

The Rethinking Initiative Updated: Viewing Information Access and Resource Sharing in a Global Context

Who we are

Since the original publication of the Rethinking Resource Sharing White Paper (http://blog.aclin.org/documents/RethinkingResourceSharing_rev6-1-2005.pdf) in February of 2005, the Rethinking Group has garnered widespread interest, held two forums with international representation, solidified its vision, enrolled new leadership from the PALCI, BLC, and CDL communities, and found an ongoing home within two well respected organizations: NISO and ALA RUSA STARS. Please see the Rethinking Resource Sharing Forum II minutes posted at <http://blog.aclin.org/links.php> for details on this partnership.

Our Vision: Create a new global service framework that allows individuals to obtain what they want based on factors such as cost, time, format, and delivery. This framework will encompass promoting and exposing library services in a variety of environments.

Our Premises: The Rethinking group believes that the directions that will have the most impact include raising the visibility of library service on the web and making it easy for individuals to obtain materials and services in the web environment. OCLC's recently published *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources* (<http://www.oclc.org/reports/2005perceptions.htm>) revealed that only one percent of individuals consult a library web page or online catalog to begin their search for information. Eighty-four percent use a search engine.

The Rethinking group strongly endorses a user (individual) focus for services. Traditional resource sharing services are built around staff needs, institutions, and technological limitations. Today's users expect self-service and are confident that their results are of the same or higher quality than those of library staff. Whether this is objectively true is irrelevant to their perceptions. A major shift will be required in the ways in which services are provided.

Where We Are Headed: Our Immediate Next Steps

1. Pursue formal inclusion within the NISO and RUSA STARS
2. Pursue formal liaison with ASCLA and IFLA representatives
3. Establish a Funding Committee to support the work of the Initiative
4. Establish a Marketing Committee to further the publicity and education efforts required for the success of the Initiative
5. Develop a pilot project to meet users where they are: a proof-of-concept browser plug-in. This plug-in is to be freely available (open source) and is designed to put the library and its services into the web-based world individuals use. This pilot is expected to be shown as beta at ALA Midwinter 2007.
6. Develop a Policies Manifesto to be shared at the 2006 Annual ILL Conference
7. Research and produce a Best Practices document giving examples of institutions using various recommended practices
8. Present the progress of the Rethinking Initiative at the 2006 Annual ILL Conference

9. Research user behavior for the purpose of defining user needs and user personae in the areas of information access and resource sharing
10. Plan for a face-to-face meeting of the entire Rethinking Initiative adjacent to the 2007 Annual ILL Conference

How Our Efforts Impact Libraries

How does the work of the Rethinking Initiative affect the library and information industries?

- Positive user experiences with the library and information industries encourage increased usage:
 - satisfied users return and spread the word
- Positive user experiences and increased usage may translate into broader understanding and support of the missions of the library and information industries:
 - satisfied users value their experience
- Positive user experiences and efficient usage of information resources through provision of a wide range of choices can reflect well on the industry's stewardship and marketing of information resources:
 - satisfied users and efficient information usage maximize return on investment
- Low-barrier management of information access and resource delivery can support staff reassignment, allowing staff to spend more time offering other value-added services
- Better communication of limits and policies where they are appropriate and necessary will lead to better distribution of the efforts involved in information access and resource management:
 - time not wasted is a value-added feature in itself
- Successful experiences can be marketed to current and potential users:
 - visible value-added services raise the information institution's importance within its constituency
- Low barrier information access encourages interoperation among vendors:
 - libraries have more choices in how to deliver their value-added services

In Closing

The original core authors of the White Paper started this initiative to encourage librarians and other information professionals to take a broad look at the opportunities, technologies, expectations, and issues surrounding information access and resource sharing. We are delighted and indeed a bit overwhelmed by the enthusiasm displayed thus far on the part of so many people. It is our hope that the continued work of the Rethinking Initiative will result in better end-user experiences for our shared publics and better service provision from the members of our industries.

Brenda Bailey-Hainer
Gail Wanner
Candy Zemon

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