library research has a new name…
and just about everything else

by Craig Thomas

After nearly two years of study and planning by information specialists across the UW system, library users are on the threshold of a major upgrade to their search experience. Starting in early December, all UW libraries will begin rolling out Search@UW, an innovative search tool that will make finding library resources simpler, faster, and more comprehensive than ever before. Here at UW Oshkosh, the launch of Search@UW will take place over the next six months. When fully implemented, Search@UW will allow Polk users to search the combined local and digital collections of the entire UW system along with a global landscape of databases, journal articles, e-books, and more - all from a one-box, faceted interface as easy to use as Amazon’s.

What makes Search@UW different?

Until now, online search in academic libraries has depended on two aging platforms, the Online Patron Access Catalog (OPAC) and federated search. A sturdy ‘80s workhorse, the OPAC provides title-level access to books, journals, movies, and other resources held in local collections. While OPACs have served users faithfully for several decades, they have always lacked one thing essential to the research process: article-level access to journal literature. For library users, the result was a scavenger hunt. For books, they had to look in the OPAC; for articles and similar resources, they had to scour multiple online databases and indexes, each with its own interface, logic, and search engine.

Federated search, developed in the ‘90s, was designed to fix article search by merging all those disparate interfaces into one. Federated search engines take a user’s query and send it to the search engines of multiple online databases, and then patiently assemble the results as they trickle in. While a major improvement, federated search has two inherent problems. One is speed. With so many search engines involved, real-time retrieval of results can be painfully slow. The other problem is huge, half-digested results sets. Merging results from multiple sources, eliminating duplicates, and ranking items by relevance - all on the fly - makes slow work for federated search engines. And the resulting set may still seem like a haystack to users looking for a few choice needles.

The secret sauce in Search@UW is a new approach to search called “resource discovery,” which audaciously sidesteps the main drawback of federated search. At the heart of resource discovery systems is a gigantic mega-database, in this case called PrimoCentral, where the metadata from multiple article databases is downloaded, indexed, and readied for search. (How gigantic? PrimoCentral now has 600 million items and is growing.) So, rather than sending queries to multiple databases and trying
to process the merged results on the fly, resource discovery does all the heavy lifting ahead of time. The result is lightning-fast response to user search requests - even when the data from OPACs and other digital collections are added. Resource discovery platforms also rely on recent advances in ranking algorithms and facet generation to improve relevance of results and to make zeroing in on the right materials as intuitive as, well, shopping on Amazon.

Selection of the best platform for the UW system was a high priority for the Council of University of Wisconsin Libraries (CUWL) and involved months of study and discussion. After formal review earlier this year, CUWL tapped prominent library software developer Ex Libris and its popular Primo system to provide the underlying technology for Search@UW. The UW system joins a growing list of institutions using Primo technology, including Princeton, Northwestern, Minnesota, Iowa, Oxford, and the British Museum among others. An added bonus for the UW system is that Ex Libris is a familiar vendor, since it already provides the system’s Voyager OPAC.

At UW Oshkosh, the launch of Search@UW will occur in three phases.

Phase one commences in mid-December with the beta release of online article search. In January, phase two will feature the full-production release of article search. Phase three will follow in late spring with the addition of all physical resources held locally by Polk and by other UW libraries across the state. So in the weeks ahead, check the library home page and give article search a spin. Throughout the launch, we encourage you try out Search@UW and tell us what you think. Feel free to write us with feedback or suggestions at neises@uwosh.edu.

A special note to power users: Please be aware that arrival of Search@UW will not affect your access to the search tools you already know and love. You can still use any of the native database or publisher search interfaces or any of the Voyager search tools you may have already integrated into you research processes. But please do consider trying Search@UW at your leisure and letting us know what you think (at neises@uwosh.edu).

