



Web-Scale Discovery in an Academic Medical Library: Our Experience with EBSCO's Discovery Service

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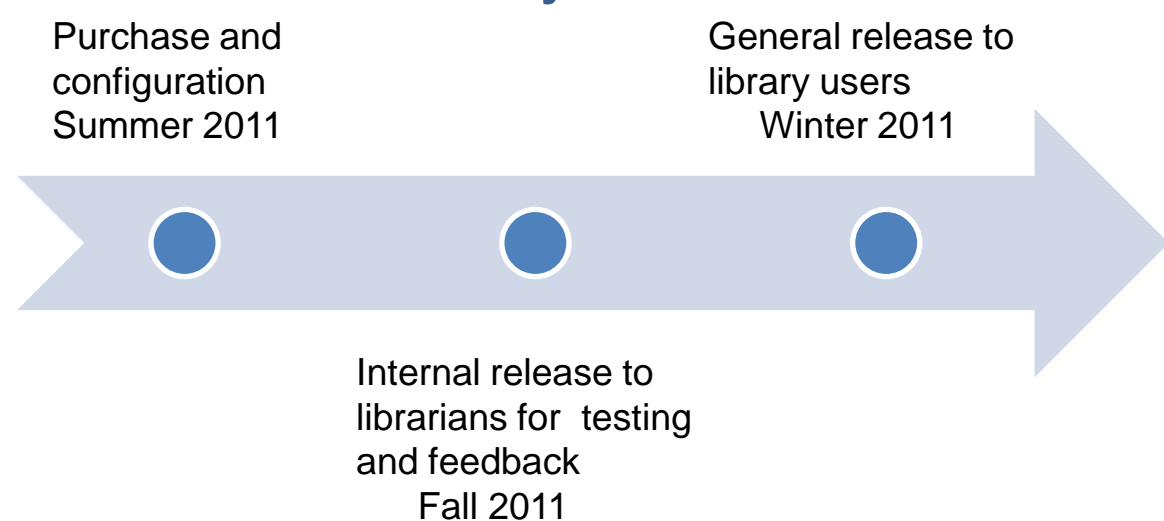
OBJECTIVE

- To determine if a highly tailored version of EBSCO Discovery Service aimed at an academic health sciences audience will be an appealing and effective tool for searching the Library's collections
- To compare its use to that of the current federated search tool.

BACKGROUND

- Himmelfarb Library sought to identify a better discovery tool for its homepage due to:
 - A desire to improve visibility and access to the print resources and electronic content.
 - Dissatisfaction with performance of the federated search system (slow retrieval and inconsistency in availability of databases).
 - The frequent use of Google and Google Scholar as the primary method used by library users to find medical information.
- After demonstrations of several discovery systems, librarians wanted to determine if discovery systems designed for a general audience could effectively be reconfigured for a health sciences audience.
- The Library hoped to replace the federated search system with a discovery system, but only if the new system provided a significant improvement for users. The Library could not roll out another system that did not better fill their needs.

