# Next-Generation Flavor in Integrated Online Catalogs

We have looked at a genre of products that libraries can implement to replace the online catalog delivered with their ILS. Some of the online catalogs also offer at least some of the interface features found in the decoupled products. As this vision of library catalogs becomes the new norm, the developers of the online catalogs delivered with the ILS products will evolve their products accordingly.

## Polaris

Polaris Library Systems offers an ILS called Polaris, which it markets to public libraries, primarily within the United States. This product was initially released in 1997 and has been steadily evolving since.[1]

The online catalog of Polaris has gained a number of features in its latest release that include some of the characteristics of the next-generation library interfaces. Beginning with Polaris Version 3.3, the online catalog includes relevancy ranking, faceted navigation, and a "did you mean" feature for spelling suggestions in queries. This version also uses AJAX to improve the function of its user interface. Polaris has supported the display of cover art images and other enriched content.[2]

Once a user enters a query, Polaris displays a results list that includes a narrow column on the left side of the page for search refinement features, with the list of items in the results set in a wide column. At the top of the search refinement column is a group of facets labeled "Language" that limit the current results set to the language selected. Below the language selector, in a section titled "Narrow your search," appear several facet categories, including type of material, subjects, authors, series,

and publication date. This version of Polaris doesn't display the number of items associated with each facet as has become the norm. Clicking on any of the facets in this section applies the term to the current search, updates the result, and displays the term in the breadcrumb list of search terms. Each facet entry includes an "X" to remove it from the current search filters.

The column also offers a section called "Related Searches" that lists suggestions for new searches based on the most relevant items in the current results set. This section includes search suggestions for subjects, authors, and series. It also provides links allowing the user to try the current search in other forms. Each of the links in the Related Searches section executes an entirely new search.

Polaris has supported the delivery of results through RSS since version 3.2.[3] By using functionality built into Polaris, a library can offer RSS feeds for new books, videos, sound recordings, and materials in large-print format.

The user interface of Polaris now includes many of the features that fall within the expectations of the new generation of library catalogs. The scope of the catalog continues to be focused on the physical collections of the library or consortium (see figure 22).

*Fayetteville Public Library System*
http://catalog.faylib.org/polaris

*Pierce County Library System*
http://polariscatalog.piercecountylibrary.org/polaris

**Figure 22:**
Search results from Polaris version 3.3, featuring relevancy sort and faceted navigation.



**Figure 23:**
Search results from PINES.

## Evergreen

The open-source Evergreen library automation system also includes some of the interface features associated with the next-generation catalogs. Evergreen was developed by the Georgia Public Library System to support the 252 public libraries in the PINES consortium.[4]

When the user enters a query into the PINES catalog, it returns the results in a wide column with a narrow column on the left side of the page for search navigation. This column includes multiple sections titled "Relevant Subjects," "Relevant Authors," and "Relevant Series," each listing the most relevant terms culled from the current results. Clicking on one of these executes a new search for the term. This feature differs from faceted browsing, which limits the current search with the selected term.

PINES does offer spelling suggestions for the query terms and returns results in relevancy order (see figure 23).
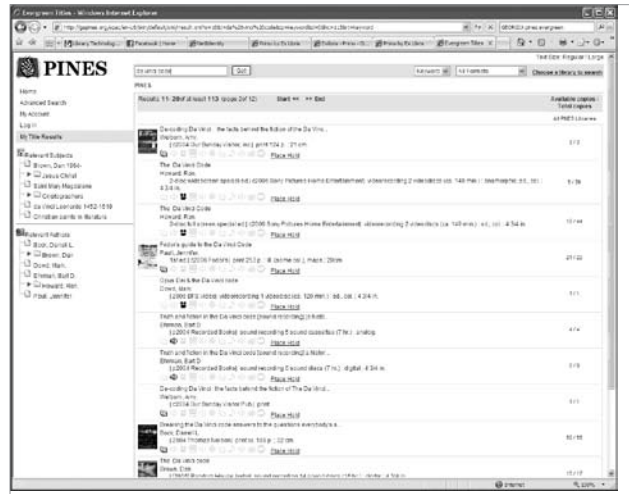
*Georgia Library PINES*
http://gapines.org

