Evaluating Digital Asset Management Systems: a Team Approach

Janet V. Addison
Purdue University, jaddison@purdue.edu

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A Team Approach
Janet V. Addison, Purdue University Libraries

INTRODUCTION
Choosing a digital asset management system for a library should involve the input of as many professionals as is feasible. Organizing material that is digital is challenging. The information age has given us a plethora of choices and decisions requiring expertise. A project involving digitization of a local collection may be of necessity developed by the Architecture, and as such should involve input from archives professionals as well as others throughout the library system.

ASSEMBLE THE TEAM
Sample configuration of a digital asset management team:
• Catalog Librarians
• Access Systems/Analysts
• Authority Control
• IT staff
• Digital Initiatives Librarian
• Sponsor

REFERENCES: OTHER LISTS OF REQUIREMENTS
"Recommendations to the Steering Committee," http://www.dspace.org/dSpace*
"Technical Requirements for Vendors: Requirements for Database Vendors," encompass.endinfosys.com/
"We Came, We Saw, We Collaborated," Langley, Anne, Browsing and Accessing Digital Collections: An Introduction to Digital Libraries, coord. by John Chute and Peter Chute 2004, Luna Insight

DEVELOP THE CRITERIA
Developing criteria for assessing digital asset management systems on the market can be challenging as a team, especially when you are evaluating systems intended for your large and diversified collection. The team was aware that the criteria would be developed through the group process, and that some modifications would be needed in order to properly evaluate the systems.

DO THE HOMEWORK
All members of the team should have a common understanding of types of collections that will be digitized. Some digitization may be homogenous, but in other cases, different types of digital objects will be digitized, such as letters and correspondences, photographs, ephemera, and audio-visual materials. Once you are familiar with what you want to accomplish, it will be easier to align your assessment with the digital collection. Consideration should be given to the importance of thematic priorities for browsing purposes, customization of the web site, etc.

REFERENCES: TEAMS
Langley, Anne, "We Came, We Saw, We Collaborated," Browsing and Accessing Digital Collections: An Introduction to Digital Libraries, coord. by John Chute and Peter Chute 2004

DO THE RESEARCH: CONTACT VENDORS AND COLLEAGUES
Contact the vendor and ask questions. Ask for recommendations from other institutions. Visit the vendor web site. Visit web sites of other libraries currently using the system.

DO SOME MORE HOMEWORK
Another aspect to planning your approach to evaluation of digital asset management systems is to have access to the library's strategic plan. Understanding the goals and primary action plan will help put the acquisition of a new system into the broader picture.

CONSULT, REPORT, AND RECOMMEND
Establishing a timeline is necessary in order to put focus on the group's activity, especially if your IT staff is committed to several projects, owning an open-source digital asset management system might put undue burdens on existing staff because of the need for additional programming.

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"Recommendations to the Steering Committee," http://www.dspace.org/dSpace*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
I would like to thank the following members of the Digital Initiatives Team at Purdue University: Sammie Morris, Carl Snow, Mike Witt.

THE CRITERIA EXAMPLES
Integration with external terminal
Can the program be accessed through an external terminal using a standard such as Z39.50, Google, or Incompay
Local ability
How does the product work over the Internet?
Scalability
How does the product scale; can it scale to accommodate millions of objects?

LICENSING
What is the cost of the product; how is the product sized?

ACCESSIBILITY
What patron access methods are supported: browsers, client programs, required plug-ins; does the system support open standards vs. proprietary viewers

DATA LOADING/EXPORTING
Can the staff client be configured to the needs of the specific worker, locking out access to collections or functions that are inappropriate or not needed

FOREIGN LANGUAGES
Can the product handle different languages? Does the product support international standards?

AUTHORITY CONTROL
Does the system support use of an external authentication services, such as LDAP

OTHER LICENSING
What is the cost of the product; how is the product sized?

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