at a number of M25 institutions, the most convenient being University College London. I set out in the afternoon towards UCL, with the location of the book, its availability and status to hand.

The book was there!

Search25: Other deliverables

The project set out to achieve much more than to meet the service need described above. It demonstrated the successful use of open-source software products Xerxes and Pazpar2 to create the new service and to provide a platform for future development. Pazpar2 is the system core: the search engine, aggregator, and matching and merging processor; Xerxes is the system framework: the user interface, query definition and results display.

The project delivered the Search25 Licensing Report, produced by SERO Consulting Ltd (see <http://search.inform25.ac.uk/blog/>). The report is based on work undertaken to ascertain relevance, potential and appetite for the open licensing of bibliographic metadata through the service. Although data in the Search25 context can be defined as small 'releases of data', this work nevertheless represents an important step in the



Search25 screenshot

open metadata journey and opens up the possibility for the Consortium to facilitate the adoption of open licensing by member libraries.

An analysis of user expectations of the new service has been provided through a report produced by Paul Clough and Paula Goodale from the University of Sheffield Information School (<http://search.inform25.ac.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Search25EvaluationReportFinal.pdf>). Paul and Paula have written extensively in the area of search system evaluation, and through focus groups at the outset of the project they were able to identify a number of suitable criteria for evaluating the Search25 system once it was fully implemented. These were developed into user scenarios, which are described in the report; for instance, a student or other patron contacts the library reference desk because they cannot find a particular item they need for their study.

An application programming interface (API) for M25 library data has been developed and has potential for re-use by other services. Search25 includes a database with large amounts of information about individual libraries belong-

ing to institutions within the M25 Consortium. These data have been made available to external applications needing information about academic libraries in the south east of England through the API, which enables real-time queries. Search25 itself uses the API for its library information.

Sustaining the service

The M25 Consortium's Steering Group and Support Team, making use of the well-established structure of the Consortium itself, will ensure that appropriate support and maintenance mechanisms are in place. To inform decision-making and prioritisation for the future, an M25 Online Services Group, reporting to the Consortium's Steering Group, has been set up.

E-BASS25 (E-BOOKS ACQUISITION AS A SHARED SERVICE IN THE M25)

In 2011 the M25 Consortium, together with MLAG (Museum Librarians and Archivists Group), carried out a survey of members, around their experiences with e-books, the business models they were using and whether there was an interest in or appetite for a cost-effective collaborative approach to e-books acquisition. The answers

were varied, but there was a clear steer from the membership for the Consortium and MLAG to move towards patron-driven acquisition (PDA). In March 2012 Royal Holloway University of London, on behalf of the M25 Consortium, submitted a bid to Jisc under its Digital Infrastructure Programme, indicating the following as named partners Kingston University, Jisc Collections, SERO Consulting and Owen Stephens. Funding of £39,427 was awarded by Jisc to carry out the work described below.

3.1 E-BASS25: Aims

The aims of the project were:

- to deliver a series of linked reports and guidelines as a navigation tool for consortia seeking to embark on collaborative purchasing of e-books with particular reference to the PDA model
- to provide a wider review of the e-books landscape
- to review PDA options and other relevant models
- to identify how consortia PDA purchasing can fit with national initiatives, for instance model licences, purchasing consortia agreements and services such as KB+ .

3.2 E-BASS25: Outputs

The outputs of the project can be found at <http://ebooksguidance.jiscinvolve.org> and include:

- landscape review, albeit relatively brief in view of other related work taking place in the domain, including an interesting case study on the consortial Orbis Alliance in North America
- an animation film explaining – and hopefully demystifying – four business models
 - PDA usage
 - PDA rental
 - PDA purchase
 - PDA evidence based
- a report, delivered by Jisc Collections, reflecting their work in interviewing seven publishers and two aggregators
- a report by Helen Woolfries (Kingston University) assessing the impact of the four identified purchasing models on systems requirements, including resource discovery and financial management demands.

Workshops, surveys and next steps

The contributions of David Kay (SERO) and Owen Stephen were significant; for instance, the two workshops facilitated by David and his team,

one at the beginning of the project, the other at the end, and a further survey of M25 and MLAG membership at the end of the project. The survey emphasised continuing interest in taking forward collaborative acquisition. In similar vein, the project manager's outgoing blog laid down a challenge to the M25 Consortium (Dominic Tate, 'Reflections on the E-BASS25 Project', <http://ebass25.rhul.ac.uk/2013/02/21/reflections-on-the-e-bass25-project/>). He advised the Consortium that it now had evidence of a preference for the evidence-based model and should look ahead to delivering a service. The Consortium is now considering its next steps.

Further work is being undertaken by Jisc and SCONUL under the Co-Design Programme. This directed at understanding the 'pain points' experienced by libraries in managing and dealing with e-books and to identify actions that might be taken at local library, consortium or national levels. Workshops have been held up and down the country, two of them hosted via the M25 Consortium. The report from this Co-Design work is scheduled to be completed in February 2014.

I should like to express my thanks to all members of the project teams for the Search25 and E-BASS25 projects, in particular John Gilby and Graham Seaman (Project Manager and Developer, respectively, for Search25) and Dominic Tate (Project Manager for E-BASS25).