## Koha

The open-source Koha ILS also includes some of the interface characteristics of the next-generation catalogs. Koha was originally developed in New Zealand in 1999 by the Kapito Communications consulting firm for a small library system called Horowhenua Library Trust. Koha has since been installed in at least 300 libraries worldwide, including some public libraries in the United States. Commercial support for Koha is available through LibLime, a company founded by the implementers of Koha at the Nelsonville Public Library in Ohio.[5]
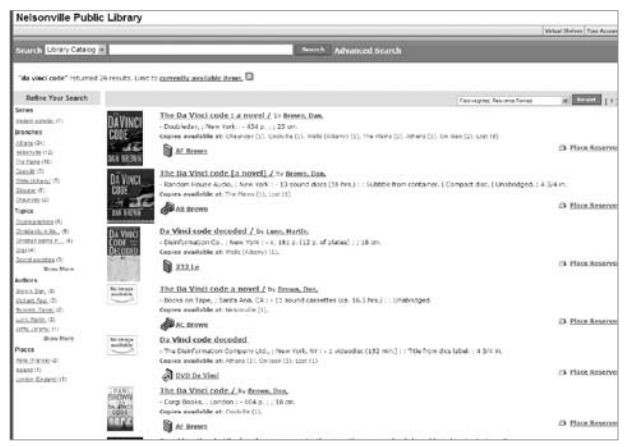
After the user enters a query, Koha returns a results list sorted in relevancy order. A drop-down control offers the ability to re-sort the results in several different ways, including "field-weighted, relevance ranked," "popularity," "author," "call number," "dates," and "title" (see figure 24).

The results of the query appear in a side column, with cover art images when available. Clicking on an item presents a new page with more detailed information and a listing of holdings for each library location.

At the top of the results page, Koha presents the current search terms and the number of results so far. This header also includes a link to limit the results to only those items currently available and an RSS icon that provides access to the current results set as an RSS feed.



**Figure 24:**
Results from the Koha implementation at the Nelsonville Public Library, showing relevancy sorting and faceted navigation.

A narrow column on the left of the search results, titled "Refine Your Search," provides several categories of facets available to narrow the results of the current search. The categories available in the Nelsonville implementation of Koha include Authors, Branches, Places, and Topics. Following the conventions of faceted navigation, each of the terms is followed by the number of items, enclosed in parentheses, that will be returned when the term is selected. When the user clicks on a facet, a new set of results displays with the new search parameters and the results header updated to show the terms now in effect. There is no easy way to deselect a facet once it's selected.

*Nelsonville Public Library*
http://search.athenscounty.lib.oh.us

*Crawford County Federated Library System*
http://catalog.ccfls.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-main.pl

## LibraryThing for Libraries

Next-generation library interfaces involve social networking features, such as end-user tagging and suggestions of related works based on a social network. A library can add these features to its existing library catalog through a product offered by LibraryThing (see figure 25).

LibraryThing is a social networking site that enables users to create online collections of books representing their personal libraries. The records for these books are derived from the Library of Congress, Amazon.com, or the catalogs of libraries throughout the world. Once a book is added to a personal online library in LibraryThing, users can add tags to each entry. These tags can be used to find books in each user's own collection or among all the books represented on LibraryThing. LibraryThing also offers a LibrarySuggester feature that suggests items that may be of interest based on a user's personal library. LibraryThing has grown to be an extremely popular social networking destination focused on books and has amassed a very large collection of bibliographic records, tags, and other socially produced data surrounding books.

*LibraryThing*
www.librarything.com

LibraryThing for Libraries leverages the social data in LibraryThing, allowing libraries to overlay their existing online catalogs with additional features. By subscribing to LibraryThing for Libraries, a library's online catalog can offer a record display that includes tags, recommendations, and lists of other editions and translations.

