Brief Copac Overview
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Background
Copac is publically funded online library research service created from the catalogues of the RLUK (Research Libraries UK) university libraries (http://copac.ac.uk). Also included are the British Library, the National Library of Wales and the National Library of Scotland and specialist libraries including the Tate Gallery library and Wellcome Trust. (See http://copac.ac.uk/libraries/ for a full listing). Access is freely available to everyone, but the service is targeted towards higher education researchers and educators (i.e. ac.uk). The records in Copac largely represent library monographs – these include books, manuscripts, and special collections. Also included in Copac are records for images, maps, and musical scores. Article level records are not yet included, but this development is in progress.

In addition to these target users, the service is heavily used by librarians at academic institutions for various purposes: 1. supporting academic users (i.e. searching on researchers’ behalf); 2. cataloguing (i.e. using Copac records to catalogue new library assets as opposed to paying a bibliographic data supplier); 2. collections management (i.e. deciding if an institution can dispose of any items as they are readily available elsewhere – space management is one of the most foremost issues facing libraries today). It is worth noting that Copac is used for these purposes, though 2 and 3 are not part of the current funding remit (though this is changing, see below).

In terms of its primary function, researchers and educators use Copac to identify library resources within the UK that will support their work. Most academic users of Copac are advanced researchers and wish to explore resources in a particular subject area not yet known to them, or locate items not available within their own institution’s library. These items include books, serials and articles, manuscripts, maps and ephemera from special collections. A vast majority of these users come from humanities based subjects whose research is heavily monograph based. STEM users (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) are not heavy users of Copac, as STEM research is heavily article based.

The service is funded via HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England) through JISC (Joint Information Systems Consortium). JISC's mission is to provide world-class leadership in the innovative use of Information and Communications Technology to support education and research. The service provider is Mimas, a not-for-profit organisation specialising in technology innovation and service delivery for the education sector based at the University of Manchester (http://mimas.ac.uk).
Copac is significantly changing
Thanks to new funding from JISC, the service is currently undergoing significant changes as the hardware and database is completely re-engineered, a completely new interface and graphic design is developed, and additional UK libraries are integrated into the system. Longer term plans include developing tools to support library business flows (to enable efficiencies and savings) and integrating activity data to support adaptive personalisation of results. The changes will be iterative.

By July 2011 the new Copac service will include:

- **Enhanced user interface** and complete graphic redesign with ‘FRBRised’ record display, enhanced deduplication, improved search and ranking of results and faceted browsing support (released iteratively. First prototype available for testing by end of November 2011).
- **Improved coverage** through the incorporation of more UK academic libraries (6 more by July 2011 – expansion rate and tactics to be determined post July 2011)
- Integration of article level data (Zetoc) and access to full content (for authenticated academic users)
- An ‘Open Copac’ API and support tools for developers wishing to ‘mash’ Copac MODS xml content into new applications (e.g. local library technical developers creating scholarly support resources). *Licensing issues still be explored as part of RDTF, but there are some ‘quick win’ ways forward here.*
- More **flexible personalisation features** for end users so that they can export and repurpose content within citation management systems and social media contexts (blogs, virtual learning spaces, etc)

Also in development, with prototypes released by September 2011:

- Collaborative Collections Management service prototype (supporting the decision-making processes for librarians managing, developing & disposing of collections)
- **PENDING JISC FUNDING:** Recommender functionality based on aggregations of UK university book circulation data. *People who borrowed this also borrowed...*
Current Usage

Copac User Survey Summary – key findings

In December 2009 Copac conducted a user survey via its website. 1794 usable surveys were completed. The survey was conducted to understand the role, task type, and perceived value of the service by users.

1. 75% respondents from the UK
2. 49% respondents involved in direct academic work (i.e. researchers, lecturers, undergraduates)
3. 53% respondents library professionals based at Universities (searching on behalf of users and also using Copac for collections management purposes)
4. 65% respondents involved in Higher or Further education
5. 71% of UK respondents came from humanities disciplines (history, theology, philosophy, languages & literature)
6. 97% of respondents would recommend Copac to others
User profile
(based on usage pathway analysis and interviews with users)
Main target group: Advanced academic users – researchers, lecturers, postgraduates.

Sophisticated searchers
These users are the mature or sophisticated users, who are conducting research for publication. They are familiar with bibliographic search services, including how to navigate electronic resources to find articles across different databases. They also do a lot of sweeping searches through Google.

Primarily undertaking historical types of researcher or looking for foreign language material
They are typically doing historical type work: investigating events, people, or political issues that are little known or finding a new angle on what’s already been said – so finding non-contemporary items is very important. They are often looking for a specific item – often a rare item that is only located in a few places in the UK. However, serendipity is also critically important – the ability to browse, or discover relevant content by accident. These sources form the evidence for their research. Language scholars are looking for similar items in other languages, for example Arabic or French.

They are competing and collaborating with other researchers—developing their research and academic research is critical to them
They need to produce credible and original research – the type that will be published in respected journals and to help them earn positions and promotions. To do this, they need to stay current and abreast of what the competition or their peers are up to in their field so they can ensure they know what’s already been said, and situate their own work in relation to the field.

Strategic Context – the macro-environmental factors
The broader political, economical, technological, and social context in which Copac is situated in increasingly complex. In response to this complexity a Copac steering group has recently been assembled and is working to develop a strategy for the service. In September Steering committee convened to undertake strategic brainstorming and future path for the service.

A new vision from our funders
Copac is situated within the much larger strategic context of resource discovery in the UK. JISC has articulated a new vision for the future. “UK researchers and students will have easy, flexible, and ongoing access to content and services through a collaborative, aggregated and integrated resource discovery and delivery
framework which is comprehensive, open, and sustainable.”¹ The aim is to provide a shared UK resource discovery infrastructure to support research and learning, to which libraries, archives, museum and other resource providers can contribute open metadata for access and reuse. The focus is on aggregations of content, both existing and new, with the aim to develop new approaches to aggregation and data flow that will remove barriers, breaks down silos, and overcome existing inefficiencies. Copac is considered by many in the stakeholder community as central to achieving this vision.

The broader technological context:
Relevant contextual themes emerging are: 1. the increasing adoption of ‘open’ approaches to the creation, sharing, and consumption of resources; 2. the growing importance of ‘web scale’ capabilities; 3. the emergence of powerful meaning-based technologies; 4. the explosion of user-generated content or ‘crowdsourcing’; 5. the understanding of how activity data can be used to add significant value to end-user services; 6. the move to understand the potential of ‘real-time’ data flows.

Economic context
The current economic context highlights the need for institutions to save money but also to drive academic excellence through reputation. In the context of Copac developments, this means balancing the drive for innovation with the need to implement pragmatic solutions that offer immediate benefits to researchers and also institutions around cost/time saving and efficiency gains.

¹ One to Many, Many to One: The RDTF Vision: http://ie-repository.jisc.ac.uk/475/1/JISC%26RLUK_VISION_FINAL.pdf