

SIPX

An Alternative to Traditional Course Packs

Review Date: 6 October 2016

Overall Score (Weighted Total)	
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Content — 40% (Quality, uniqueness, reliability, and appropriateness for community college audience)	3
Interface — 25% (Usability, customization, mobile supported, lack of problems, print/download/email content, citation formatting)	3
Cost — 15% (Value and terms of use)	2
Accessibility — 15% (Compliance with standards)	4
Support — 5% (For administrators and users)	5

SIPX is an intriguing product for helping instructors obtain copyright permissions and provide electronic course readings at a reasonable cost. In fact, some institutions are pursuing SIPX for the express purpose of managing open access content and to add legitimacy to open educational resources (OER) efforts. But does SIPX address a need experienced by the typical community college? More to the point, does it provide enough value for its cost? Read on to find out.

Method

Two reviewers, one with previous experience with SIPX and one new to the product, spent more than twenty hours looking at the administrative/instructor interface of SIPX, reading relevant reviews and promotional materials, and speaking with librarians at other libraries using SIPX. Both reviewers also attended a presentation by SIPX sales representatives and asked questions about the product.

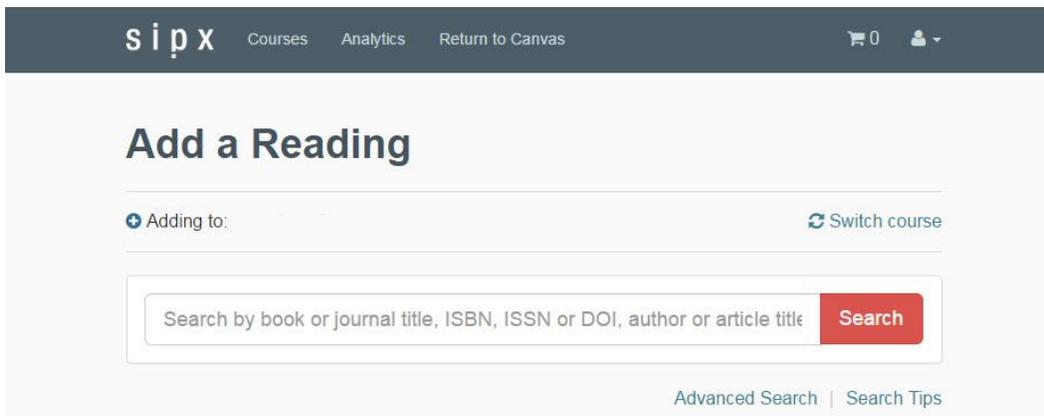
Review

Introduction

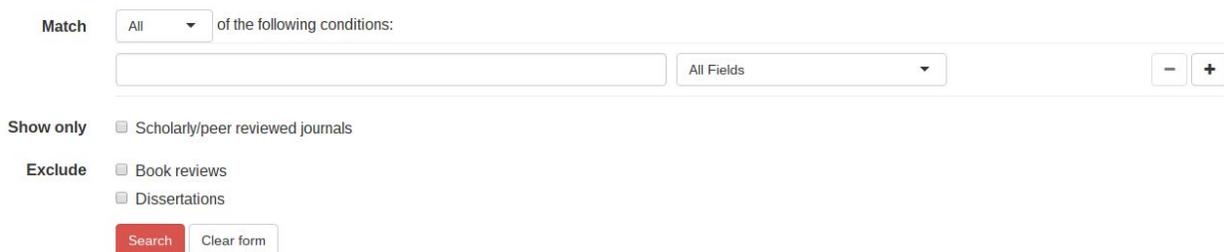
SIPX is a tool designed to add digital content within learning management systems. Instructors identify materials they want to use as course readings, search for them through SIPX, and attach them directly to their course shells. In this way SIPX can serve to replace traditional course packs or as a library's e-reserves system. SIPX can get content from library databases as well as other sources, including open-access repositories. Importantly, SIPX will obtain copyright clearance from publishers and creators that they have a relationship with. SIPX was acquired by ProQuest in fall 2015.

Interface

SIPX is typically integrated within a learning management system (LMS). Once SIPX has been added to a course shell, instructors can conduct known item searches to find materials they want to add as a course reading. Currently SIPX supports searching by author, title, ISBN, ISSN, DOI and a number of other fields.



Advanced search features helpfully provide an option to exclude book reviews.



Each item in a results list includes either a “Find a license” or “Add to course” button. An item with a green “Add to Course” button can be added to a course. If there is a cost associated then students will reach a PayPal or Amazon paywall before they can access the item. If SIPX cannot find a copy available using library databases or other connected sources, instructors will

be prompted to manually upload the content to the SIPX system before it can be added to the course.



The fabric of the cosmos - space, time, and the texture of reality
Greene, Brian, Penguin Books, 23, 2007, ISBN: 9780141035291
Book Find a license

Q&A: Brian Greene on music and string theory \$0.00
Nature, Hoffman, Jascha, NATURE PUBLISHING GROUP, 465:7297, 2010, eISSN: 1476-4687
Article + Add to Course

During testing the reviewers regularly encountered the prompt to upload the material, even for items where the library had access to an electronic version of the content. This is a substantial downside to this product as it makes using it far more cumbersome than it otherwise would be. This is especially so given that SIPX is primarily used by instructors managing course readings and manually uploading materials is time consuming. It also suggests an opportunity as perhaps the various platforms aren't seamlessly integrated yet and future enhancements might make for a smoother experience.

Reading successfully added X



Storey's Guide to Raising Meat Goats - Managing, Breeding, Marketing has been added

Next: [Upload Reading File](#)

Students cannot download readings until there is a corresponding PDF. Upload is also available on the course and reading detail pages.