Each of the entries in the fields layered into the online catalog through LibraryThing for Libraries serves as a search link. When a user clicks on a tag, for example, a pop-up window appears, titled "Tag Browser," which lists other items in the library's collection that have been assigned that tag in LibraryThing. Clicking on a title in the Tag Browser presents the record in the library's online catalog through an ISBN search. This approach makes use of tags that exist in LibraryThing rather than in the records of the library's ILS.

The sections labeled "Similar Books" and "Other editions and translations" each present a list of related works determined through associations made through LibraryThing. Clicking on one of these links presents that record in the local online catalog through an ISBN search link.

LibraryThing for Libraries doesn't currently allow library users to add new tags directly through the library's online catalog. This capability is planned for an upcoming release of the service, which will allow users to contribute tags, reviews, and ratings.

Libraries interested in enhancing their current online catalog to give their users the ability to search by tags can subscribe to LibraryThing for Libraries. This product does not require the installation of additional software by the library. Rather, it works by adding HTML and JavaScript coding provided by LibraryThing to the templates of the online catalog. This task can usually be accomplished within the customization options of the ILS without the intervention of the ILS vendor.
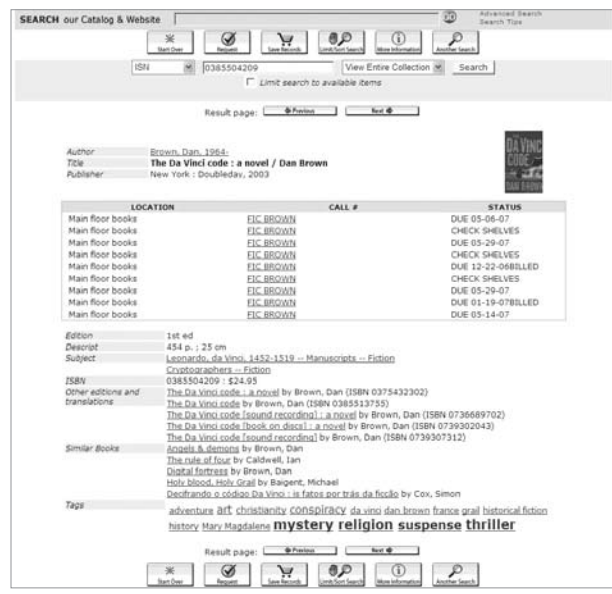


**Figure 25:**
Record viewed in the Millennium catalog of the Danbury Public Library showing additional fields provided through LibraryThing for Libraries.

The Danbury Public Library in Connecticut was an early subscriber to LibraryThing for Libraries, enhancing its Millennium catalog from Innovative Interfaces.

*Danbury Library*
http://cat.danburylibrary.org/search

## Notes

1. "Gaylord's Polaris to Complement Galaxy," *Library Systems Newsletter,* July 1997: 57.
2. Polaris Library Systems, "Polaris Library Systems Announces ILS Version 3.3," press release, Apr. 17, 2007, available on the Library Technology Guides Web site, www .librarytechnology.org/ltg-displaytext.pl?RC=12511 (accessed June 1, 2007).
3. Polaris Library Systems, "Polaris 3.2 Incorporates RSS as Core Capability," press release, Jan. 18, 2006, available on the Library Technology Guides Web site, www.librarytech nology.org/ltg-displaytext.pl?RC=11753 (accessed June 1, 2007).
4. Marshall Breeding, "Pines Sets Precedent for Open-Source ILS," *Smart Libraries Newsletter,* Oct. 2006; Georgia Public Library Service, "Georgia's 252 PINES Public Libraries Preparing Debut of Evergreen Software, Web-Based Catalog," press release, Aug. 21, 2006, available on the Library Technology Guides Web site, www.librarytech nology.org/ltg-displaytext.pl?RC=12162 (accessed June 1, 2007).
5. Marshall Breeding, "An Update on Open Source ILS," *Computers in Libraries* 27, no. 3 (Mar. 2007): 27–30; Marshall Breeding, "Automated System Marketplace: An Industry Redefined," *Library Journal* (Apr. 1, 2007).