APIs to Enhance the User Experience

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Who I am, my experience with discovery, project management now.
A Bit of Background

Locally managed discovery since 2009

- Catalog: Aleph-to-Solr-VuFind
- Articles: Metalib X-Server
- Other web content

2010: Summon replaced Metalib for articles
2018: Launching a new interface
User Experience Goals

Provide scaffolding to help users
- Within our site
- As long as possible
- Keep the ‘back button’ alive
Some Secondary Motives

User confidentiality
Analytics
  • To further improve our systems
  • To understand usage
  • To connect with campus learning analytics

Holistic experience
360 Link

Launched October 2015
Uses 360 Link API & Umlaut
Redirect was relatively easy

Umlaut is open-source software designed to work with Link Resolver APIs. Originally written at Johns Hopkins for SFX. We provided connector for 360 Link.

We had long branded our resolver as "mgetit.lib.umich.edu".
Benefits:
- Permalinks
- Problems get reported to our Ask a Librarian service and where those reflect bad data (not user issues), to Technical Services
- Options for other delivery mechanisms
- We can learn about inbound and outbound usage patterns; where do people arrive from? Where do they go?
Summon

We only use Summon for licensed content
Built our own front end

Not our catalog
Will show new front end, not old one.
Basic functionality of Summon
Everything in the site (search result, item) has a stable URL
Will be adding 'select and act' interactions, and long-term "favorites"
User data – can understand user behaviors at whatever level we decide is needed, for various purposes
Same problem-reporting functions as in link resolver – so when direct links fail, users can tell us immediately
Concluding Thoughts

Several goals in our work:
1. Keeping users in our context
2. Affording them opportunities for help
3. Learning from user behavior
4. Relying on our partners for data & content