An Open Letter to the Library Community

14 May 2013

As many of you know, on May 2nd, the Orbis Cascade Alliance Board of Directors sent a letter to EBSCO and Ex Libris requesting that they address concerns over the accessibility of EBSCO content via the Ex Libris Primo discovery service. The original letter as well as the respective responses from EBSCO and Ex Libris are available here - http://www.orbiscascade.org/index/ebsco-and-ex-libris.

As President and CEO of Ex Libris, I believe the issues raised by the Alliance are critical to the success of libraries in offering discovery services to their end-users, issues that are also highlighted in the April 16th Library Journal editorial entitled “Discovering Reciprocity” [http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/04/opinion/editorial/discovering-reciprocity/]. Basically, there is an inherent conflict of interest when content providers attempt to control a library’s choice of discovery.

In their letter to the Alliance, EBSCO has made a number of claims:

- EBSCOhost content should only be discovered through an API
- The only such API is to the separately offered EDS Discovery Product
- This API method is superior to index-based discovery
- EBSCO does not have rights to enable content for index-based discovery (such as Primo).

We were surprised at these statements in the letter and have attached a point-by-point analysis that refutes these claims and others [also available on our Web site: http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/files/EBSCORefusaltoAllowIndexinginPrimoCentralAnalysisMay2013.pdf] We believe the attached analysis reveals inaccuracies that deflect from the real issue: making EBSCO owned databases available through the library’s discovery service of choice.

Despite our disagreements with many of the EBSCO statements, let me state unequivocally: Ex Libris wishes to ensure that the content libraries license and subscribe to is exposed for discoverability and access as widely as possible. Hundreds of information providers agree and already make their content available through Primo. We are not asking EBSCO or other content providers for any content they do not have the rights to. We are simply requesting, on behalf of our mutual customers, that EBSCO make available the content which they DO have rights to offer WITHOUT requiring that a library purchase the EDS Discovery Product and use sub-standard API to access this content.
To that end, we invite EBSCO to meet with us at the American Library Association annual conference to focus on reaching an understanding on these important issues. We will further extend an invitation to representatives of the Alliance Board of Directors to join this meeting and assist in facilitating an agreement that directly addresses their concerns.

Finally, I would like to thank the Orbis Cascade Alliance and other libraries who are working to represent and protect the interests of all libraries on this important issue. We stand with you and continue to believe that together we can bring change such that EBSCO databases, whose rights EBSCO determines, are available to any EBSCO customer through the discovery service of choice.

Sincerely yours,

Matti Shem-Tov
President and CEO
Ex Libris Group