

Resource Discovery Services at London School of Economics Library

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Abstract

The paper describes some recent projects and developments at the Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

To support and assist learning and research the Library has introduced new resource discovery services, the Beta Catalogue and Cross Searcher federated search engine. There is close collaboration between the Library and LSE Centre for Learning Technology to provide online information skills training via Moodle. The LASSIE project has investigated the use of social software in libraries. LSE Library staffs are gradually introducing social software into their work. The LSE Institutional Repository, LSE Research Online, is managed by a team of Library staff. Two projects, VERSIONS and VIF, have explored the issue of uncertainty around different versions of an academic paper. The NEEO project has developed an open access repository for the research output of European economists. The digitisation of print collections is at an early stage.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to describe some recent developments and projects at the Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). It is a brief overview from a non-technical perspective, but will touch on some areas of relevance to the theme and sub themes of this Conference.

2. LSE Library

The Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science (British Library of Political and Economic Science) is one of the largest libraries in the world dedicated to the literature of the social sciences. Founded in 1896, when the initial focus was very much on politics and public administration, its sphere of interest has broadened

over the years to embrace not only the core disciplines of economics, politics and sociology, but also areas not traditionally counted perhaps among the social sciences. It is an expanding universe with a reach that is sometimes unexpected and surprising. In recent years, for example, there has been a clear trend of interdisciplinary social science research and teaching, which is drawing more and more on research undertaken in the natural sciences. Our users now require access to a very wide and complex range of information and increasingly expect it to be delivered in a convenient digital format.

The Library holds extensive print based research collections, which have been recognised for their outstanding national and international importance and awarded 'Designation' status by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). At present there are reckoned to be over 1.3 million volumes with 8,500 current print serial titles. In addition there



are extensive electronic resources: 41,000 e-journals, 3,900 e-books, and 125 other e-resources (including datasets).

The Library serves over 9,500 full time students, both undergraduates and post graduates, and over 1800 academic and other staff. There were also over 12,000 external users registered in 2007/08. In developing new services it is important to gather information on the library users and their experience, both positive and negative, of using the collections and services. For many years, therefore, the Library has regularly surveyed students and staff and sought feedback to learn more of their needs and requirements. The developments described below are firmly based in this.

3. Resource Discovery

The first place for all Library users to locate their material (all books, periodicals and electronic resources) is the OPAC. The system we have operated for the last 5 years is Voyager (ExLibris, formerly Endeavour). Within that period, the look and feel of the traditional library catalogue has been challenged by the growing familiarity with and attraction to more of a "Google style" approach, among both students and researchers alike. As librarians, of course, we appreciate the finer points of cataloguing and classification, and their usefulness for resource discovery, skills which are now perhaps becoming lost on the current generation of users.

As a direct result of user feedback asking for a "cleaner, more user-friendly interface" the Library has introduced the Beta Catalogue, which will run alongside the Voyager OPAC for an unspecified period. Using VuFind open source software from Villanova University, the Beta Catalogue offers a new approach to searching. Starting with a general

keyword, a search can then be narrowed using the groupings on the right hand side of the results screen. Fuzzy searching shows alternative spellings, offers suggestions for related items and identifies variant editions. One can read reviews from Amazon, and use the quick links to get more information from Amazon, Google Books, and World Cat. The Beta Catalogue is still a work in progress; it does not as yet have the full functionality of the OPAC to permit class mark searching, renewals, reservations, or user account information. Since it was implemented towards the end of last year the response of users has been overwhelmingly favourable. It is not intended at this stage to replace the Voyager OPAC interface.

4. Management of Electronic Resources

Up to the summer of 2008, access to electronic resources was managed through the ENCompass electronic library system from Endeavour. Over time, the sheer number of resources within this system made it unwieldy and sluggish to access, as it offered not only the available subscription resources, but also linked to a growing number of free internet resources, such as numerous working paper series. It was clear that another solution would need to be found. The question was therefore posed – why replicate what can readily be found via Google, or internet gateways, such as Intute? The decision was made to take a different approach, namely to catalogue all subscription resources in the OPAC, making that the main point of discovery and access for all resources, whether print or electronic. All existing links to free internet resources were reviewed by Information Services staff and substantially reduced. The most important and relevant have now been included in web based subject guides, prepared for each academic department, using the free social bookmarking tool Del.icio.us. New free resources,

selected by staff, are added into the Library's Del.icio.us account and feed automatically into the listings in the subject guides.

To improve and enhance resource discovery for LSE staff and students a federated search facility was introduced In September 2008, using 360 Search from Serials Solutions. The service has been customised and rebranded within LSE as Cross Searcher. With the potential to add up to fifty databases to the system Cross Searcher at present offers simultaneous searching of over forty key databases, including the Library catalogue. Users may search the whole collection or select from the subject focused sub-sets. Search results are faceted into clusters by sub-topics, dates, journals and authors, enabling users to refine their searches. Results may also be downloaded into bibliographic software, such as EndNote.