What Search@UW will search

- **Search@UW**
  - Everything indexed in the system’s mega-database:
    - > 600 million items, including articles and more

- **Books+**
  - Everything in Polk’s catalog

- **More Books+**
  - Everything in all UW catalogs

- **Articles+**
  - Everything licensed by Polk: tens of millions of full-text items available online

- **Digital Collections**
  - e.g. UWDC & MINDS@UW

The small slice of licensed resources not yet indexed in Search@UW
Students appreciate and need the library as a place to study and work, especially during the final week of the fall term. “It’s the vibe of the library that brings me here,” one student reported in a recent survey. “Everyone is working on something, everyone is getting something done—it spreads through the room.” That is why for over two decades Polk Library has provided 24/7 building access for students during the term’s “crunch time.” In the early 90s, only the reference room was open for students. In the early 2000s, based on student requests, the entire first floor of the library was opened for students.

Yet, one floor is not enough to provide good work and study space for the approximately 5,000 students who are in the building during the 62 extra hours that the library is open during the final week of the term. The noise level can be high during the busiest times and we had reports of people sitting on the floor because no seats were available.

Last year a group of students asked if the library would consider opening more of the library building during this period, especially the “quiet study” areas on 2nd and 3rd floors. Library staff were happy to do this if we could figure out how to get regular staff presence on all the floors of the library during late night hours. Thanks to the cooperation of many people the library will be opening all the floors of Polk Library for 24/7 starting at 7 am on Friday, December 7th through Friday, December 14th at 6 pm.

Many thanks go to the students who suggested the expansion of service, and all of the library student workers and staff who are working more late night and early morning shifts during this week. Also, thanks go to University Police Chief Joseph LeMire and the students of the Community Service Officers program. The CSO students will help library staff provide a presence around the building at certain hours. I appreciate the help of Provost and Vice Chancellor Lane Earns and Vice Chancellor for Student Services Petra Roter who are sharing the additional cost of the expanded service with Polk Library.

Patrick Wilkinson

---

**LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR: All Night Study, All Polk All the Time**

**by Patrick Wilkinson**

---

**Starbucks Coffee, Hot Food Options, Simply to Go Sandwiches and Salads, Bottled Beverages, Snacks, Gum and more!**

---

**MiTaza**

Monday - Friday
8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Polk Library
Main Lobby
When it opened in 1962, Polk Library featured a new department unknown to campus when the library was housed in Dempsey Hall. The Area Research Center, a unique partnership between the College and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, was part of a bold approach to preserve and provide access to historical research collections of local interest. Today, the ARC network has 14 members and is known nationally and beyond for its unique model and policies. For the Society which was established in 1846, the network initially was a very necessary response to a very real problem: they simply had no more room.

The Wisconsin Historical Society is the largest state historical society in the country, collection-wise. So successful was it at collecting private papers and public records that, by the 1950s, the Society found it had used every nook and cranny of their building at 816 State St. to house it all. In 1962, four institutions, including Oshkosh State College signed on to bring society-owned materials into their libraries on a sort-of permanent deposit. This would expand on an earlier experiment to house local government records at the schools which had proved to be an ignored, warehousing of little-used records. As Area Research Centers however, the focus would be broader as they would include the papers of private individuals and institutions. These additions made the center more attractive to curricular opportunities and combined with University archives programs, the centers blossomed.

The most unique aspect of the program is the ability of the members to transfer these materials among the partners. Original records can be requested from one ARC and sent to another, something found in only one other archival network in the country. For over 30 years this was done in private vehicles of archival staff. In 1992, the network began to employ a statewide courier that eventually would grow to provide five day a week delivery. Today the system has grown to 14 centers (including archives on all four-year UW System campuses) resulting in more researchers using the archival collections of the Wisconsin Historical Society in places other than the headquarters building.

At Oshkosh, the collections allow students of numerous disciplines an opportunity to use original, primary source collections of national and international importance and materials of a quality that few undergraduates at similar-sized institutions would ever have access to. On any given day, the 3rd Floor of Polk Library may find genealogists poring over Winnebago County naturalization papers, while undergraduates make sense of the letters of Wisconsin suffragettes, the fan mail of a Hollywood producer, or the records of a 19th century mental hospital. Far surpassing the dreams of the original creators of the network, the centers serve as humanities laboratories, allowing scholars of many disciplines to work with the raw materials of historical understanding.

