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VuFind Wins \$50K Mellon Award

Rising open source discovery layer and OPAC replacement incorporates modular design and popular features By Josh Hadro

Villanova University's VuFind project, described as "a library resource portal designed and developed for libraries by libraries," in December won a \$50,000 Award for Technology Collaboration from the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**.

VuFind is an open source OPAC replacement created to be a comprehensive interface for all of a library's content, including catalog records, institutional repository items, and electronic journal information. Many have been eagerly following the software's development, such as *LJ* Digital Libraries blogger **Roy Tennant**. Moreover, a recent announcement from the **HathiTrust** described its plans to implement "a temporary public beta using VuFind, to be deployed in early 2009." All of this, in addition to the recognition from Mellon, has solidified VuFind's position among the most promising discovery layers currently available to academic libraries.

The specific use of the \$50,000 award has yet to be determined, said **Andrew Nagy**, VuFind's lead developer and former technology development specialist at Villanova's Falvey Memorial Library. However, Nagy told *LJ* that one of the largest components left to be built into the VuFind interface is an authority control mechanism and that some of the funds likely will go toward development of software in that area.

VuFind is approaching the official release of version 1.0 and is currently available as a "1.0 release candidate." The final version is tentatively scheduled to be completed in the first quarter of 2009. The interface has already been implemented in live production or beta stages at nine libraries and is in testing in at least four more.

Modular by design

VuFind is ILS-agnostic and was designed with modularity in mind. Nagy told *LJ* that there is no all-in-one solution for resource discovery and that the developers aimed to give site administrators the ability to tailor the software: "If a component doesn't fit your needs, you

can take that out and replace it with a component that has a better fit," he said.

Much of VuFind's appeal lies in the number of its user-focused access and discovery features such as faceted navigation for search results, "more like this" suggestions, user lists for saving records, and compatibility with the open source **Zotero** bibliographic citation manager.

VuFind can also pull in biographical information from Wikipedia to give context to author searches in the catalog and can display book reviews from services like **Amazon** and **Syndetic Solutions** on individual item records. For more info on VuFind and other Mellon award winners, see tinyurl.com/VuFindMATC.

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The Tech Behind the HathiTrust

The HathiTrust repository made quite a splash when it launched in 2008, landing at position number four in the *LJ Academic Newswire* list of the ten most important academic library stories of the year. To get a handle on the technology driving this mammoth effort, which now contains more than 90 terabytes of scanned digital content, *LJ* caught up with Brad Wheeler, Indiana University chief information officer and executive board member of HathiTrust. "There are many reasonable approaches to providing [search] results from a body of content this large," said Wheeler. "One approach involves using presentation strategies like facets, incorporating elements from the bibliographic data. Others might involve complex ranking strategies, scaffolding, or other techniques. This is clearly a challenging problem that we'll learn more about through experience."

For more of the interview, go to tinyurl.com/HathiTrustTech



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