

A Vision for VALE

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In 2009, eight VALE libraries realize they have all given up on their current ILS (Integrated Library Systems) due to a combination of high maintenance fees, inadequate service, and lack of innovation from existing ILS vendors. The eight libraries begin to examine their options. The ILS marketplace had become stagnant, and the slowness of library-vendor partnerships to extend the ILS to meet the demands of the changed scholarly communications cycle, student learning needs, and faculty research needs has left the ILS marginalized and of limited usefulness.

Encouraged by the success of open-source, "extensible" systems in development and implementation at other libraries and consortiums around the country, the "VALE 8" make the bold decision to begin a truly shared and collaborative VALE "OLS": Open Library System.

In 2010, funding is secured from Federal grants and the State of New Jersey to form a VALE Office of Information Technology. The VALE OIT has both a centralized and distributed staff and begins work on adopting, implementing, and improving an existing open-source ILS system. Seven other VALE libraries commit to joining the project in a phased-in approach.

By 2012, the VALE 8 are up and running on the new "OLS". Four others are scheduled for 2013. Another 5 VALE libraries have also made commitments to join in the next few years. The VALE OLS has become the statewide platform for delivering higher education library services.

Unnecessary duplication of records, efforts, resources, maintenance, and tasks have been eliminated. Resources that have gone into that redundancy have now been redirected towards collections and other service improvements.

Each VALE library is able to completely customize their "slice" of the VALE OLS. Discovery of library resources is improved for NJ college and university users. Acquisitions and cataloging of resources has been greatly streamlined, resulting in improved quicker-to-shelf service to NJ college and university users. Interlibrary loan and reciprocal borrowing agreements have been greatly streamlined and automated, resulting in improved service for VALE library customers.

Resources have been redirected towards providing the "Next Generation" VALE OLS via:

- Book covers
- Book review
- Full text integration
- Comments, book blogging, user tagging
- Recommendation engine
- Integration with journal databases

The VALE OLS has extensive API's allowing library and IT staff at each individual VALE library to develop and integrate the OLS independently, as well. VALE libraries

have integrated the OLS with their campus's Course Management Systems, student portals, digital libraries, OpenURL link resolvers, e-portfolio systems, library web pages, library-subscribed fulltext databases, and other student-driven online environments such as MySpace, Facebook, and their 2012 "descendents."

By 2012, the VALE libraries have:

- Traded resources supporting redundancy, duplication, and inefficiency for resources going toward improvements, innovation, and increased access
- Created a shared, centralized resource of staff, servers, and software
- Created a system that raised the capabilities of the "smaller" VALE libraries, while extending the capabilities of the "larger" VALE libraries
- Become a model for other academic library consortiums around the world