# SuperSearching at UTS:
# Experience With a MetaLib/SFX Installation

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**Abstract**
*MetaLib and SFX were implemented at UTS Library in 2001. This paper traces UTS' experience, from the initial search for solutions to problems of electronic information access, through to the launch of SuperSearch – UTS Library's MetaLib/SFX system. Details of the various phases of the implementation are provided, including planning and preparation, the work of the implementation group, and the operationalisation for the ongoing management of the system. The paper concludes with mention of some related developments at UTS Library.*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the implementation of SuperSearch, a new gateway to electronic resources at the University of Technology, Sydney. SuperSearch is based on the MetaLib and SFX technologies developed by ExLibris, and UTS was the first site in Australia to go live with the MetaLib product. UTS was also the first site internationally and nationally to go live with the MetaLib/SFX combination which we named SuperSearch. SuperSearch was launched at UTS in early December 2001.

SuperSearch provides UTS clients with a single identifiable and simple-to-use starting point for navigating the considerable array of the Library's electronic resources, in particular its substantial collection of fulltext serials.

SuperSearch was developed during 2001 by a project team comprising UTS Library staff working in close cooperation with ExLibris teams. The MetaLib and SFX components of SuperSearch have been adapted and customised to meet specific needs of UTS clients, and it is envisaged that further tailoring and enhancement will occur while these products remain the Library's chief electronic resource gateway.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

UTS Library serves over 29,000 customers, and the greatest proportion of these are part-time students. The Library has operations based at UTS' three campuses. The University's commitment to its strategic initiatives aimed at international programs and work-based learning have lead to issues of equity. This has meant heavy demands being made on the Library's capacity to service users, particularly onshore users requiring off-campus access from offices and home, as well as offshore students. To try to satisfy these demands, funds have recently been injected into the Library's budget specifically targeting the expansion of electronic resources, and in particular aimed at building up the electronic serials collection. This intensive growth has created several challenges for Library staff, and lead to a number of significant developments during 2001, including SuperSearch.

## THE RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING METALIB AND SFX

*Why did UTS need MetaLib and SFX?*

At the end of 2000, UTS Library had some pressing needs. There was no effective means of dealing with the sudden proliferation of electronic resources. At that stage, there were over 150 different electronic databases. There are now close to 200 databases, and more are expected in 2002. There was, and continues to be very little consistency among our databases, particularly in areas that really matter to the Library's clients - interfaces and search functionality. Databases also differ in ways that matter to our Library staff, e.g. record structures and authentication options.

As part of UTS' electronic collections, there were more than 25,000 electronic serial titles by the end of 2000, and they all needed cataloguing. When we reflected briefly on our e-serials situation in December 2000, we calculated that it would take around 10 person years to catalogue our electronic serials, and we knew that we needed to find alternatives to traditional cataloguing methods in order to provide our clients with access to these valuable resources.

Our electronic resource collection generally offered a confusing array of large amounts of potential information which was difficult to access. This situation led to

our users becoming more dependent than ever on our liaison and desk services to help them navigate their way through the maze. This was occurring at a time when the Library staff was under great pressure to reduce client-dependency by making more information accessible electronically.

Like many libraries, our databases were all accessible via a title list on our journal database pages of our Library website.  We also catalogued our databases at the collection level, providing users with hypertext link access to them from our Innopac web catalogue.  This was barely satisfactory while our database collection remained small.   However, when our collection began to grow rapidly, this approach to managing our electronic resources proved inadequate.  It was not acceptable to expect our clients to go in and out of different databases trying to find one or several resources that might be right for them, and it was a daunting task for even our most skilled liaison staff to assist our clients through this process.

*Why choose MetaLib/SFX and not other products, and why be an early adopter of these products?*
UTS Library has a culture of developing quick prototypes for specific needs.  In 1998, we purchased the Athens/ISOS authentication system.  UTS was the first and only implementation of this technology in Australia, and we purchased it to address some urgent client needs.  ISOS gave us some of what was needed at the time, and it was a calculated risk taken in consideration of functionality and cost.

The decision to purchase MetaLib and SFX was also a risk, calculated in consideration of the pressing needs mentioned above.   An improved means of managing our electronic resources was required to maximise access for our clients. We wanted to offer them a simple, seamless method of reaching our fulltext serials while they searched for information via easy-to-navigate subject and personal gateways.  All this had to be controlled by an authentication process which would provide smooth access for off-campus and on-campus users, while ensuring database licence compliancy.

