



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
LIBRARY BOARD REPORT

AGENDA DATE: November 12, 2020
TO: Library Board
FROM: Administration Division, Library Department
SUBJECT: Integrated Library System (ILS) Migration

RECOMMENDATION: That the Library Board review and approve the Standalone Integrated Library System Proposal.

DISCUSSION:

Background

Santa Barbara Public Library (SBPL) has a shared catalog using the Integrated Library System (ILS), Polaris, which is managed by the Black Gold Library Cooperative and contains materials available at all Black Gold Cooperative member libraries.

Since 2016 SBPL staff have been looking for a solution to improve the user experience and create back-end efficiencies for the management of SBPL's online public access catalog (OPAC).

Challenges of Current Shared Black Gold Cooperative ILS

Patrons experience frustration with the catalog for several reasons:

- Search results do not follow relevancy expectations (i.e., a keyword search for "Little Women" does not have the book by Louisa May Alcott on the first page of search results).
- Filtering search results is challenging, due to the inconsistent use of item types across seven Black Gold jurisdictions.
- It is challenging to limit to all SBPL libraries by location in the catalog; patrons are often confused about which Libraries are SBPL locations.
- Due to multiple versions of classic or popular titles, there can be several bibliographic records as each jurisdiction owns a different edition, and patrons have difficulty locating the one at the library they are visiting, or the one that will fulfill the hold most quickly.
- The Black Gold mobile app doesn't have full functionality, and the catalog does not have mobile responsive design.
- The shared Black Gold catalog can only contain materials available to all libraries, and not materials that SBPL purchases on their own, such as RB Digital, Mango Languages, Overdrive Advantage titles, etc.

It should also be noted that a recent 2020 survey of library services resulted in overwhelming feedback from our patrons regarding the challenges of using the current Black Gold Polaris catalog.

The current ILS also poses challenges to staff. Many challenges are related to the functionality offered by Polaris, but additional problems are the result of the offsite management of the ILS by Black Gold Cooperative staff, rather than local control of the ILS by SBPL staff.

Polaris does not adequately meet the needs of SBPL staff due to:

- A lack of integrated, holistic statistics reporting functionality.
- The ILS is not fully cloud-based or web accessible, and presents challenges for offsite access or mobile programming and use at outreach locations.
- Lack of local control; SBPL staff are unable to contact vendors directly to troubleshoot issues, which leads to inefficiencies.
- The catalog can't be customized for our community.
- Polaris doesn't have purchase suggestion integrations, so this is a separate form, and there's no way to automatically notify patrons that an item has been ordered.

Black Gold Management of the ILS creates additional inefficiencies for staff and prevents SBPL from optimizing the experience for our patrons:

- SBPL staff are not able to directly contact vendors to ask questions or troubleshoot issues, and instead must go through the Black Gold Systems Administrator to resolve issues.
- Black Gold is not proactive about looking for solutions or enhancements to the current ILS.
- SBPL staff cannot make any changes to the Black Gold catalog user interface, display options, or even operating hours listed, which causes delays.
- Decisions about the ILS must always be made by committees at Black Gold, which has caused problems such as moving forward with an upgrade that still had bugs to be resolved against SBPL's vote, and created decreased functionality and took significant staff time to uninstall and reinstall software.
- SBPL is unable to fully customize shelf locations, material types, patron categories, and collection codes due to the shared catalog.

Previous Investigations into Possible Solutions

SBPL began investigating ways to improve the OPAC in fall 2016. SBPL staff recommended an ILS discovery layer, which would integrate with the current Polaris ILS and offer additional functionality and improved user experience. After two years of discussion that included presentations from prospective vendors at both the Reference and Adult Services Black Gold Committee and the Administrative Council, two library jurisdictions, Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, voted to move forward with Bibliocommons Discovery Layer in August of 2018. The vote failed to pass as the five remaining jurisdictions did not support the costs related to the enhanced service.

In 2017, Automation and Technical Services Black Gold Cooperative committee began to investigate ILS options, reviewing several options on the market. SBPL was in favor of open-source ILS Koha, due to improved functionality and decreased costs, but other Black Gold jurisdictions as well as staff of Black Gold Cooperative were hesitant to migrate to a new platform. Since the current ILS, Polaris, had a new mobile solution add-on, LEAP, SBPL ultimately supported that majority vote.

However, even after the launch of LEAP, SBPL staff and patrons continued to experience staff frustration and patron confusion related to the ILS and OPAC. Again, SBPL advocated for a discovery layer solution to address the user experience problems with the catalog, but again, a majority of the Black Gold Cooperative members were not interested in investing in a solution, even though the majority of costs would fall to SBPL and San Luis Obispo Library, the two jurisdictions in favor of a discovery layer product.

SBPL also supported the Black Gold Cooperative review of Link+, a tool that allows for interlibrary loan of materials to a larger network of California public libraries and would enhance services and could potentially allow Black Gold libraries to share materials without a shared ILS, but the majority of the members did not support this proposal despite the grant funding available to support the initiative at the time.

