



## **Comments from Attendees at the Federated Search Symposium, 2-3 February 2006**

Thank you to all attendees who filled out evaluation forms. Your input is being carefully reviewed by The Alberta Library and the planning committee.

### ***Summary:***

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Of the 141 delegates, 72 evaluations were received back, the majority an even split between public and academic librarians with a handful of special, regional and other library staff.

General feedback was that the group discussions, Roy Tennant, vendor presentations and the Google Scholar presentation were all very well received. The group work and claims analysis process were successful although several delegates suggested that the reporting back process could have been eliminated and instead posted to the web.

Attendees were pleased they were not subjected to sales pitches in the vendor presentations and learned a lot about the products on the market today as well as tools for evaluating these products. Many commented that being able to see all vendor presentations would have been ideal.

Delegates are hopeful TAL will move forward with this and several noted they would like TAL to make a decision on a product.

### ***Detailed Evaluations***

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#### **Breakdown of responses:**

- Academic (32)
- Public (26)
- Regional System (6)
- Special (3)
- Other (5)

**Most Valuable Part of the Symposium?**

- Speakers (40)
  - great representation, honest feedback on products from those with experience, great variety. Good to hear about implementation experiences. Excellent keynote speakers.
- Group Discussion and collaborative group work (17)
  - Enjoyed comparing, discussing and brainstorming about this topic with colleagues.
  - Discussions really pushed boundaries – liked this!
  - Claims Analysis Process (4)
- Vendor Demos (19)
  - Would have been nice to see all the vendors though!
  - Appreciated discussion opportunities with vendors
  - Good to include vendors as part of library community
  - Good presentations of products and great opportunity to do side by side comparisons of vendors
- Focus on one Issue (7)
  - Being immersed in the subject, gathering information in an interactive manner. Well-structured opportunity to learn about an emerging technology! Good pace, size of topic was perfect for 2 days.
  - I learned an amazing amount in 2 days – reshaped my planning & implementation thinking
  - Definitely brought me up to speed! Good overview
- Structure (7)
  - The combination of opportunities – presentations, panels, discussions and learning through all those avenues; the depth of information; variety of session formats and opportunities for discussion

**MacEwan Centre Facility**

Poor = 1; Excellent = 5

| 1 | 2 | 3  | 4  | 5 | N/A |
|---|---|----|----|---|-----|
| 1 | 4 | 21 | 39 | 6 | 0   |

**Did the symposium meet your expectations?**

Yes (54)

Somewhat (1)

Exceeded (15)

Comments received were positive. A few suggestions for improvement were that people would have liked to see all the vendors, and that more time for discussion with Cathy Gordon would have been appreciated.

## Group work

### Did you have enough time to contribute to the group work sessions?

Yes (69)      Mostly (1)      No (1)      Too much (6)

### Did you find the group work productive?

Yes (60)      Somewhat (6)      No (1)

Some of the comments received were

- I appreciate the opportunity for focused collegial discussion. Not sure if the claim process can be counted on.
- It gave good questions for discussion with vendors
- To a certain degree. It was good to discuss this in a smaller group, but the reporting back resulted in many of the same findings.
- I was surprised at how well it worked
- Good to meet new people and get variety of opinions and feedback
- Any chance for small group discussions at conferences is a good thing. It's easier to talk in a small group, than to address the larger group.
- Alerting us on what to look for in demos and what questions to ask.
- It opened my eyes to the needs, customer expectations, and problems that are faced by other institutions. Found out a lot from other types of libraries on how they did their searches, and how they customized their search sessions
- Good to talk & see if other people's impressions were similar to mine.

### Would you attend a follow-up symposium on Federated Searching?

Yes (30)      Maybe (4)      No (14)      Undecided (2)

Comments indicated that participants felt that the value of a follow-up symposium would be in learning about new developments. A follow-up symposium should be focused to new material and product options and features. Attendees would be interested in a process leading to a TAL decision.

### Recommendations for other symposium topics TAL might pursue?

Many suggestions were received, which leads us to believe that this is a good format to use in future. Varied topic suggestions will be reviewed by TAL staff.

### What would you suggest to improve future symposia or conferences?

Numerous suggestions have been received and will be reviewed by TAL staff and taken into account in future when planning similar events.

### Additional Comments?

General comments received included:

- Thank you for organizing a conference with current, rich and relevant content plus suggested process to evaluate federated search products.

- Would have preferred to have less group work and more time to see ALL the vendors. This would help make a more informed decision.
- It would be better to allow time for hands-on searching of individual products. Just watching demos from vendors is not enough to evaluate the products.
- Since not all groups saw all demos, it would have been good to remix the groups when they attended the demos
- Maybe with this investment a decision could have been made.
- Might have liked suggestion for restaurants/pubs in area
- Might have had more 'public library' focus
- Not much focus on children's services, which is sometimes overlooked by TAL (ie: AAQ for kids is not differentiated from adult)
- Great to meet with colleagues from other sectors
- Useful. It left me with more questions to answer, more homework left to do – that is good. Helpful for my organization.
- Enjoyed this (more than CLA) because it was focused, timely, smaller audience.
- Public libraries have very different needs & focus from academic – a conference either focused on public libraries or have general speakers & then separate groups would have been useful.
- Claims analysis was a good mechanism to focus discussion. More practice would be helpful. Would recommend this process for future discussions and conferences. Room temperature was fine, except for Friday afternoon.
- Great experience to think beyond challenges of your own particular library to the wider world and the future role of libraries.
- Very timely topic
- I know the next steps to take now for my situation