MetaLib offered a unified search interface, simultaneous searching of multiple targets, customisable portals, and a potential to manage hybrid information resources (Z39.50-accessible and non-Z39.50-accessible).   SFX offered context-sensitive linking between web-based resources, and it was standards-based (i.e. not reliant on the various proprietary linking mechanisms developed by individual database providers).

We looked at MetaLib and SFX in December 2000, and also searched the market for other similar technology.  The decision to purchase MetaLib and SFX was made in early 2001.  It was felt that these products would address some but not all of UTS' needs, and that they had potential.  We were aware that UTS might be the first implementation in Australia, and of the pitfalls associated with early adoption.  At that time, it was of critical importance to us that these two products were not vapourware.   Undeniably, they needed substantial configuration, particularly MetaLib, and UTS probably could have been spared some of that work had other libraries bought and configured the system when we did.

**THE IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE**

In the UTS implementation experience, the MetaLib/SFX combination should be treated as a module of an ILMS (integrated library management system). In terms of implementation, it seems neither appropriate nor practical to treat it as a standalone system because of the complex interrelationships with many other systems, e.g library catalogues and databases.

Our implementation occurred in 3 phases:
- Pre-implementation, approx March – June 2001
- Implementation, June – December 2001
- Post-implementation, December 2001 +

**Pre-implementation Phase**

The first tasks were to identify UTS' resources, and to prioritise them for adding to our MetaLib and SFX. To prepare for MetaLib, we were required to obtain Z39.50 access information for every resource if it was available. This involved asking all our database suppliers these questions:
1. Do you offer Z39.50 access?
2. If so, please provide your Z39.50 server IP & port number, and a Z39.50 username/password for UTS.
3. If not, please confirm that Z39.50 access is not available.

To prepare for SFX, UTS's electronic serials were identified and prioritised, and lists of titles and ISSNs were produced from whatever sources were available.

As this information became available, it was sent to the ExLibris project team which catalogued our databases into MetaLib, and also undertook some dataloading to enable SFX functionality.

The UTS MetaLib/SFX server was purchased in May 2001, and the ExLibris team immediately began loading the software and records in readiness for training which was conducted by an ExLibris trainer at UTS Library in late May.

**Implementation Phase**

In June, a Library implementation team known as MIG (MetaLib/SFX Implementation Group) was formed at UTS, and its project brief included:
- ongoing system development;
- stakeholder consultation and system demonstrations;
- training, documentation, promotion and publicity;
- pilot and launch of the system.

The timeline was tight. The system had to be implemented by the end of 2001 in order to give our liaison staff sufficient time to develop new information literacy programs based on MetaLib/SFX by 1st semester, 2002.

We began tailoring the system almost immediately. The first things to go were the names of the MetaLib Information Gateway groups (or subjects) – the ones that came with the system installation were replaced with subjects which suited the UTS environment. We then assigned the new Information Gateway groups to all our MetaLib catalogue records. The controlled vocabulary and keywords used in

MetaLib records were also reviewed and amended to suit the Library's requirements. We changed the look of our SFX button and gave it a name which was more meaningful at UTS - LinkS'.

MIG made our MetaLib/SFX available to all Library staff in July after a series of system demonstrations, and staff were encouraged to self-register and use the system in order to play an active role in the development of the system prior to its launch. Feedback from the Library staff was crucial throughout the implementation, and by September when we began load testing, many staff were already familiar with the system, and they were able to report problems and bugs accurately and promptly.

Our MetaLib/SFX was piloted during October-November 2001 to a group of around 80 UTS Nursing academics and students.  Promotional materials and sessions, documentation and training programs were developed for the pilot group, and since then, these have been further developed and expanded for the rest of the UTS community.  We had tried to resolve authentication issues before the pilot, and we found that the pilot was a good test of the solutions we had put in place.  Inevitably, authentication problems were encountered, and workaround solutions were used in some cases, but overall the pilot went well and some useful feedback was received from the client group.

UTS Library launched the system as SuperSearch on 3 December 2001.  This was intentionally a 'soft' launch at a quiet time of the year to enable us to maintain the momentum of the system development, and to resolve any teething problems before $1^{st}$ semester 2002.  MetaLib resource configuration work is ongoing, as are the tasks associated with enabling of existing and new SFX targets.

**Post-Implementation Phase**
The post-implementation or operational phase was planned prior to the launch of SuperSearch. It began immediately after the launch and is ongoing. Tasks associated with the continuing development and maintenance of the system were identified and assigned to various departments within UTS Library.  Because the implementation team members were drawn from those departments, it is proving to be a relatively straight-forward process to incorporate SuperSearch work into the normal processes and workflows of the Library.

