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Connections

Merrimack Valley Library Consortium, Inc.



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Volume 9, No.12

December 2009

It's Your Turn!

We are now moving into the next phase of the Open Source Library Project: developing the ultimate prototype. We have the opportunity to create a Library System to meet **OUR** needs, but we need to figure out what those exact needs are! This is the time when everybody's expertise and creativity is needed.

Our current task will be to brainstorm about what the "ultimate" library system could look like for each of us, our colleagues, libraries, and State. Brainstorming sessions have already begun at committee meetings; however, it would be great if as many individuals or groups as possible could get together formally or informally to start generating ideas for the system. A list will be available on the MVLC InfoPlace that will compile and summarize the ideas that have been produced.

At this point in time we are looking for **quantity not quality**; in brainstorming each idea can be a catalyst for many more ideas. To make sure that we get all those cascading, symbiotic, and organic ideas it is important to try to follow three brainstorming best practices: accept it, write it down, and take it further.

ACCEPT IT: Try not to criticize or judge any ideas—everything (even what you might think is wacky or insane) is OK. The literature says that negative (as well as positive) critiques can hamper

the brainstorming process. The negative causes people to refrain from participating and the positive can cause people to think "my ideas are not as good as that last one". (Maybe we should have a contest for the most "outrageous" idea that can be implemented!)

WRITE IT DOWN: Try to write everything down and make it visible to all members in a group setting. Everybody's ideas need to count. As mentioned earlier a compiled list will be on the MVLC InfoPlace.

TAKE IT FURTHER: Try to take each other's ideas and take each one a step further. Many brainstorming facilitators say that when you think you have come up with everything...come up with three more! Often that last push takes you down a path to really innovative ideas. Make your brain hurt!

Getting started with brainstorming can be the most difficult part of the process. We all have different ways of thinking and communicating. The following tips will highlight some ways to help get things moving (and keep them going!).

It can be helpful to start small with an individual task that you do. An example could be the task of creating a new patron record. Some people like to write down the steps of a task as it is currently done in Horizon and then "fix" it. An example

could be the convoluted two-step process for designating an email overdue notification in the new patron record. The “fix” could be to be able to designate email (or text, or twitter, etc.) notification in one place with one click.

Others may want to think, instead, about the goals of the task and then create a completely new procedure without any of the limitations of Horizon. A goal could be “to make sure the patron is not already in the system”. Maybe, there could be a patron search button next to the fields for entering the patron’s name. This would eliminate a separate search task and rekeying of the name for the record.

Depending on your learning and communication style here are some tips for thinking about the process getting your ideas out:

Hands-On people could go into the Horizon TRAINING database and walk through the steps and write out suggestions as you go. It could be handy to print out a screen shot and show what needs to be “fixed”

Writing people could jot down a numbered list of efficient steps to get the job done. During this process it may be useful to have some questions to ask:

- What is the most frustrating or time-consuming part of this task?
- What would make this more user-friendly and intuitive?
- Can you quickly find and access all information necessary for this task?
- Should there be more standardization here?
- Should there be more options and customizability here?
- Is there a third-party program that does what is needed?
- Would a tie-in with a communication tool such as Twitter, email, or a blog be useful in any way?

Talking people could have some fun and imagine they are the librarian on the Starship Enterprise. Talk your way through the task by “telling the computer” what to do. Outline some of the most tedious or complex procedures that you currently do and show where you need to “ask” the computer to do something.

Visual people may want to draw a mock-up of what a perfect entry screen/form would look like. For example, if you are adding a new patron record, which mandatory items should be on the first screen so that there is an easy option to finish the record later?

Don’t limit your self to Horizon or even just other library systems. Interactive technology development has progressed much faster in the non-library world. We need to find and integrate as many of these great ideas as possible into our new system. As you are using the Internet copy the url or print out those sites which are exceptionally **user-friendly** (or really cool!).

So, in closing, this is the time to open the flood gates on creativity, innovation, and efficiency to produce a large quantity of ideas and thoughts about the new system. Later on, during the first part of 2010 a coordinator for the project will be hired and will help us (including C/WMARS and NOBLE) move into the next phase of selecting, prioritizing and modifying the best ideas to develop.

Please send your ideas, drawings, urls, or whatever you have to Tracy at tswaim@mvlc.org or FAX 978-557-8101 or MVLC, 1600 Osgood St., North Andover, MA 01845.



Packet Shaper/ Database Server Installations Scheduled

Central Site will be installing new equipment in December. On December 7th, a new Packet Shaper will be installed in the computer room. This will update our current, end-of-lifed unit. It includes a good deal more memory than our present unit, runs the latest version of the operating system and should provide us with somewhat more shaping capability. We expect this installation to happen sometime after 5:00 PM on the Monday, December 7th. The cutover involves simply switching a few cables and should require little or no downtime.

The bigger project will be the migration to our new Horizon database server, scheduled for Thursday, December 17th. This server is far more powerful than our current Sunfire V490 and will likely provide some improved performance with Horizon (although much of the seeming slowness of Horizon is due to telecommunications and not the server. This server will also allow us to run the Evergreen ILS on it simultaneously and we expect it to become the production server for Evergreen when we migrate a couple of years from now.

The upgrade will begin around 8:00 AM on the 17th. Horizon, HIP and products that rely on the Horizon database for user authentication (self-check workstations, time and print management systems, databases such as Overdrive) will be down during the migration. The Internet, e-mail and databases that don't authenticate users against the Horizon patron database (i.e, state and regional databases) should be available.

While as much of the work as possible will be completed in advance, we still expect a minimum of a half a day of downtime to complete the cutover.

New Receipt Printer Software Available

MVLC has taken over maintenance of the "Horizon Receipt Printer" software, previously maintained by Dean Baumeister of Andover. To allow us to provide a higher level of support for it, we created and released a new version version 2.0 .

The new version is substantially changed from the previous. The new version **requires** the .NET Framework version 3.5, and as such will not run on Windows 2000 due to a lack of support for this from Microsoft. It does, however, work on both 32 and 64 bit versions of Windows XP, Vista, and the brand new Windows 7 (note: most libraries are using 32-bit operating systems). It also works with any receipt printer Windows will recognize, including USB, and will also work with networked printers.

New features include a graphical tool for configuring software options, integration of library-specific customizations directly into the configuration file (no more need to download them), and the use of an external file for route information on transit slips, which means they can be easily changed should the routes change in the future. In addition, the program no longer appears (by default) as an icon on the Windows taskbar (the big buttons at the bottom of the screen), but rather appears as a much smaller icon in the notification area (aka, the system tray). Also, by default the software will attempt to configure Horizon to use it for printing receipts (but will not change what receipts are printed automatically). The installer was designed to be easy to use for librarians and IT people alike, and attempts to make all needed changes to the computer automatically.

The new version was written and is supported by Thomas Berezansky at Central Site.

For more information, instructions, and downloads visit the Horizon Receipt Printer's page on the MVLC Staff Wiki at:
http://www.mvlcstaff.org/Horizon_Receipt_Printer

MVLC CALENDAR

December 2009

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9 Core Services Committee MVLC - 10:00 AM	10	11
14	15 Executive Committee MVLC Central Site 2:00 PM	16	17 Reference Committee Chelmsford – 10:00 AM	18
21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve (Central Site closes at Noon)	25 Christmas Day
28	29	30	31	