5. Information Literacy

Developing information skills in our students is seen as an important activity of the Information Services Division. For a number of years the Division has run a programme of information skills training, covering use of specific databases or software (e.g. EndNote bibliographic software), and also sessions on particular types of documentation, such as legal information and United Nations publications. Such class or tutorial sessions are not obligatory for students and attendance can be low. Library staff therefore has begun to develop online courses and training resources within Moodle, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) software, supported by LSE. Of particular note is the Library Companion for Students, and for Researchers, which offer a collection of resources and helps at the appropriate level for more effective library use, study and research. They cover, for instance:

- ◆ getting the best out of online searches

- ◆ finding particular types of material (e.g, conference papers, government documents
- ◆ updating and current awareness services
- ◆ citing and referencing

A further Companion is dedicated to using the specific Resources of the Data Library. The Library presence within Moodle is deemed important in raising awareness of library resources within the student learning environment and in this we work in close collaboration with the LSE Centre for Learning Technology (CLT). The Library and CLT together also offer hands-on training for PhD students and academic staff in sessions which introduce some aspects of Web.2:

- ◆ Blogging for beginners: using these in teaching and research
- ◆ Managing internet resources: introduction to social bookmarking
- ◆ Finding and using images for teaching

The Centre for Learning Technology has recently led an interesting research project entitled LASSIE (Libraries and Social Software in Education), which explored how social software might enhance the distance learners' experience of libraries. An extensive literature review revealed the extent to which libraries are beginning to explore and embrace Web. 2 technologies, such as blogs, wikis, RSS feeds and social bookmarking tools. Five case studies looked in depth at applications and good practice in a number of real library situations. One study looks in detail at the development of a podcast (using Camtasia) at LSE for training students in citing and referencing. This has proved very popular with students and teachers both within LSE and elsewhere.

LASSIE reported in March 2008 and its findings and other documentation are available on the project website. The project blog is continuing to be

maintained and is a useful source of information on developments in social software in libraries and information literacy.

Within LSE Library itself Web 2.0 tools are gradually making their appearance in day to day work. Both Information Services and Technical Services Divisions are starting to use wikis for collaborative work and sharing documents. The only area actively using a blog is the Archives Division. Entitled "Out of the Box", the blog seeks to inform and showcase the work of the Division and its archival collections not only to the LSE but also to the wider public.

6. LSE Research Online

LSE is a research led institution of international renown. The Library plays a key role in supporting researchers and promoting their work via the institutional repository, LSE Research Online. LSE began to develop an institutional repository in 2005 using EPrints open access software, developed at the University of Southampton. Four years on LSE Research Online is operating as a fully fledged service, providing an online, open access collection of publications by LSE researchers. To date there are over 14,800 items deposited in the repository, including, articles in refereed journals (both accepted versions and submitted versions) articles in un-refereed journals, books, book chapters, discussion and working papers, conference material, theses, forthcoming publications.

The open access movement and the rationale for creating an institutional repository are well known. I shall just mention some features of importance to LSE:

- ◆ to provide a central collection of LSE research in one place on the web
- ◆ to increase the visibility and impact of LSE research

- ◆ to offer cross-searching with repositories at other universities in the UK and globally
- ◆ to preserve LSE research papers for the future
- ◆ to reduce the barriers faced by researchers across the world, by making LSE research freely available
- ◆ to assist the efficient management of RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) submissions
- ◆ to provide easy access to information for the many journalists who enquire about LSE research

The repository is managed in the Library by a team of information professionals with experience of working with researchers and of creating high quality catalogue and index records. It reports annually to the Research Committee of the LSE. Since June 2008 the repository has had the full backing of the LSE Academic Board, which has significantly boosted submission of papers.

The development and progress of digital repositories has not been without its challenges, both legal (from an IPR perspective) and institutional and cultural. Very often repository managers are called on to engage in high-level advocacy work to promote and explain the repository idea within their institutions. One specific issue has been that of uncertainty over different versions of academic papers, how these versions fit in to the lifecycle of the paper as a digital resource and which version of a paper might be deposited in a repository. To investigate this issue LSE took the lead in the VERSIONS project, in partnership with the Nereus Consortium of European research libraries in economics. The project was funded by the JISC under the Digital Repositories Programme, from 1 July 2005 to 31 January 2007.

The Project looked at the evolution of an academic research paper during its lifecycle, with a focus on the discipline of economics. Different versions

frequently co-exist in publicly available electronic form, alongside formally published versions. Without good signposting, however, the picture can become unclear and it can be difficult to discover the definitive version of a paper and to track the development of the idea. The outcome of the project was the development of the Versions Toolkit of guidelines for stakeholders in digital repositories. Copies of the toolkit are freely available from the VERSIONS website. Following on from VERSIONS, the Library also took a lead in the development of the Version Identification Framework (VIF), which provides practical advice and recommendations to authors and content creators, repository managers and the repository software community on how to identify versions better.

The partnership with the Nereus Consortium mentioned above has also been significant in the development of NEEO (Network of European Economists Online) an open access digital repository dedicated to the research output of economists in Europe. Economists Online aims to increase the visibility of economists' research by collecting it in a single, cross-searchable portal. The work of 500 leading European economists, including comprehensive publications lists, is now accessible with as many full-text links as possible.

7. Digitisation of Collections

In terms of digitisation of print collections LSE is really at the start of the journey. At the present time the Library is partner in a project, funded by the JISC, to digitise around 23,000 pamphlets from the 19th century. This will add significant further content to an earlier project which digitised over 600 pamphlets. It is interesting that the web pages which provide access to these have received a very large number of hits from external visitors. This reveals a huge interest in the wider community for historical material available in digital format. The Library has

recently appointed a Digitisation Manager, starting in April 2009, whose role it will be to seek funding and take forward a programme of further digitisation initiatives.

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