**STAFFING IMPACTS**
Undoubtedly, the greatest impact of implementing SuperSearch at UTS has been on Library staff. This is because we purchased at a time when MetaLib in particular was an immature system.  The impacts have been felt in the Serials/Interlibrary Loans Department, the Library IT Team, and increasingly in the liaison teams.

It made sense to involve staff with serials expertise at the pre-implementation phase. Having negotiated licenses, purchased databases, and organised access to them, this group of staff had a good understanding of the Library's electronic resources, and they were familiar with our database providers.  Since the MetaLib/SFX training from ExLibris in May, serials/interlibrary loans staff have reviewed, amended and maintained MetaLib catalogue records, and they are coordinating the ongoing configuration work with advice and feedback from liaison staff.  They enable SFX

targets and services and conduct the SFX dataloads. They are also heavily involved in testing of MetaLib and SFX functionality.

IT staff initially advised on hardware requirements and arranged purchase of our server. Since installation, they monitored load tests and have been working in cooperation with ExLibris on system maintenance and upgrades. In addition, they are assisting the Serials/Interlibrary Loans staff with the ongoing configuration work.

Our liaison staff handle client feedback about SuperSearch, and are developing information literacy programs incorporating SuperSearch. They also provide substantial feedback, and enhancement suggestions.

During 2001, none of our staff was taken offline to work specifically on SuperSearch. The implementation team members all continued with their regular jobs, as well as working on SuperSearch. Some additional help was provided as needed. While this approach may not suit every library, it proved manageable at UTS, and had the advantage of bringing together the required expertise without major disruption to the Library's services. An added benefit has been a relatively smooth post-implementation phase to date, largely because SuperSearch expertise was already present in each of the areas in which SuperSearch tasks have been operationalised.

## RELATED DEVELOPMENTS AT UTS
As well as implementing SuperSearch, UTS Library undertook several other major developments in 2001.

At the same time that preparations were underway for MetaLib/SFX, the serials/interlibrary loans staff were involved in adapting and testing software for purposes of creating and bulk loading of brief linked MARC records for UTS' electronic serials into the catalogue. This was based on AutoCat software which was made available by QUT. UTS went into production with this process in April 2001, and since then, over 19,000 linked catalogue records have been loaded into our Innopac catalogue. This has significantly increased access to our electronic serials for our clients. These brief linked MARC records integrate well with SuperSearch. Like other catalogued resources, they are available via the 'Holdings in UTS Library' SFX service offered from within SuperSearch.

On the same day as the SuperSearch launch (3 December 2001), UTS Library's new authentication process was also rolled out. The old authentication system (Athens/ISOS) was replaced by a process consisting of a lookup to the University's LDAP server, plus proxying using Squid software. We have since also provided another authentication option based on EZProxy. In switching to the new authentication process, UTS Library immediately increased the range of resources available to remote clients. As so much of SuperSearch functionality relies on authentication, it was essential to bring in the new authentication process at the same time as the SuperSearch launch.

The redevelopment of UTS Library's website began in 2001, and is scheduled for rollout in February 2002. SuperSearch will feature on the new look website with links from various pages.

Learning commons were developed in 2001 at all UTS campus libraries, and are spreading into other parts of the University. Among the benefits that learning commons offer, the additional PCs in these areas are providing increased access points for on-campus clients to reach SuperSearch.

**CONCLUSION**
All UTS Library's electronic resources are available via SuperSearch from the Library's website, and SuperSearch is being promoted as the chief gateway for user's information needs. A $2^{nd}$ gateway - a version of the old journal database pages on the Library's website – is being retained for the time being. This dual access is considered necessary during the transition to SuperSearch because it is recognised that some existing users will need time to adapt to the new improved ways of information-seeking which SuperSearch offers.

*Have the MetaLib and SFX products met our expectations?*
Overall, and when considered with other related developments at UTS, MetaLib and SFX have addressed a number of needs. SFX has provided the sophisticated cross-linking mechanism we required in order to greatly expand access to our substantial electronic serials collection which had grown rapidly as a result of targeted funding. MetaLib, while slower than SFX to develop, has given us the capacity to better manage our electronic resources for our clients. In terms of maximising access to these resources, the MetaLib product needs a lot more development so that clients can derive the full benefit from the common search interface. It remains to be seen whether the MetaLib development path will catch up with that of SFX. If it can, then I believe that the MetaLib/SFX *combination* will be more attractive to libraries.