

To: Library Steering Committee ("LSC")

From: Discovery Tool Subcommittee

Subject: Discovery Tool

Date: December 7, 2015

Discovery Tool Subcommittee update:

The Discovery Tool Subcommittee has further studied available discovery tools and makes the following recommendations:

- TCNJ Library should implement a discovery tool, preferably for implementation during summer 2016.
- That discovery tool should be Ebsco Discovery Service (EDS).
- The dean, upon accepting these recommendations, should charge an appropriate group with tool customization and promotion to ensure successful integration and implementation of Ebsco Discovery Service.

These recommendations are based primarily on the following factors: perceived strengths and weaknesses of discovery tools in general, advantages and disadvantages of EDS over alternative discovery tools, and stakeholder input and subcommittee analysis during a product trial testing period.

Two fully functional trials (for Summon and for Ebsco Discovery Service) were set up so that TCNJ stakeholders could test these products. These trials were configured to include TCNJ Library's holdings and subscriptions so that they would behave exactly (or close to exactly) as they would if we were to proceed with an implementation. These trial products were made available to all TCNJ Library staff, and feedback was sought via multiple channels: an online survey that collected responses for approximately 2.5 weeks (November 6 – 25), two open forum sessions (on November 11), and several one-on-one brief interviews with library student workers.

Strengths and weaknesses of discovery tools have been thoroughly described in various library publications and have been summarized in a written update sent to LSC by this subcommittee (submitted September 22, 2015).

The subcommittee recommends implementation of Ebsco Discovery Service for several reasons. Students have relatively high familiarity with Ebsco interfaces (evidenced in high web traffic in TCNJ's Academic Search Premier database). Ebsco allows for greater customization of its search-result-ranking algorithm (compared with discovery tool competitors), which could allow TCNJ to appropriately prioritize book holdings. TCNJ Library already subscribes to many resources via Ebsco, which should make resources more discoverable overall. Ebsco displays live holdings information for items from TCNJ Library's catalog. Lastly, Ebsco has made a pricing offer that could allow TCNJ Library to subscribe to EDS at no additional cost above

current expenses. (As part of this offer, Ebsco would include an EDS subscription at no charge if TCNJ Library migrates to Ebsco's link resolver product from SerialsSolutions).

Members of TCNJ Library's community provided helpful feedback about discovery tools. Many responses suggested that each tool is easy to use and potentially helpful for satisfying researcher needs. Those who expressed a preference for one of the tools over the other were roughly evenly divided: Support was approximately equal for the two tools and many of the differences noted between the two tools were customizable features that can be modified and customized. The most common concern raised was the potential effects of "dumbing down" library resources.

Students in particular mentioned that these tools seemed notably easier to use than other offerings, including Google, Google Scholar, TCNJ Library's catalog, and library subscription databases; they mentioned that they would be more likely to use such tools (and therefore use more subscription/purchased library resources) if more of the library's offerings were searchable in one interface. Some mentioned that their classmates would feel similarly, noting prior conversations they'd had with friends about challenges in doing library research.

Discovery Tool Subcommittee members analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of the respective tools. The group reached a consensus that EDS and Summon are largely similar in nearly all relevant respects.

It is anticipated that the current needs of library users would be better met by making a discovery tool available at TCNJ. What seems clear is that a successful implementation would depend on thoughtful and appropriate customization and configuration. Careful attention would need to be paid to verbiage of display labels, selection and placement of interface controls, algorithm customization (for search-result ranking), selection of indexed materials, and more. Consideration would also need to be given to any integration of the discovery tool into the existing landscape of TCNJ Library resources, and it is this planning that could address concerns about "dumbing down" library resources. This tool is not intended for use by everyone in all types of research and it will be important to educate library users in the importance of other more specialized tools for high level research.

Members of the Discovery Tool Subcommittee are Amanda Cowell, Jia Mi, John Oliver (chair), Cathy Weng, and Marci Zane.