The UW Oshkosh Archives and Area Research Center is located on the 3rd Floor, South Wing of the Polk Library.
As the campus-wide development of the University Studies Program continues, Polk Library is developing critical information literacy learning objects for integration into Quest 1 courses next fall.

As the developers of the USP understand, information literacy skills are crucial to success in the 21st century. These skills include searching for and finding information relevant to personal, professional and civic lives; critically evaluating information for accuracy and bias; and effectively applying information. While Polk has long been responsible for teaching many of these skills, Quest 1 provides more focused opportunities for instruction and application.

To reach the thousands of Quest students, Polk Library will make even greater use of its YouTube channel, website tutorials and social media platforms to provide information literacy instruction flexible, convenient and creative. And while creativity is not always something associated with library instruction, Polk’s staff members are developing entertaining and engaging approaches to these modules. Polk Library will have its Quest 1 offerings ready for review and inclusion in syllabi by mid-summer.

Intriguing pieces of artwork from recent alum, Eric Anderson, were installed recently in Polk Library’s 1st floor art gallery. For his mixed-media paintings, Anderson found inspiration while learning about the people of Myanmar, also known as Burma.

Anderson specifically is concerned with the instances of human rights abuse in this south-east Asian country and the “modes of reprisal” being used to improve the situation.

According to Anderson, the “current dialogue” for his artwork is civil disobedience in Myanmar and Tibet, contemporary communication and distractions. Anderson believes there is an “essentiality of art in the analysis of human kind.”

Many of his paintings feature images of protest and media and dramatic uses of the red and yellow colors common to Buddhist monks. Anderson is pleased with his paintings’ temporary home, remarking that “the analysis is angled at the fresh intellectuals soon to take charge.” The library is excited to feature Anderson’s work. Last spring, Polk purchased a large painting of his in the Senior Art Show, finding it a wonderful example of the talent of UW Oshkosh’s art students. That painting hangs permanently in the Leisure Reading Room, second floor north.
As critical as they are to ethical and rigorous scholarship, citations can be a real headache; they are as painful to students as they are to the instructors who review and grade them. This winter, thanks to the Student Technology Fee program, Polk Library is offering some relief. RefWorks, a widely used citation management system, was selected for its comprehensive solutions to managing citations and creating bibliographies.

RefWorks provides a 100% online space for researchers to enter and store citation information. Users have multiple ways of importing bibliographic information into their password-protected space. Citations can be exported directly from Polk Library databases using a plugin within the database’s own interface. With RefWorks’ RefGrab-It plugin for internet browsers, users can import citation data from a website or the Polk Library catalog directly into their RefWorks accounts. Of course, users can always enter citation information manually within Refworks’ native interface. Once entered, these resources are “in the cloud” and therefore available wherever the researcher goes. And as long as UW Oshkosh remains a client of RefWorks, alumni can keep their accounts, allowing them to bring their research with them to grad school or professional positions. The RefWorks interface allows users to easily organize citations into folders for different classes or projects.

While organizing sources is important, RefWorks’ real value comes from its ability to format a bibliography—in one of thousands of consistently updated styles—with a click of the button. The bibliography can then be exported to Word, RTF or other formats.

Another tool in RefWorks’ arsenal is the ingenious Write-n-Cite plugin. After installing this utility on a machine running Microsoft Word, Write-n-Cite users can create in-text citations drawing data from a RefWorks account. A menu tab in Word allows searching and browsing of the RefWorks managed sources without having to jump back and forth to a browser. Just like RefWorks’ bibliography generator, Write-n-Cite supports numerous citation styles, which can be changed at any time easily.

