Awesome Box

Library Lab Grant Proposal

Overview

Awesome Box is a proposed additional returns box that would offer library users the ability to promote any item. An accompanying data service and API would provide access to the data for use in a catalog, on a library website or in any other application. A grant would enable us to finish building the technical infrastructure and acquire the return boxes for any Harvard Library that would like to participate.

The service

If a library user enjoys an item from the collection for any reason, they simply return it to the Awesome Box instead of the normal returns box.
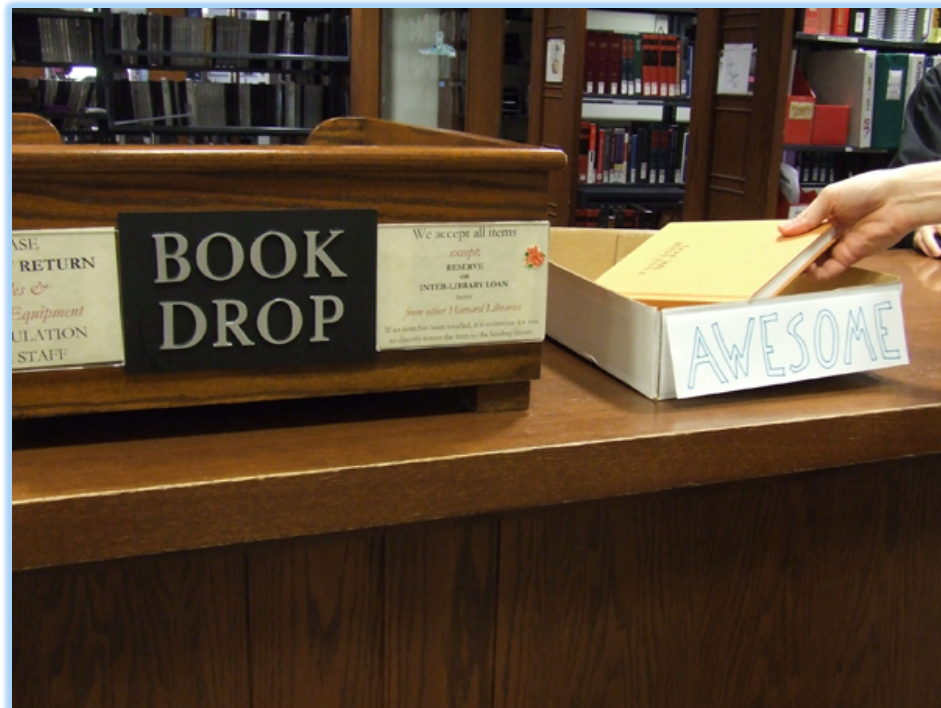

Figure 1: User returning an item to the Awesome Box

Using the Awesome Box web-based administration page, a library staff member scans the barcode of the returned item and the item's identifier is sent to the Awesome data store. The item then returns to the regular workflow.

Awesome items will be made available through an RSS feed, a Twitter stream, and through an API. In addition, a Recently Awesome page will be available to allow users to browse through recently awesomed items.
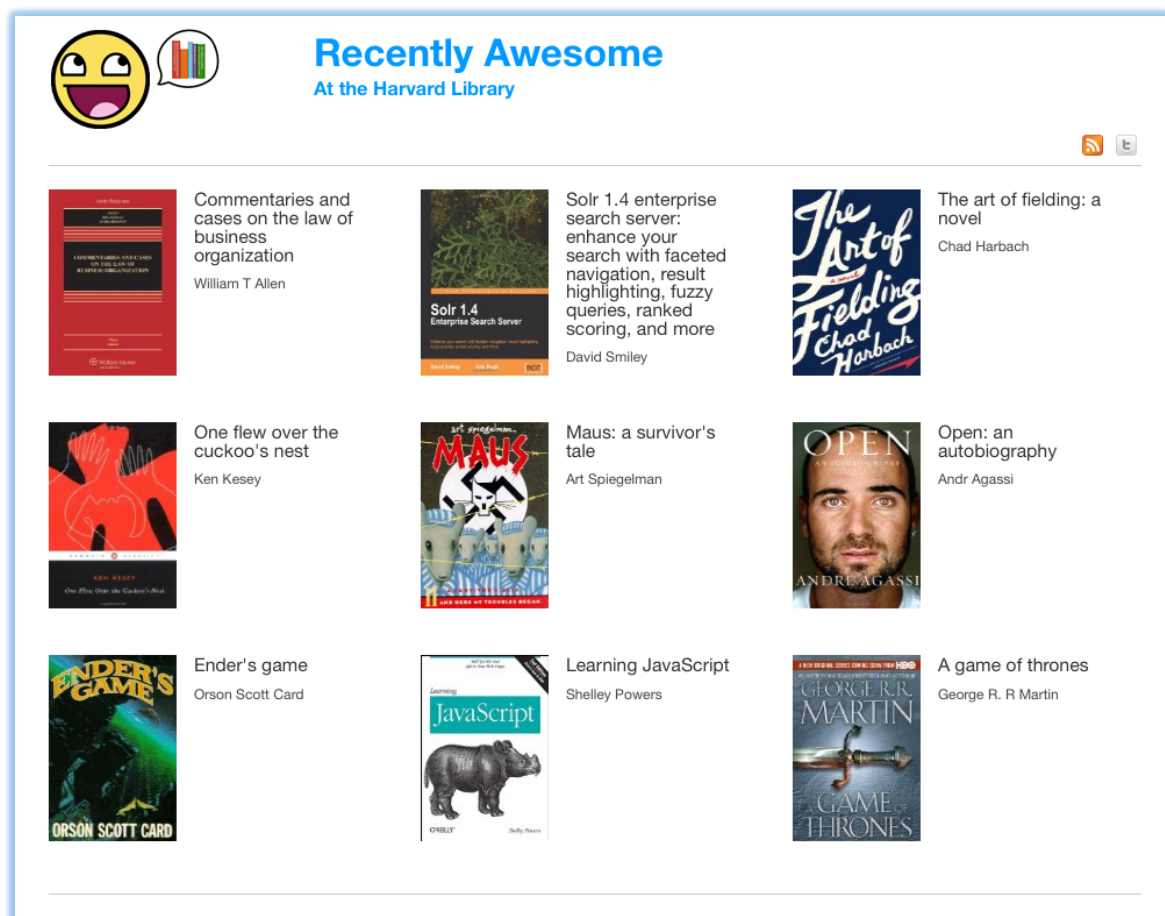

Figure 2: Recently Awesome web interface

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Developing Awesome Box

Beta versions of the Recently Awesome display page, administration page, API, and supporting backend are up and running. To implement Awesome Box across the Harvard Library system, we would need to do the following:

1. Acquire a suitable returns box for each participating library
2. Complete development of the supporting backend
3. Flesh out the currently implemented API
4. Investigate requirements for possible integration into HOLLIS

We imagine a suitable returns box is made of wood and clearly and consistently labelled so as to be recognizable across libraries. The box could also be wired to display feedback, probably in the form of an indicator light, to a user when an item is returned.

Match with Library Lab grant values

This service will allow library users to easily engage with the collection. It will also allow the community to get a sense of what items are useful or enjoyable to other users.

Effect on daily operations

Staff members will have to collect items from the additional returns box and scan them into the Awesome data store.

Proposed funding

Complete development of the supporting backend and API:
20 hours * $85 = $1700

Physical Construction of Awesome Boxes for ten of the larger open stacks libraries:
$200 per box * 10 boxes = $2000

Total: $3700

Principal Investigators

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Awesome Box