In 2019, Black Gold Cooperative began an evaluation of the core services of the cooperative and cost allocation formula associated with them. At this time, SBPL made it known to Black Gold that resource sharing of materials would be reviewed to determine if a continuation of this shared model was still appropriate and if it was indeed a core service of the cooperative.

SBPL began its investigation of the possibility of managing the ILS independently, including vetting potential vendors and developing a cost/benefit analysis. To this end, SBPL formulated a migration team consisting of the Collection Development Librarian, IT supervisor, Circulation Supervisor, Acquisitions Library Technician and Senior Library Technician, and led by the Library Services Manager for Public Services. In January of 2020 Black Gold set a timeline for this work to be completed, with a desire to have a decision finalized for all jurisdictions by July 2021. Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo are reviewing options at this time.

In spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges of the ILS. When different Black Gold member libraries augmented operations at different times, and delivery and sharing materials ceased, all changes had to be done by Black Gold staff, resulting in delays to changes and reintroduction of services, and a significant increase in patron confusion over how to access materials. Over the summer, SBPL staff continued to evaluate options for migration to a new, locally managed ILS.

SBPL Proposal for an Independent, Locally Managed ILS

SBPL proposes to withdraw its library patron records and its library holdings from Black Gold's Polaris catalog and import them into an independent catalog, an open-sourced ILS product

called Koha. It would be maintained and cloud-hosted by the ByWater Company. In addition, SBPL would install a discovery system that integrates with Koha, called Aspen. This product solves both staff and patron challenges of the current system and is cost effective.

Responsive Design

Both Koha and Aspen use responsive design, meaning they render on all computing and mobile devices. Both can also be translated into Spanish or other languages.

Searching Made Easier

Koha and Aspen make the patron searching experience easier. The Aspen discovery system would allow patrons to search for all the books, eBooks, magazines, e-magazines, computers, kits, instruments (or any other item) we own, regardless if it's in electronic format or a physical material, from a single screen. Currently patrons must use specific apps or login into digital resources separately to search each resource. Results would also be compiled and displayed, with options to focus results for titles or subjects based on the types of items retrieved. With this "one stop shop" kind of search mechanism, patrons will have a much easier and faster time finding what they want.

Faster Changes to the Catalog

By having its own ILS, SBPL can make faster adjustments and improvements when needed. With control of the catalog and discovery service, SBPL would be able to make any necessary changes immediately, rather than waiting in a queue to be completed by Black Gold staff. This is especially important in times of natural disasters or our current pandemic situation.

Better Statistics and Reports

Koha would also allow SBPL staff access to much more valuable and specific reporting data in a more efficient manner. Much like the catalog, the reporting module of the Polaris ILS cannot be customized by SBPL. Koha's reports can be customized and created for specific purposes either with Koha's internal web-based reports graphical interface, or by SQL code including SQL if/then/else conditional statements.

Increased Staff Efficiency

Library staff efficiency would be improved with our own ILS. Unlike Polaris, Koha and Aspen staff interfaces are entirely web-based, and can be accessed from any computer with an internet connection. Each library staff member will have their own username and password, and their rights and permissions within the Koha staff interface can be customized according to their job duties and tasks. By using an entirely web-based administrative interface, staff can effectively manage Koha and Aspen from any computer or location, including computers on the City network. Staff would no longer be

confined to staff workstations on the Black Gold network, or remote desktop connections, when running reports, cataloging new items, or submitting electronic orders for items.

Patron Experience with Migration

Patrons would not be inconvenienced by this project. They would not need to change library cards, would still not have to worry about fines (SBPL will remain fine free), and would more easily be able to access their SBPL library account, as they would not have to navigate through the Black Gold website to get to it. Patrons would still be able to renew items online, pay any type of damage or replacement costs online, as well as make donations online. Patrons would also be able to receive text and email messages alerting them of holds filled or when books are due. The overall classification and organization of library materials will be improved.

However, access to print and physical audiovisual materials owned by other Black Gold member libraries is an important consideration in a potential migration, and one SBPL staff didn't discount in cost/benefit analysis of migration.

SBPL is confident that the Library can fulfill the vast majority of demand for materials using local collections.

SBPL is a net lender of materials to other Black Gold Libraries. Staff encourage patron suggestions of materials, and regularly analyze circulation statistics to determine demand for subject and titles. SBPL's collection development emphasizes access to new and popular materials, rather than serving as an archive or research library. Thus, SBPL's mission is to meet the recreational reading needs of patrons, and provide access to up to date nonfiction, rather than an exhaustive collection. Currently, SBPL librarians are conducting an audit of current collections to identify gaps that might not have been obvious or important with shared print materials. Additionally, SBPL plans to remain a member of the Black Gold Cooperative for the sharing of digital materials, as well as continue to develop our own independent collections.

