

# **PATHFINDER REVIEW COMMITTEE FINAL REPORT**

## **Presented to UC Berkeley Library Cabinet**

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### Presented by

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## **I. Introduction**

### **Our Charge**

In September 2003, Cabinet constituted the Pathfinder Review Committee, and charged it with answering the question, "Can the UC Berkeley community discontinue the use of Pathfinder and use the new Melvyl system in its place?"<sup>1</sup> In answering this question, the Committee was charged with determining and prioritizing

- The benefits of discontinuing Pathfinder
- Pathfinder features which would be lost if the Library decided to use Melvyl as the sole online catalog, and the impact of this loss on Pathfinder users
- The feasibility/difficulty of recreating/replacing these features with enhancements to Melvyl

### **Methodology**

While investigating the various aspects of the charge, committee members represented their own constituencies as well as serving as informed and interested users and teachers of the catalogs. Janet Garey served as technical consultant for Pathfinder and other Library-specific Systems questions, and Cris Campbell represented the California Digital Library and served as technical consultant for Melvyl-related questions.

Committee members solicited input from staff in their own units, and consulted with members of the Arts and Humanities and the Social Sciences councils. The Library Sciences Council provided the committee with a position paper.<sup>2</sup> In addition, we contacted staff at the UC Davis Library for information about their experience with using (legacy) Melvyl as their sole public catalog, and their recent decision to implement a local OPAC.<sup>3</sup>

### **Summary Recommendation**

We recommend that the UC Berkeley Library keep Pathfinder at this time, and revisit the question in 12 to 18 months. A detailed explanation of this recommendation follows. We have made every effort to address all of the specifics of our charge, including listing the benefits/savings which would be realized if we were to discontinue Pathfinder. Priority ranking and details concerning various features and the feasibility of their implementation in Melvyl, etc. can be found in appendices B and C.

## **II. Benefits of Discontinuing Pathfinder, and Offsetting Costs**

- A. Reduce confusion for catalog users
  1. Single catalog - no need to choose between catalogs
  2. UC-eLinks link to Melvyl, not Pathfinder
  3. Melvyl contains holdings for UC Berkeley affiliated Libraries, Pathfinder does not
- **Cost:** retrain current users of Pathfinder, including staff. Includes publicity, signage, instruction [one semester to one year project]

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<sup>1</sup> The full text of the charge may be found in Appendix A

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix D

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix E

- B. Simplify work of instructional and reference staff - one catalog to teach
  - **Cost:** increased number of classes/reference sessions on Melvyl
  - **Cost:** additional training for instructional and reference staff in different search strategies for Melvyl
  
- C. Save Systems Office staff time and resources
  1. Save approximately 416 staff hours annually (ca. 5-8 hrs. a week) in running, monitoring, database maintenance and minor fixes, and loading records from GLADIS into Pathfinder.
  2. Save an additional 200+ hours on possible new projects such as reindexing or interface changes
  3. Software cost savings: none
  4. Hardware cost savings: none
  5. Disk space savings: negligible
  6. Overall Systems savings: modest
  - **Overall Systems cost:** undetermined amount of programmer time, including cooperative programming with CDL, in a transition to Melvyl as the sole UC Berkeley catalog.
  
- D. Pathfinder guides savings
  1. Approximate \$350 annual savings for printing 5000 Pathfinder guides
  2. 10-15 hours annually of staff/GA time for revision, production, and distribution of Pathfinder guides, and updating web version.
  - **Cost:** increased production and distribution of 3 Melvyl guides

### III. Pathfinder Features That Would be Lost - Intrinsic

- A. Limit by Library location
  1. Top priority of all committee members and Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities Library Council members.
  2. Used heavily by Bancroft, Environmental Design, Doe/Moffitt Reference, other subject libraries, both staff and students.
  
- B. Subfield display and display order under local control
  1. Bancroft 351 notes (arrangement notes) display in Pathfinder, but not in Melvyl - significant for archival collections
  2. \$3 subfields used by Bancroft display for maximum clarity in Pathfinder, but not in Melvyl
  
- C. Inclusion of "on order" records, n-level records, and all p-level records
  1. Keyword-searchable way for staff and patrons to find on order records ; Systemwide policy makes inclusion of on-order records in Melvyl unlikely
  2. Pathfinder n-level records plus ability to limit by individual library on a particular campus used by NRLF staff and by NRLF client libraries. Not available in GLADIS or Melvyl.
  3. Pathfinder p-level records used by Bancroft and others. Only serials and TCP p-level records included in Melvyl.