Planned Project Timeline



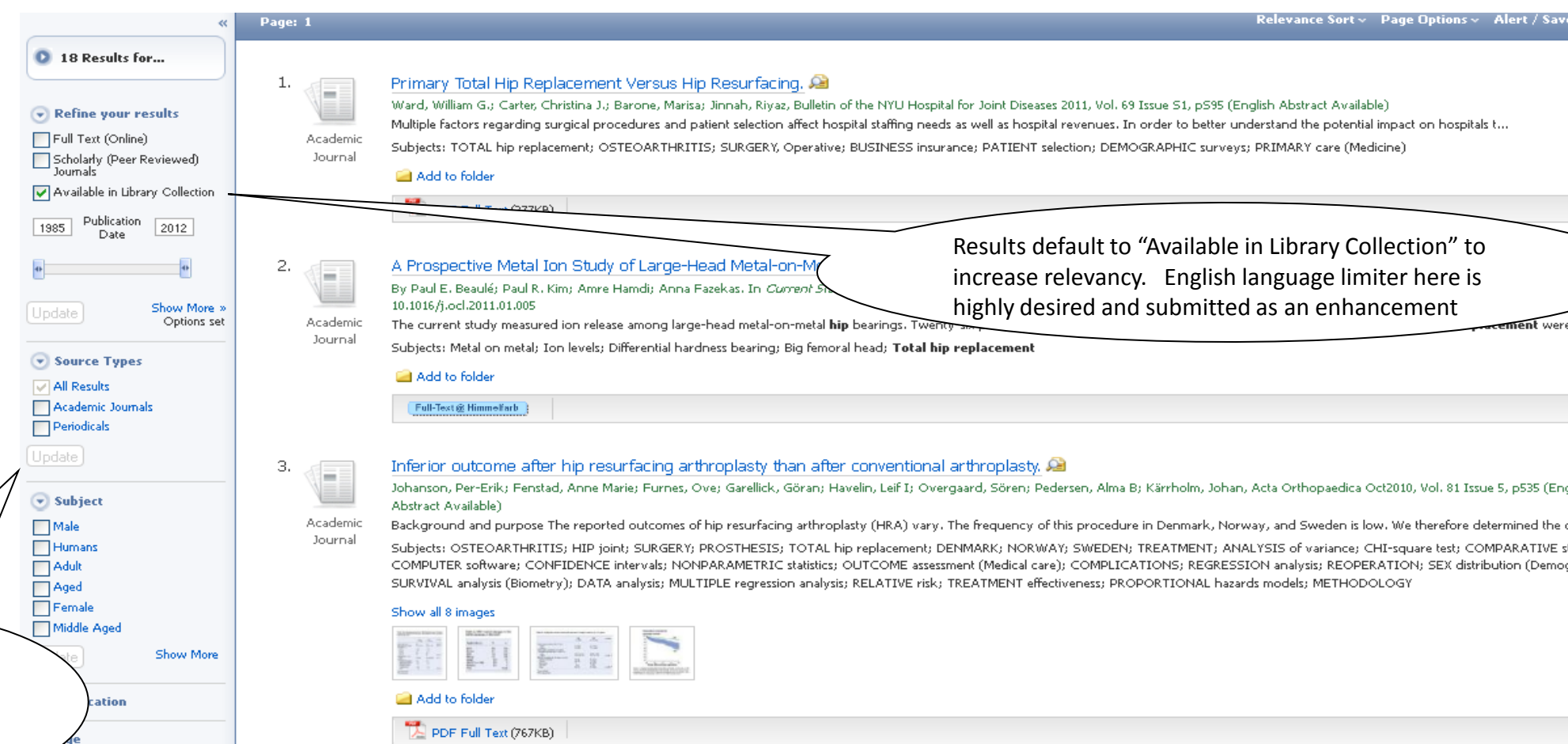
METHODS

- A one year license to Ebsco Discovery System (EDS) was acquired to provide adequate time to customize the system for a health sciences library and allow for an informed decision on whether this was an improved search tool for our users.
- The project timeline allowed for configuration of the product in summer 2011, publicizing it internally for in-library use and soliciting feedback from librarians through fall 2011, and making it available to all library users by winter 2011.
- A focus group of the librarians was held in early December. Based on feedback from the focus group, the library decided to conduct usability testing with selected student and faculty users before making it available library wide to all users.
- The original and actual timelines appear above and to the right. Release to users is now planned for June of 2012.

