MyLibrary 3.x and a "Next Generation" Library Catalogue, Maybe

This, the tiniest of essays, first outlines the fundamental structure of MyLibrary 3.x. It then describes how a database like MyLibrary could be used as a part of a "next generation" library catalogue, maybe.

MyLibrary 3.x

Where the older versions of MyLibrary are/were more like a turn-key application written in Perl, MyLibrary 3.x is a set of object oriented Perl modules – a "toolbox" – allowing developers to create turn-key applications. Ironically, programmers call these sorts of things "libraries".

The purpose of MyLibrary is to make it easy to read and write to a specifically designed database. The database essentially contains four types of information:

1. *Resources* - a list of information materials described using Dublin Core elements, plus a few legacy fields from MyLibrary 2.x
2. *Facet/Term combinations* – a locally-defined controlled vocabulary
3. *Librarians* - a list of people who manage the content of MyLibrary
4. *Patrons* - a list of the people who use MyLibrary

Since MyLibrary allows you to classify resources using facet/term combinations, and since MyLibrary allows you to classify patrons and librarians the same way, it is possible to create relationships between resources and patrons, resources and librarians, and librarians and patrons. (See Figure 1.) Put another way, it allows librarians and patrons to answer questions like: who manages this collection, what resources should I use, and who are my patrons, and who is my librarian?

"Next generation" library catalogue

There seems to be a growing expectation that a "next generation" library catalogue is not really a "catalogue" at all. Instead, it is a set of useful services applied against sets of population-specific information collections.

With the advent of globally networked computers people's expectations regarding access to information have dramatically changed. Not only to they expect to be able to do a greater amount of information work from their computer desktops, but they also expect to get the complete text of their materials, not just its metadata.

In an effort to meet these changing expectations, the content accessible via a library catalogue can be expanded to include the electronic full text versions of information materials. For example, there is no technical reason why the full text of a journal article can not be a part of a library catalogue. At the same time we must remember that collections are only half of the problem. People expect to be able to do things with the full text information once they get it. (See Figure 2.) Read. Edit. Review. Annotate. Rate. Transform. Share. Validate. Etc.

Technically speaking, a database/index combination of information materials accessible through a number of increasingly popular Internet protocols can be a "next generation" library catalog. It would be possible, but not necessarily recommended, to use MyLibrary as the database of such a combination.

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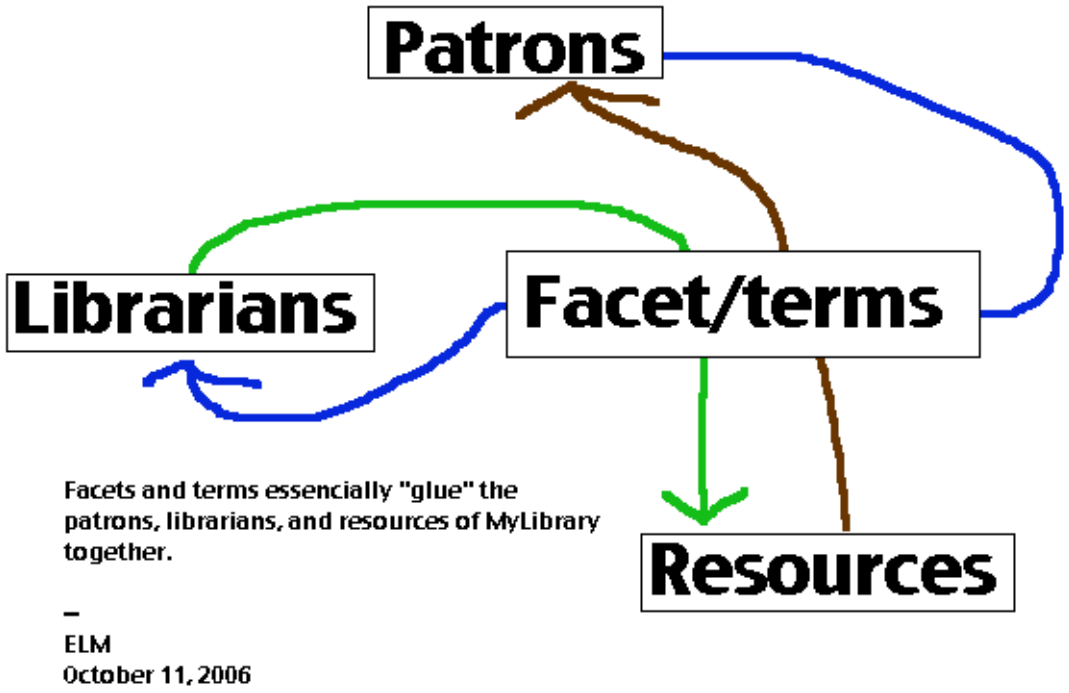