- D. Indexing under local control - loss of 12 indexes unique to Pathfinder
  - 1. Chronological Imprint and Newspaper/Geographical Access - important to Bancroft and Newspaper catalogers and other users
  - 2. Indexes based on relator codes: Association, Binder, Typographical
  - 3. Other indexes
    - a. Genre/Physical characteristic (important for special collections - Melvyl searches only as part of subject searches, retrieving lithographs as a format (655) along with lithographs as subject (650).)
    - b. Uniform Resource Locator - very popular
    - c. Edition, Music Publisher, Computer system, Date Added
    - d. Uniform Title - more narrowly defined than Melvyl "Main Title" and useful to Music Library, other units
  
- E. Search and Browse features
  - 1. Maximum ability to truncate search terms - basis of search strategy in many units, parallels search strategy in article databases
  - 2. Limiting and sorting
    - a. ability to set persistent limits and persistent sort for a session; more sort fields, sorting by more than one field at a time.
    - b. Pathfinder default sort is obvious and useful to catalog user
    - c. limiting by exclusion ("not") as well as "and", e.g. "not films/videos" [Only possible in command search in Melvyl; does not work for locations]
  - 3. Modify feature - full range of Boolean operators plus ability to add limits to a search result
  - 4. Full Boolean searching in Full Feature search, including "or" and "not" [Only "and" between boxes in Melvyl Advanced Search. Can be used within search box, but not obvious to some users]
  - 5. Nearly all fields browseable
  - 6. Call number searches automatically turn into Browse if partial call number entered in search box
  
- F. Display issues
  - 1. Fully customizable display options from Brief and Saved displays
  - 2. Call numbers and URLs appear on first result screen
  
- G. "Date added" searches possible; "Recent Acquisitions" feature available.

#### IV. Pathfinder Features that Would be Lost - Extrinsic

- A. "Full Service" Page NRLF and Page BAKER
  - 1. Ability to request individual volumes of journals, journal articles and book chapters from Pathfinder is VERY popular feature
  - 2. CDL presently offers campuses the option of using a blank form, **external to Melvyl**, for book, book chapter and journal article Request

- a. Journal article form takes user to UC-eLinks menu and presently allows a Request only if no full text found
  - b. Blank form is time-consuming and error-prone (typos by user)
- 3. Request from Melvyl catalog currently strictly limited to monographs (Note field in Melvyl Request form allows patron to request a copy of individual pages or chapters)
- B. Stanford Request feature - Berkeley users search Stanford catalog using Pathfinder interface, place request directly from interface.
- C. Authentication using CalNet ID and passphrase
  - 1. Pathfinder offers a choice of authentication methods: Library patron file authentication and CalNet authentication, which was requested by patrons.
  - 2. Melvyl offers only Library patron file authentication.

## V. Possible Actions

- A. Discontinue Pathfinder, Use Melvyl "as is"
 

**We find this course of action unacceptable because of the loss of key features in Pathfinder, especially the ability to limit by library, the special indexing, the superior search functionality, and the access to on-order, n-level, and p-level records. These losses are not balanced by any financial savings nor warranted by the simplification of single catalog searching.**

  - 1. Benefits
    - a. Single catalog for students and other users [but GLADIS continues ]
    - b. Melvyl already favored by Science Libraries staff and others because of inclusion of all Affiliated Library records, and cataloging considerations.
    - c. New Melvyl features, such as keyword index, author/title index and My Workspace useful for UC Berkeley users
  - 2. Drawbacks
    - a. Loss of essential features such as ability to limit by library location, Berkeley-specific indexes used heavily or exclusively by some units. [see list of features, III and IV, above]
    - b. Loss of easy Page NRLF and Page BAKER for book chapters and journal articles. Complete loss of Stanford Request
    - c. Loss of on-order, n-level and p-level records
    - d. Loss of date-added and recent acquisitions searching
    - e. Loss of ability to authenticate using CalNet passphrase
    - f. Loss of Pathfinder-specific search strategies: reliable truncation, full Boolean searching in Full Feature search, and flexible limiting and sorting

- g. Loss of local control over indexing and other features. Priorities for Melvyl enhancements/other changes shared with all other UC Campuses
- 3. External Concerns - CDL
  - a. CDL would need to explore possible additional licensing fees if Melvyl becomes exclusive OPAC for Berkeley
  - b. CDL analysis would be necessary to evaluate the impact of the extra load on Melvyl if all Berkeley catalog use were switched from Pathfinder: **Average of 32,402 Pathfinder sessions per week, representing 54,481 searches per week.**
  - c. CDL would need to explore impact of increased traffic on CDL Helpline by Berkeley users
- B. Discontinue Pathfinder & Negotiate with CDL for Modification of Melvyl to Include Desirable UC Berkeley Features and Indexes
 

**This solution would be desirable if the time frame for implementation in Melvyl were more hopeful. Since it looks likely that no programming effort could go into our wish list until at least 2005, we recommend re-evaluating our position at that time.**

