Preface

The origin of this book came from the author’s personal experiences, detailed in the chapter “Funding a Makerspace,” with the lessons learned when trying to acquire new technology in a library. Libraries are conservative institutions of necessity, being traditionally in the business of securing books and journals for access in perpetuity. When the shift is made to a digital collection model and the libraries mission is expanded to meet the needs of its community there will be stumbles as new roads are explored. For many libraries the zenith of technological complexity was the ILS or Integrated Library System. This system allowed for cataloging, circulation and discovery of items among other activities. As a result, a model was built where a vendor would present a product that would more or less fill the needs of the library. This process of going out to bid with a Request for Proposal was so onerous that most libraries dreaded the thought of changing ILS vendors even when the product was clearly lacking. Over time this became the status quo for libraries, first one would choose a vendor, second one would stick with that vendor unless there was drastic need for change. For their part vendors worked with libraries focusing more on customer relation than research. After all, librarians liked stability, if the product changed too much there would be complaints.

We are in a different world now. With the domination of electronic resources over print, and the ILS being unable to address this change, libraries have been forced to seek other solutions. Often this solution comes in the form of a discovery layer. The chapters “Don’t Make Us Wear the Get Along Shirt,” “Moving from Local to Global via the Integrated Library System: Cost-Savings, ILS Management, Teams, and End-Users,” and “From Summon to Search Plus” focus on two very different approaches taken to acquiring and implementing this technology. Another great trend has been the adoption of Open Source software and its use in creating information products. The chapters “Selection Process for Free Open Source Software,” “Funding a Gamification Machine,” and “Insourcing and Outsourcing of Library Technology” all touch on this topic. Finally, there is my short chapter on “Funding a Makerspace.” This goes into detail about how acquiring really new technology can be perplexing for purchasing departments and library administrators.
The purpose of this book is a call to libraries that their way of doing business is hopelessly antiquated. New technologies do not lend themselves to old vendor models and there is a need for more agility and speed in the purchasing process. As libraries struggle to find relevancy those who are leading those changes will need help from those that hold the purse strings and understand how business has been done in the past. They must not be held back from trying something new by those comfortable with systems now obsolete.