Project lead and instruction librarian, Ted Mulvey, believes that faculty and students alike will appreciate RefWorks single-minded focus on citations. “While other online citation generators and research storage systems exist, they often are one-dimensional in the way in which they treat content. RefWorks, on the other hand, can manipulate and serve the data in the way researchers require.” In addition, Refworks’ use of NetID means one less password users have to remember. Just one more way RefWorks can make the citation headaches melt away.
By Amanda Kersten, Library Communications Intern

Responding to the growth of online education and other distance education programs at UW Oshkosh, Polk Library restructured its outreach position into a dedicated Distance Education Librarian. In September, Erin Mischak arrived in Oshkosh to take on the challenge of providing library services to people across the region, state and beyond.

Mischak, a southern California native, grew up in Orange County. After receiving a B.A. in Comparative Literature from UC Santa Barbara in 2003, she looked for a position in the competitive world of publishing. The search proved difficult so ultimately she took a marketing and fundraising position at a non-profit organization for foster children. Unhappy there after five years, Mischak wanted to get into a field in higher education and use modern technology.

Mischak pursued graduate school at San Jose State University, where she earned her Master’s Degree in Library and Information Science through an entirely online-based program, an experience that made her uniquely qualified to work with distance education students. While Mischak never planned on leaving California, the lack of academic positions out west forced her to expand her job search nationally, leading to her opportunity at Polk Library.

Starting over in a new place, making new friends and being far away from family are struggles that come along with relocating; but for Mischak, Wisconsin’s weather made her most fearful. Despite her worries, Mischak reported that she adjusted quickly: during her first week here, a bitter September cold snap that brought temperatures plummeting to the mid-60s forced Mischak to buy a sweatshirt and her first long sleeve t-shirt while the bulk of her clothes were still in transit.

As the Distance Education Librarian, Mischak finds creative ways to reach out to students and faculty involved in online courses by promoting library services and offering interactive support. Her philosophy is to “be flexible, creative and collaborative.”

Mischak goes on to say, “more and more classes and students are involved with online coursework, some of which are fully online courses. Traditionally, the library is seen as a physical place. But if you are an online student that does not come to campus, how does the library help you?” Through her passion for teaching and connecting with others, Mischak strives to answer that question every day.

When she isn’t producing webinars or customizing an instructor’s D2L page, Mischak loves to cook, read and indulge in her zombie obsession.

Laura Briskie (Circulation / Reserves) was accepted into UW Milwaukee’s master’s program in library science. She will begin next fall.

Jeff Brunner (Electronic Resources Librarian) was named to a Council of UW Libraries RFP committee charged with finding a new library services platform.

Crystal Buss (Circulation Services Librarian) attended the “Back in Circulation, Again” conference in Madison in October.

David Hietpas (Library Web Developer) and Maccabee Levine (Head of Library Technology Services) presented to the Council of UW Libraries (CUWL) User Services Coordinating Committee the unique features and development process of the new Polk Library website.

Sarah Neises (Head of Public Services) is currently taking part in the IT Leaders @ University of Wisconsin System Program, a series of five intensive workshops focused on developing the leadership and management skills particular to university IT organizations.

Sara Stichert (Coordinator of Interlibrary Loan), presented OCLC Article Exchange at the annual WiLS ILL meeting in October.
The sounds, sights and flavors of the early 1960s were all on display in November when Polk Library celebrated its 50th birthday. A half century to the day after Polk’s official dedication, Polk staff hosted a “mocktail” party for campus guests and former staff member, including some who were there on that auspicious day in 1962. Polk staff contributed foods of the era, researching old recipes for authentic mid-century appetizers. While the Swedish meatballs and rumaki were big hits, the less said about the molded guacamole the better.

Not to be outdone by their culinary masterpieces, staff donned period outfits to give the party more of a Mad Men feel while guests took in displays about Polk history and where the library is moving in the areas of technology, instruction and collection development.

If you missed the party, fear not. Polk’s south wing turns 50 in six years, allowing Polk staff to groove to a very different part of the 1960s.