SBPL would also investigate options for interlibrary loan services that would allow patrons to borrow materials not owned by SBPL, including Link+, OCLC, or Illiad. This would actually increase access to materials beyond Black Gold Cooperative member libraries.

Budgetary Implications of Koha/Aspen ILS Implementation

There are up-front costs for Koha/Aspen that will allow us cost savings and efficiencies in the future. The ongoing costs of Koha/Aspen are anticipated to be significantly less than our current Black Gold costs, especially when costs for shipping materials to Black Gold Libraries is considered.

SBPL would be able to manage the ILS with existing positions without compromising other services. Additionally, Koha/Aspen is significantly less expensive than other alternative ILS options. There are many factors to consider in evaluating the costs associated, as this migration

is not only a transition from one service provider for the software that manages the catalog database, but a change in operations and an enhancement of services. While impacts to existing staff assignments and workflow are expected, especially in the redistribution of duties during the initial implementation year, there will not be any additional expenditures for staff time in excess of our current staffing budget.

Staffing Needs

Currently, the ILS is managed by Black Gold staff, and SBPL conservatively estimates that its portion of the Cataloger's, the System Administrator's, and reduced salary costs for administration services to be \$40,000. The Library would see a cost savings in Black Gold contributions if a membership tier that excludes management of the ILS was implemented.

SBPL would independently manage the ILS with existing staff. SBPL estimates the value of this staff time to be \$78,683. This is not new spending, and is currently allocated in the budget. It is also estimated that over time these costs will neutralize as it is anticipated that we will have an initial high volume of training and work to perform the migration. Once the new ILS has been launched we anticipate current staff not spending more time than they currently do communicating with Black Gold and handling questions from frustrated patrons.

SBPL estimates that the staff cost to manage shipment between other Black Gold Libraries, largely serving the delivery of our materials to and from large net borrower libraries, such as Goleta Library and San Luis Obispo Library, are \$86,880 annually. If we were only doing shipment to SBPL locations, the cost of that staff time would be approximately \$9,040 a year. This net savings in staff time would allow us to redistribute workload among staff and increase capacity for programming and outreach.

ILS Software

SBPL's annual cost for its portion of the ILS through Black Gold Cooperative is approximately \$29,509.

The cost of Koha for SBPL would be \$10,130 annually. There would be additional one time installation costs of \$17,875 which includes transfer of data and staff training.

The Aspen overlay software has an annual cost of \$10,450. There would be an implementation cost of \$14,600 which includes local configuration and staff training.

The table below illustrates comparative costs of the ILS managed by Black Gold Cooperative and the anticipated costs of implementing Aspen/Koha, as well as ongoing annual costs.

Cost Categories	Cost of Aspen/Koha Year 1	Black Gold ILS Costs
Black Gold salary - ILS management**		\$40,000
SBPL staff salaries - shipment	\$9,040	\$86,880
Koha Installation	\$17,875	
Koha Annual costs	\$10,130	
Aspen Installation	\$14,600	
Aspen Annual Costs	\$10,450	
Polaris Annual Costs		\$29,509
TOTAL YEAR ONE	\$62,095	\$156,389
Cost Categories	Cost of Aspen/Koha Year 2	Current ILS Costs
Black Gold salary - ILS management*		\$40,000
SBPL staff salary - shipment	\$9,040	\$86,880
Koha Annual costs	\$10,130	
Aspen Annual Costs	\$10,450	
Polaris Annual Costs		\$29,509
TOTAL YEAR TWO	\$29,620	\$156,389

* Staffing costs at Black Gold will likely increase significantly in the future (based on a recent salary survey) and estimates were created with input from the Black Gold Director of Operations.

Interlibrary Loan Costs

SBPL is investigating options for addressing patron's needs for access to materials outside our collections. The Cost of ILL service is unknown, but SBPL is confident it can implement a solution with the savings realized from migration.

The current delivery costs associated with transferring materials throughout Black Gold are paid by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the State. Each year Black Gold funds courier services through LSTA funds and then uses the remaining balance of this revenue to purchase Overdrive digital audio and eBooks. The reduction in courier costs could allow for more of these monies to go into a collection that is in more demand than any other. Current wait times for Overdrive's most popular titles are at nearly 60 days.

Implementation Timeline

The proposed timeline for the transition and implementation of an independent ILS would be a major project beginning in December 2020 with anticipated launch in July 2021. SBPL staff would need to do Polaris record cleanup, initiate a service contract with Bywater Solutions, collaborate with Bywater to set up a test environment for Koha, create a plan for transfer of patron and collection data from Polaris to Koha, develop a customized catalog, train staff on the new ILS, complete a full testing of the migration, and create public messaging about the transition.

CONCLUSION

A locally managed, independent ILS will ultimately save SBPL money, improve the patron's search experience, increase access to materials, and eliminate staff inefficiencies.

Migration not only results in significant cost savings, it allows SBPL to enhance services. A discovery layer is not currently available with the Polaris ILS, and Black Gold member libraries are unlikely to support paying for it when it does become available.

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