  - 1. Benefits
    - a. Single catalog
    - b. Inclusion of some desirable Berkeley-specific features, or their equivalent in work-arounds
  - 2. Drawbacks
    - a. Loss of local control on all levels.
    - b. Only certain desirable features could be implemented in Melvyl because of Aleph software constraints
    - c. Sharing priorities: features to be implemented must be placed in Systemwide queue of desiderata
    - d. Long delay in implementation of ANY Berkeley features because of CDL time/resource constraints
  - 3. External Concerns
    - a. Licensing implications [see V A 3a, above]
    - b. System load and Helpline traffic implications [see V A 3b-c, above]
    - c. Systemwide policy issues
      - i. Broader discussion necessary - prioritization of Melvyl development is Systemwide issue
      - ii. Impact of Berkeley-specific suggested modifications on Systemwide use of Melvyl needs to be explored
  - 4. Melvyl Technical Issues
    - a. Melvyl is a new and "unfinished" system. CDL unwilling to undertake development or implementation of new features until the system is stable

- b. Loading rate - Melvyl loading rate for records already less than optimal. Adding additional indexes requested by Berkeley may negatively impact loading rate.

5. CDL resource allocation issues
    - a. April 2004 through October 2004 CDL will be fully occupied with implementation of version upgrade of Aleph software [NOTE: possible 3-month delay of upgrade, pushing completion date into 2005]
    - b. No further analysis or implementation of UCB-requested additional Melvyl features until early to mid-2005
- C. Keep Pathfinder
- Keeping Pathfinder offers several benefits in addition to the key features already outlined in III. and IV. above.**
1. Smaller database, results easier to read, less confusion for UC Berkeley users
  2. Response time faster or comparable to Melvyl in most situations.
  3. Local control over priorities for reindexing, enhancing, etc. Open source software requires no outside vendor support. Can be maintained and customized in-house to meet Berkeley's needs with no outside policy/procedural concerns.
  4. No need to re-educate staff and present user population
  5. Redundant system for UC Berkeley and NRLF holdings; allows use of Pathfinder if Melvyl is down, and vice-versa

## VI. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Pathfinder Review Committee finds that it would not be advisable to discontinue Pathfinder at this time. Many Pathfinder features, particularly ability to limit by library location and ability to search indexes not available in Melvyl, are considered essential by staff and users of some Library collections. Any savings realized by the discontinuation of Pathfinder would be extremely modest to negligible, and would be partially negated by costs in other areas, such as Melvyl training, extra Melvyl catalog guides, etc.

The experience of the UC Davis Library, which only recently implemented a local OPAC, after years of using a piecemeal system with legacy Melvyl as the public online catalog, may also be relevant. Gail Yokote, AUL for Research Services and Collections, Shields Library, University of California Davis, writes:

*" When we decided to look for an integrated library system to replace the aging home-grown programs plus limited functionalities for DRA and III, we wanted a local OPAC which could reflect more functionality and choices for our library users. Things like showing on order or inprocess titles, performing call number searches, tailoring displays, implementing features that might not be feasible in all UC+ environment were attractive to us. Using an OPAC which must take into account the good of all vs. the desires/needs of an individual campus can become discouraging at times."*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix E

Extensive analysis by the CDL and Berkeley would be necessary before any Berkeley-requested features could be implemented in Melvyl. Due to CDL's need to commit its staff resources to the impending upgrade of Melvyl to Aleph Version 16.02, this analysis could not be undertaken until early to mid 2005, depending on how long it takes to stabilize Version 16.02.

Even if Berkeley decided to discontinue Pathfinder to use the existing Melvyl catalog without any enhancements, it would be necessary to carry out an evaluation of possible impact on Melvyl system performance.

The CDL would like to initiate an evaluation of system requirements for a bibliographic system that serves both Systemwide and local needs and encourages Berkeley to undertake such an exploration with CDL. The analysis done thus far by the Pathfinder Review Committee could serve to jumpstart such an effort and could result in a broad outline of requirements for a future environment that could be useful at whatever time Berkeley decides to revisit the issue of discontinuing Pathfinder. Since CDL serves all of the UC campuses with its services, proposed changes to the catalog would have to be viewed in the context of shared services for the system and the evolution of processes to prioritize and develop them.

We recommend that Berkeley continue to support Pathfinder as the UC Berkeley Library Web OPAC, and revisit the question in 12 to 18 months. By that time, Melvyl's status as a stable production system should be clearer. In addition, desirable features, such as the improvement to the ability to modify a search, should be in place. We further recommend that Berkeley help the CDL initiate a Systemwide analysis of bibliographic services, focused on the services delivered by the Web OPAC.

Adding Berkeley-specific features to Melvyl promises to be a very resource-intensive process for the CDL and for us locally. The possibility of getting our features added to Melvyl is somewhat remote. If the fiscal climate improves, Berkeley might want to explore the possibility of an integrated system for all functions. In that case, it would make more sense to conserve our resources now rather than undertake a temporary solution by moving to Melvyl and attempting to get Melvyl modified for our needs.

In the meantime, we can continue to have local control over Pathfinder, and the ability to continue to enhance it to meet our own needs and priorities.