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Biz of Acq — Mainstreaming “E”: Integrating Print and Electronic Journal Acquisition and Management

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Column Editor’s Note: At Indiana University Libraries, Lynda Clendenning integrated management of electronic and print journals in one Serials Acquisitions unit. She describes preparations for the use of an Electronic Resource Management System (ERMS) at Indiana University Libraries, to consolidate sources of information on the Libraries’ electronic resources. She also discusses the Libraries’ participation in the LOCKSS Alliance, which provides for the archiving of electronic copies. — AF

Introduction

All libraries face the challenge of organizing serials acquisitions operations to manage the continuing evolution of electronic journals. As publishers unplug online journals from their print subscriptions and offer electronic journal packages based on total subscription “spend” levels, experience and expertise in both print and electronic serials become critical. Serials acquisitions staff are taking on management of A-Z lists, MARC record profiles, access problem resolution, and linking services, adding new technical skills to their print acquisitions skills. This article tracks the changes in acquiring electronic journals at one university and their impact on its Serials Acquisitions unit.

Creating an Electronic Resources Unit

Like most libraries, Indiana University Libraries (Bloomington) created a new unit to handle the acquisition of electronic resources when it became evident that special procedures and skills were needed. Electronic resource license negotiation and complicated pricing and access issues required specialized professional skills. In 1999, to meet this challenge the Libraries created a unit called Electronic Resources Acquisitions (ERA).

ERA staff, member, and ERA unit handled licenses and orders for electronic databases, journal packages and individual electronic journal orders, and e-book packages and individual e-book orders.

Integrating Print and Electronic Journal Acquisitions

Mirroring the experience at other libraries, the electronic resources workload expanded quickly, and the library responded by adding a half-time support position in the fall of 2000 and assigning a librarian to head the unit in July 2001. That fall, the PA became the head of the Serials Receiving unit but continued to work in ERA half-time. As the new Head of the Acquisitions Division, I merged the serials ordering function with the receiving unit in July 2003, forming the Serials Acquisitions unit headed by the PA who continued to support ERA functions. The merger fulfilled my desire to integrate electronic and print journal management in the Serials Acquisitions unit by laying the groundwork for moving electronic journal management from ERA to Serials Acquisitions.

Why move electronic journal management to the Serials Acquisitions unit? Managing print subscriptions and their related publisher electronic journal packages became nearly impossible with the libraries’ print subscriptions distributed among three vendors based on a journal’s place of publication. To improve the workflow, I changed the basis for journal vendor assignments from imprint to publisher group. For example, the libraries stopped assigning its Elsevier US, UK, etc. orders to vendors by place of publication. The Libraries’ Science Direct orders were consolidated with the subscription agent assigned to handle all Elsevier print and electronic orders. Additionally, a subscription order and renewal default of print + free electronic was set. Once established, the order default increased the number of electronic journals available to users and significantly reduced the task of making title-by-title decisions, saving staff time in both Collections and Acquisitions.

Over the next year, Serials Acquisitions staff took over ordering both print + electronic and electronic-only subscriptions, taking over electronic journal ordering from ERA. In 2002, Serials Acquisitions staff began activating electronic journals, resolving access problems and updating the e-journal holdings database which includes the MARC record profile for records loaded into the online catalog. Assigning the management of all journal...
nal subscriptions to the Serials Acquisitions unit guaranteed fewer dropped titles when print orders are canceled and reordered as electronic. ERA and Serials Acquisitions must maintain a very close working relationship, especially in the area of journal packages which are often purchased through consortial arrangements. Complementing the libraries’ organization, subscription vendors, specifically EBSCO, Swets, and Harrassowitz, report that they handle print and electronic orders without regard to format. Change in the libraries’ approach to its Blackwell Publishing package provides a specific example of how integration works. Beginning in 2006, all subscriptions were “flipped” from print to electronic subscriptions. Serials Acquisitions identified all of the print subscriptions as well as new subscriptions acquired by Blackwell Publishing. The list of subscriptions is crucial as no subscriptions can be canceled within this consortium package. All print titles were canceled by Serials Acquisitions and new electronic only subscriptions were placed. Serials Acquisitions also handles the Deep Discounted Print subscriptions that package publishers offer when the primary subscription is electronic. Effective management of electronic subscriptions is based on experience with print subscriptions when the library requires individual collection program funding for each subscription in a package.

Stuff experienced in activating electronic subscriptions can then easily learn to add packages and individual journal titles to electronic resources data and access systems such as Serials Solutions and EBSCO A-Z and Knowledge Base linking systems. Serials Acquisitions staff are now managing both groups of systems as they are most knowledgeable of the entire life-cycle of an electronic journal, from purchase to user access. They are in an excellent position to troubleshoot access problems that occur from order and activation errors.