Other actions: [Add Another Reading](#) [Get SIPX Links](#) [Edit Reading Details](#)

When an item in a results list had the "Find a license" button then SIPX searches four areas to find access: SIPX Collection, Copyright Agent, Library's Subscriptions, and Public Domain. Frustratingly, the reviewers regularly encountered situations where zero results were found.

SIPX Collection [No matches] ⓘ	Library's Subscriptions [No matches] ⓘ
No results found	No results found
Copyright Agent [No matches] ⓘ	Public Domain [No matches] ⓘ
No results found	No results found

The Copyright Agent box can obtain copyright permissions. Such permissions often include a per page fee that is passed on to students. During the SIPX presentation that the reviewers attended concerns were raised that SIPX might reinforce a conservative interpretation of copyright laws by leading instructors to have students charged for content they are entitled to for free under the fair use doctrine. In response, SIPX representatives pointed out that beneath the Copyright Agent box SIPX reminds users to consider fair use and provides a link to the institution's copyright policy. Still, this user interface points to an inherent weakness in automating decisions about copyright and fair use.

Copyright Agent [1 match] ⓘ

Understanding Sherman Alexie

Series: Understanding contemporary American literature, GRASSIAN, DANIEL, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA PRESS, 2005, ISBN: 9781570035715

Estd. \$0.21 per page

+ Add to course

Get Pricing

Don't forget to consider fair use. Please consult your school's [guidelines and policies](#).

Initialization and Administration

Initially a librarian must upload the library's holdings to SIPX.¹ If the library doesn't already have a discovery service or an A to Z list of periodicals and databases, this part of the set-up could be time consuming. As holdings change the administrator will need to upload a new file to reflect current holdings. Support documentation recommends uploading a new file at least every 90 days.

The campus' LMS administrator has to set up SIPX within the LMS. SIPX support will walk the administrator through all of the steps. After the initial set-up, there doesn't appear to be too much maintenance involved.

¹ Libraries who use Serials Solutions/360 do not need to load their holdings as they're added behind the scenes through ProQuest channels.

Mobile-friendly

Since SIPX is integrated and accessed from within your LMS its mobile-friendliness is largely determined by how mobile-friendly your LMS is. Within Canvas SIPX displays fairly well on an Apple iOS device via Safari, although some buttons displayed partially out of view. On an Android device everything scaled properly.

Accessibility

SIPX is a service that is primarily accessed from within your Learning Management System, meaning that the accessibility of your LMS will impact the accessibility of your SIPX instance. With that in mind, the WAVE accessibility checker found three errors, four alerts and some structural element and contrast issues when viewing an assigned reading through SIPX from the student interface. The instructor interface was found to have more errors and alerts, according to both the WAVE and aXe accessibility checkers, such as multiple examples of images without alternate text. With that said, overall SIPX appears to have been designed with accessibility compliance in mind, especially when judged from a student's perspective.

Support

The "SIPX Resources for your Campus" website has videos, tutorials and tip sheets for administrators, instructors and students. Support for the product is available by phone and email. Dedicated implementation teams are assigned to help with different portions of the set-up process. Questions are answered quickly and support technicians check in periodically to make sure everything is going as planned.

Cost

There are three versions of SIPX: SIPX Campus, SIPX Campus with LMS Integration, and SIPX Central Solution with LMS Integration. There is a one-time installation fee as well as ongoing subscription fees, both of which are tiered based on FTE. Quotes that the reviewers are familiar with suggest this is an expensive product in relation to the benefit most community college libraries might reasonably expect to receive. Institutions that heavily utilize course packs would benefit the most from SIPX.

The Competition

EBSCO's open-source EDS add-on Curriculum Builder and ExLibris' Leganto are the only somewhat similar products the reviewers are aware of. Despite their similarities, Curriculum Builder lacks some of SIPX's core functionality. For example, it does not allow the user to search for or add content from outside the library or help obtain copyright clearances. In addition, whereas SIPX saves readings to their server, Curriculum Builder relies on linking. On the other hand, Curriculum Builder does use a discovery search, which the reviewers prefer over the known item search that SIPX uses because it is more intuitive to use. In addition, Curriculum Builder lets users preview materials prior to adding them, while SIPX, more often than not, did not have access to the materials and required an upload by the user.

Neither reviewer has experience using Leganto. According to promotional materials, Leganto allows instructors to curate reading lists using a variety of sources, much like SIPX. Leganto is designed to work alongside ExLibris' Alma platform to modernize reading lists, primarily by making them more collaborative. Librarians appear to play a significant role in the everyday use of Leganto, in contrast to SIPX which relies on librarians mostly to maintain current holdings information. Notably, both SIPX and ExLibris are owned by ProQuest.

Recommended Improvements

As developed and marketed SIPX is not intended to support discovery, but the reviewers believe SIPX would be a more valuable product if the search features were enhanced and functioned like a discovery solution. Users — especially community college instructors — would likely appreciate the ability find and use a given item without switching between tools. In addition, one of the biggest frustrations encountered by the reviewers was the need to upload a desired item into the SIPX system. Many instructors encountering this step repeatedly might wonder why they are using SIPX rather than uploading a reading directly to their course shell. Any progress SIPX could make to support more content without needing to upload it first would be welcome.

Conclusion

SIPX is a unique product that helps institutions manage electronic course readings and obtain necessary copyright permissions. Colleges that heavily use course packs would likely appreciate SIPX, especially if obtaining copyright permissions is a significant effort and SIPX can access the content such that it doesn't need to be manually uploaded. Typical community colleges, however, might find that the product's benefits simply don't justify the cost.

Other Reviews

Burke, Patrick (2016, May 2). Libraries Open Up. *American Libraries*, 47(5), 62-63.
<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2016/05/02/libraries-open-up/>