EDS Initial Search Screen



EDS Results Page



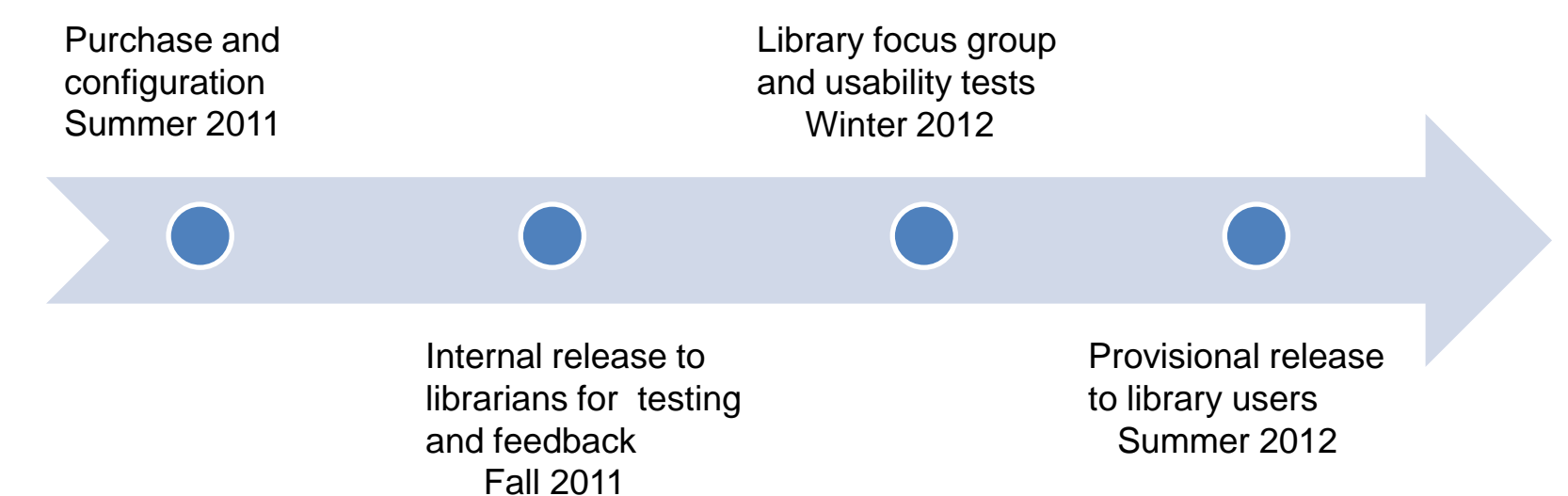
Changes Made to EDS in Response to Usability Testing

- To increase relevancy of results:
 - Default to "Available in Library Collection" limiter
 - Remove full-text search
- To reduce confusion with facets:
 - Facet list pared to those common to all content sources.
 - Three subject facet options reduced to one.
- To improve visibility of Find It, Full Text icons:
 - Size of icons and text size in icons increased
- To prevent search retrieval getting lost under search history:
 - Removed default search history display for both basic and advanced search.
- Enhancements in development:
 - Language facet that can be placed at top of facet list
 - Medical review facet (will only be available for Medline, PubMed, and CINAHL)

CONCLUSIONS

- Configuring a discovery system for use in a specialized library setting is a time consuming and intensive process. The one year trial approach gave us a more adequate time frame for addressing all of the issues involved.
- A number of important improvements required for health sciences library use were submitted as requested enhancements and are currently waiting on development. These include a prominent English language limiter and development of a medical review facet.
- Even after a one year trial, we are still not ready for an unqualified release to users. We plan to make it available on the library homepage as a "provisional release", with plans for continued user feedback as well as development and implementation of identified product needs.
- Ebsco has proven to be a helpful partner in working with us to customize and improve the product for health sciences libraries. A member of Himmelfarb's implementation team was recently appointed to Ebsco's medical advisory board to provide higher level feedback.

Actual Project Timeline



RESULTS

- The focus group and usability testing revealed the following concerns:
 - Inconsistency in relevance of retrieval, with resources with most substantive metadata frequently coming to the top even though the article was less relevant to the search request.
 - No English language limiter available on main search screen.
 - System specific display of three different subject facets confusing for users.
 - Skewed results due to facets whose contents elements are not available across all content providers.
 - Confusion over system required labeling of source types, particularly "reviews", which refers to literary reviews instead of review articles in the medical context.
 - Difficulty finding retrieval under long displays of search history.
- Usability test participants liked:
 - the ability to easily see and link to full-text
 - the preview of images in results screens
 - the breadth of resources searched
 - the tools provided for saving and exporting
 - preferred EDS to the current federated search tool
- At Ebsco's recommendation, searches now default to "Available in Library" content which has increased the relevancy of results.