Many implementations have stuck to using the provided technology but at EVIFA, the Virtual Library of Social Anthropology we deliberately went in another direction to get the best results. Our first aim was to develop a user interface which adhered to common usability principles and had no restrictions.

Our current open-source content management system, typo3, fulfills our needs perfectly unlike MetaLib. Owing to its peculiar template driven architecture the closest similarity we could achieve with MetaLib is to provide the general look and feel of EVIFA. This left us in an unsatisfactory position, especially as testing had proven that MetaLib has a number of usability issues. In addition, the MetaLib user interface, contains functionality which is not required in EVIFA.

Owing to these issues we decided, early on, to integrate the x-server functionality of MetaLib into EVIFA in order to exploit MetaLib's core functions. This technology grants access to basic MetaLib services and returns results in an XML based structure, thereby allowing the integration of the MetaLib user interface and the results list into any web design.

After extensive testing, EVIFA achieved some partial success; a minimalist MetaLib integration. This consisted of just one single search field with the resource being searched transmitting in the background. This is possibly, an acceptable solution for quick searches with one resource, in our case an online content database.

The next milestone is the entire integration of MetaLib into EVIFA. As the control mechanisms of the x-server have been well known up to that point the effort was deployed in developing the environment framework; administration of searchable resources in a separate database, integration of the basket functionality as the x-server does not support the get functionality of MetaLib's own basket and navigation between and within the results.

This work will soon come to fruition when EVIFA will be relaunched with a fully integrated MetaLib on May 27th 2005.