Preparing for an ERMS

Electronic Resource Management System and Electronic Journal Archiving program development respond to the continuing evolution of electronic journals. Most libraries are looking at Electronic Resource Management Systems (ERMS) to consolidate the various sources of information and to deliver listings of electronic journal titles to users. An ERMS is a database in which each electronic resource has a complete record of its attributes: order, vendor, content provider, URLs, title list (if electronic journal resource), contacts, funding, troubleshooting information. The systems ideally allow for tracking an order from its initiation to its Internet activation. Communication mechanisms to all staff and users who need to know about the various stages of resource activation including trials and outages are components of an ideal feature of an ERMS. Ellie Duranceau’s articles in Against the Grain over the past several years are an excellent source for reviews of ERM and ERM Systems (see Other Resources below). Although at Indiana University Libraries Electronic Resource Acquisitions (ERA), the Libraries’ Electronic Resources Committee (BERSERC), and Library Information Technology (LIT) units developed several effective local mechanisms for informing users of the libraries’ electronic resource holdings and tracking orders and payments, an ERMS is still needed, especially for sharing license information with all of the Indiana University Libraries and the IU campuses. Web pages, Access databases, paper files and the Acquisitions module of the LMS store data in too many places making information management difficult. Many libraries find they are completely overwhelmed by these tasks and need a solution such as ERMS.

However, implementation of an ERMS is a large task for a library where many different interests and needs must be met. As a stop-gap measure, I requested that the University Information Technology staff add new fields to our LMS acquisitions module order records: PUBLISHER, FORMAT, CONSORTIUM. Staff can now retrieve publisher and format data from this local internal system to track various orders by publisher and format. This information aids the libraries’ move to electronic subscriptions when they cost less than print and begins to prepare ERA and Serials Acquisitions for the implementation of an ERMS that the libraries plans to have in place within a year. We are using this system to

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maintain lists of subscription titles in each of our large electronic journal packages. As we look at other publisher packages, we can easily pull the current subscriptions we hold published by this publisher. However, this system should last only until the library implements a full ERMS when all the information on any resources can be found in one place.

And Even More Integration

Supporting efforts to create electronic journal archiving software and archive mechanisms, Indiana University Libraries is a partner in the LOCKSS Alliance (LOTS OF COPIES KEEP STUFF SAFE). LOCKSS is software that “allows libraries to collect, store and maintain electronic copies they purchase,” according to LOCKSS director Vicky Reich. At Indiana University, collection managers select the titles the library will archive once they are available in LOCKSS. Serials Acquisitions staff then verify that the library has rights to “cache” the title. Caching the title occurs when the libraries’ LOCKSS system retrieves the issue from the publisher when it is published. For example, a free humanities title is available for caching and is selected; serials staff add the title to Libraries’ A-Z list of electronic journals. Thus, the libraries “acquire” the title as well as “cache” it. If the library subscribes to the electronic journal, then the library has the right to “cache” it, or archive it where the library can deliver it to users should the publisher’s Website go down or the libraries’ access to the journal be interrupted. Currently, over one hundred titles have been selected and are actively cached for Indiana Library. As more titles are added to LOCKSS, the library will expand the number of titles archived. Although the libraries are still in the experimental stages of archiving electronic journals in LOCKSS, I anticipate that Serials Acquisitions staff will be involved in processing selections for LOCKSS in the same way they process a new subscription for print or electronic journals. Once an ERMS is fully implemented, LOCKSS cached title decisions will, no doubt, be documented within the electronic resources records where the information will be available to all staff.

Integration: The Key to Success

At Indiana University Libraries, integration of print and electronic journal management has been the key to developing the staff expertise needed to manage electronic journals, particularly publisher packages. With the additional responsibility for A-Z lists, linking software, access problem resolution, and archiving activities, Serials Acquisitions will oversee the entire lifecycle of an electronic journal as it makes the transition from a print to an electronic environment and moves on to its final resting place, the archive.

Other Resources

ERMS (Electronic Resource Management Systems):
Duranceau, Ellen. “Electronic Resource Management Systems Part II: Offerings from Serial Vendors and Serial Data Vendors,” Against the Grain v.17/3 (June 2005): p. 59. Note from the Table of Contents: “In the Sept. 2004 issue, Ellen reported on the ERMS offerings of the major ILS vendors, and promised to follow with a second article covering the ERMS tools offered by other kinds of companies, primarily serials vendors or serial data vendors. Here is Part II.”

LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) Electronic Journal Archiving System:

