

Ex Libris Customer (1978-2005) Questionnaire – Jirka Kende

1... What is your name and the name of the institution(s) where you worked with Aleph (and/or other Ex Libris products)?

Jirka Kende, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Worked with Aleph, SFX, MetaLib, Verde, Primo and Alma

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

We started in 1999 with Aleph and I was the first co-administrator.

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

I was the deputy head of the user services department and I was responsible for the complete configuration of the circulation in Aleph (all the nice tables like tab16!) and implementing it in the university library and all branch libraries of the University

4...Were there modules which you felt were particularly good, distinguishing Aleph from other vendors' versions of the same module?

The circulation was most flexible of all systems. Negotiating Alma, Ex Libris was surprised at all the things we did with Aleph and I said "we even cook coffee with Aleph, but no milk and sugar yet...).

5...Who were Aleph/Ex Libris' main competitors?

AdisBMS, Dynix

6...I think that two early decisions were very important:

- support of standards: the MARC and MAB formats, and, later UNIMARC
yes
- the early use of Unicode, the ability to handle multiple languages and scripts – Hebrew and English from the first and, very early, Danish/German/Italian – laying the groundwork for making Aleph a system which could be implemented in virtually **any** language
yes
- Others?
Flexibility especially for complex systems in circulation (13 branch libraries with different terms of use, not so easy in Alma)

7...Comments on the role of user groups (ICAU, NAAUG, SMUG, etc.)?

Being involved in ICAU and IGeLU from the very beginning I believe it was highly important for us and for the company to develop the system along the lines of the needs of the user community. I started as a Coordinator for circulation in ICAU in 2000, joined the Steering committee of ICAU and became the first chair of IGeLU in 2006 - 2015.

8...Were there particularly interesting/valuable Ex Libris staff that you remember?

There are too many, starting with Matti without whom this close cooperation would not be possible, Nancy Dushkin who also supported strongly the cooperation with the user international group, Marc Daubach as VP Europe who was very supportive in any respect, and of course Omri Gerson (as Aleph brain at those times), Ezra Schwarz (redesigning the Aleph client interface together with the ICAU

focus group), Judy Levi and Barbara Rad-El as the “ExL librarians) and of course Tamar Sadeh, the very special contact to ICAU.

9...It seems that, with ALEPH 500, the choice of a Linux / Oracle environment was important -- but maybe most of the competitors' products also operated in this environment?

Not sure

10...Are there particular interesting, fun, or odd things that you remember?

Arriving to an Aleph system seminar in the eighties in Tel Aviv, I guess in the King David hotel, there was a huge pathway in the lobby decorated with hundreds of roses on both sides and I thought wow, what a welcome, but it turned out it was a preparation for a wedding of one of the most wealthy family members of Israel. But the humus and the chocolate buffet were nevertheless extremely delicious...

In another system seminar shortly after the new module for ILL was introduced in Aleph we all were very keen to go to the ILL Session to discuss the workflows where we were not so happy about. There, a young and very good looking developer was demonstrating the module and we had to tell her that the workflows were unfortunately quite upside down. Then she looked at us with her beautiful dark eyes and said: “Well, I have never been to a library.” And we all thought “well, that is how it looks like” but of course didn't say so. But after that we talked to Ex Libris's management and suggested that especially new developers should make an internship in a library which became partly life praxis, even as Ex Libris started to develop Alma. And while developing new functionalities focus groups with the user community should support the development in the right direction which happened quite a few times in the past.

11...If your library has stopped using Aleph, when did that happen – and what was the successor system?

We moved to Alma January 2017 (and are still on the move ;-)

12...If you moved to a different library, please describe briefly your history since that time.

I stayed at the Freie University till now, meanwhile as the library director.