Ex Libris Customer SFX/Metalib Questionnaire – Yosef Branse

1…What is your name and the name of the institution(s) where you worked with SFX, Metalib, or other Ex Libris products?

My name is Yosef Branse. I have been working at the University of Haifa Library since the summer of 1981. [See my comments in the Aleph questionnaire, some of which are relevant to questions here and don't need to be repeated.]

2…When did your site install Ex Libris software and when did you start working with it?

We installed SFX Version 3 early in 2005. We made the A-Z list and Citation Linker available from the Library website. Our upgrade to SFX 4 dragged out over several months – September to December 2010 - due to a variety of technical issues that arose. SFX was recently superseded by the Alma link resolver, but for now it is still running, though not accessible to the public.

Our use of Metalib also began in early 2005, with the installation of version 3.12, followed by an upgrade to Metalib 4 in early 2007. It is still in use for accessing databases.

3…What was your job title, or, more generally, what did you do?   Were there particular projects you were involved in?

Thinking especially of the 2000-2005 time period….

4…Who were Ex Libris' main competitors? I don't recall competing products for the functions served by SFX and Metalib, nor whether we conducted a survey to compare alternatives.

5…Why were SFX and Metalib as successful as they were? Why did customers go with them rather than similar products?

6…Comments on the role of SMUG users group?

My only contact with SMUG was attendance at the final SMUG conference (London, 2005) – held immediately following the final ICAU conference. It could be that at that early period SMUG was not a factor for Israeli librarians.

7…Were there particularly interesting/valuable Ex Libris staff that you remember?

Various people whom I recall, or found mentioned frequently in my mail archives who were involved in installation, training and support for Metalib and SFX: Olga Edelman, Tal Ayalon, Eitan Ben-David, Vladimir Buldyrev, Tzvi Finkin, Christine Stohn, Dana Sharvit. (We have had a lot of contact with Dana more recently in the framework of our Alma transition.)

8…Are there particular interesting, fun, or odd things that you remember?

SFX was my first contact with a MySQL database - not long after the transition from Aleph 300 to Aleph 500 required a major reorientation in my programming, specifically the use of the Oracle database. I didn't have to do much local programming in SFX, but the knowledge of SQL acquired when learning Oracle was useful in various SFX maintenance tasks.