Ex Libris Staff (1978-2005) Questionnaire – Laura Pierson

1. When did you start working for Ex Libris?   How did this come about?
   LP: 2/8/2000. I was finishing up graduate school at Wayne State in Detroit and saw a posting on a library job listserv in December 1999. I applied and was flown to Chicago to meet Susan Marshall, Carl Grant, Russell McDonald and Maruta Skujina. I was offered the job a week later but couldn't start in January as I had plans to go to Ecuador before relocating to Chicago.

2. What was your job title, or, more generally, what did you do?   Were there particular projects you were involved in?
   LP: My first title was "Bid Writer" but evolved into "Bids and Marketing Coordinator" as I assumed responsibility for a quarterly marketing newsletter and worked on ad copy and related projects with Carl and Ezra Schwartz (Feb 2000 – Mar 2002).
   My titles from April 2002 through the present are accounted for here:
   https://www.linkedin.com/in/laura-pierson-215baa34/

   Thinking of the 1978-2005 time period….

3. Why was Ex Libris as successful as it was?
   Why did customers go with Aleph rather than other systems?
   LP: Generally speaking, with Oren's and Yohanan's foresight, ExL stayed abreast of emerging library and information standards and designed our products in adherence to them.
   ExL set our own standard in the marketplace by being more 'open' than our competing products.

   Some possibilities:
   a. Superior system and program design? (-- primarily Yohanan's doing? Others?)
   b. Superior functional design? (-- primarily Judy Levi's doing? Others?)
   c. Superior strategy (Oren Beit-Arie -- and others?)
   d. Superior marketing (Barbara Radel, et al.)
   e. Superior organization (Azriel and Udi and ???)
   f. Other?

4. Who were Ex Libris' main competitors?
   LP: III, Sirsi-Dynix, Endeavor.

5. I think that two decisions – perhaps just coincidence or luck – were very important:
   a. the use of the MARC standard – absolutely critical to success in North America (and the UK?), perhaps less so in Europe?
      LP: Agreed!

   b. 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
      LP: Agreed!

   c. Others?
      LP: not sure but we may have been one the first to use SRU/SRW (with Aleph)?

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

7. Were there particularly interesting/valuable customers that you remember?

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

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?
   LP: I think ExL lead the way, certainly with Linux.

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

11. When and why did you leave?