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## Building a Bento Box: COCC's Federated Search

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# Building a Bento Box

## COCC's Federated Search

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# The Problem

- Library patrons expect all search interfaces to act like Google.
- However, academic information is siloed by vendors.
  - COCC has 134 subscription databases. Many students use Academic Search Premier and nothing else.
- Naive and even experienced researchers are likely to miss good sources.

# Potential Solution #1: The “One Search”

- Collect metadata from multiple vendors in one searchable index
  - E.g., Ex Libris’ Primo, Ebsco’s Discovery Service
- Pros
  - Doable by librarians with existing ILSs
  - One algorithm with advanced search options
- Cons
  - Managing electronic inventory is laborious
  - Vendors don’t play nice
  - Users see only one list of top-ranked results

# Potential Solution #2: The Federated Search

- Deliver search results from multiple vendors in one interface
  - E.g., Ex Libris' MetaLib, NCSU's [QuickSearch](#), and more\*
- Pros
  - Directly tap into vendors' existing indices and algorithms
  - Users can see a variety of resources at once
- Cons
  - Vendors' algorithms can be imperfect
  - Impossible to include every resource
  - Interface is busier

\* See more examples from prominent institutions in Emily Singley's 2016 blog post, ["To Bento or Not to Bento"](#)

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Jane Austen, 1775-1817.; c2001
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English novelist. She described her raw material as 'three or four families in a Country Village'. *Sense and Sensibility* was published in 1811, *Pride...* [\(Continue\)](#)

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1. [Jane Austen's "Evelyn" and The "Impossibility of The Gift"](#). (Article)  
Criticism; 2018
2. [READING JANE AUSTEN: JOURNEYS OF SELFDISCOVERY IN THE JANE AUSTEN BOOK CLUB](#). (Article)  
Journal of the Faculty of Letters; 2018
3. ["To Know What You Are All Thinking": Riddles and Minds in Jane Austen's Emma](#). (Article)  
Poetica Today; 2018
4. [Henry Crawford as Master Betty: Jane Austen on the "Disabling" of Shakespeare](#). (Article)  
Eighteenth Century Fiction; 2017
5. [The Sensation of Language in Jane Austen's Persuasion](#). (Literary Criticism)  
Eighteenth Century Fiction; 2017

[More from Academic Search Premier »](#)**Recommended Resources**

- [Biography Reference Center](#)  
Biography Reference Center offers a comprehensive collection of full-text biographies.
- [Encyclopedia Britannica - Academic Edition](#)  
Encyclopedia Britannica is a credible, academic general encyclopedia.

# Why Build from Scratch?

- Federated search products are expensive.
- The library has full control over the design.
  - Can promote specific resources to boost usage, like the CLERC collection at COCC

# How It Works

- A user submits search terms through a form.
- The library's server uses [vendor APIs](#) to asynchronously query databases for those terms.
- The webpage displays results from the databases in “boxes.”



# Additional Features

- An autocomplete feature suggests search terms based on Wikipedia article titles.
- A “Did You Mean” feature from Ex Libris’ Primo suggests potential corrections for misspellings.
- Librarians suggest “Recommended Resources” for keywords based on Library of Congress subject headings.

# User Testing and Feedback

- A/B/C testing in Fall 2018 compared the federated search against the existing library website and Primo with articles (see [Federated Search Usability Testing Report](#)).
- Key conclusions:
  - The federated search guided students to find a wider variety of library resources.
  - Once students are in a search interface, they expect to find everything in the same place.
  - Spelling can be a significant barrier to success.
  - Students believe Google has all the answers.

# Impact on Usage

- So far, there is no observable difference in the usage of included databases from Winter 2018 to Winter 2019.
- The biggest drivers of usage likely are and always will be instructors, not interfaces.

# Questions?



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