Figure 1 – MyLibrary

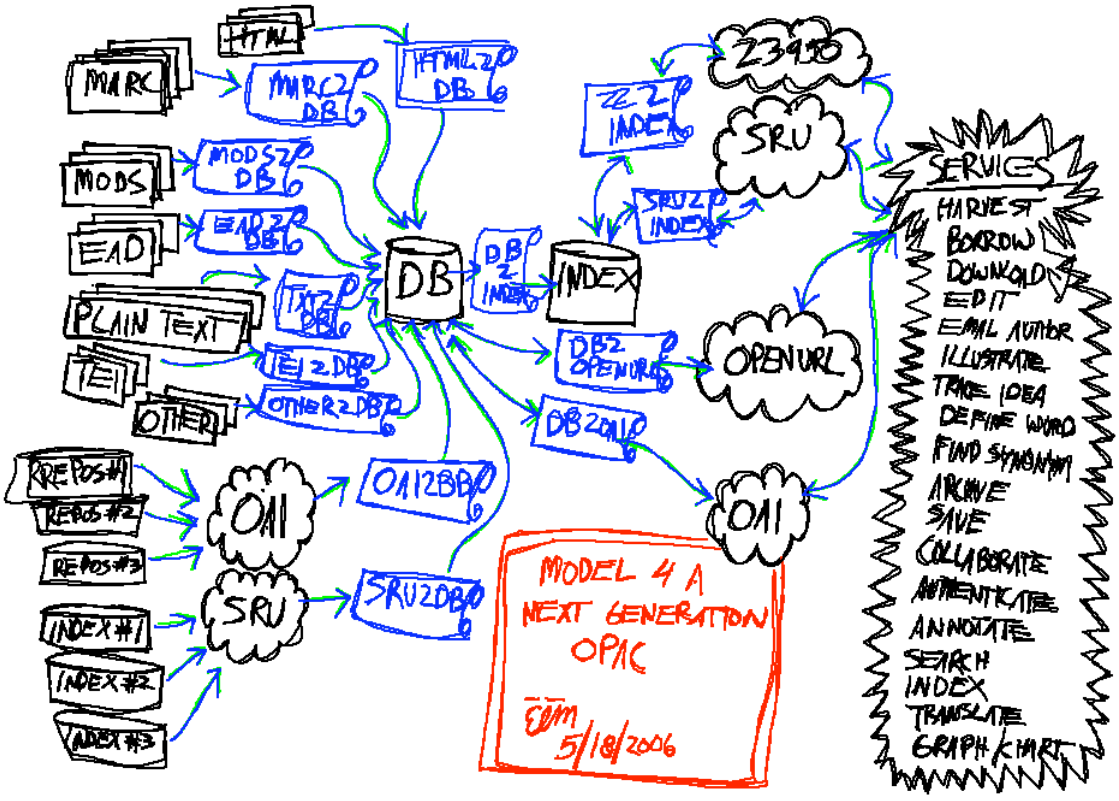

Figure 2 – A “next generation” library catalogue, maybe