lists and costs, etc. We employ a variety of tools including an ERM system, for which we contract with a vendor other than our subscription agent, and other homegrown solutions. In the end, we removed approximately $1,000,000 from our annual renewal list and saved about $30,000 in service fees. We have numerous individual electronic subscriptions that we continue to allow our subscription vendor to handle, but we viewed the removal of our “big deal” e-journal packages from our annual renewal list as an effective cost-saving measure. Will our approach work for every library? Certainly not. Should all libraries cut out their subscription vendors (a “stick it to the man” attitude)? Again, certainly not. A subscription vendor’s services can be valuable for libraries large and small. In fact, for small libraries, cutting out the agent is likely a bad idea and will result in more work than a small staff can handle. However, I believe this approach is worth considering seriously at most medium-sized and large academic libraries.

New Services and Pricing Models

What new services and pricing might libraries expect from subscription vendors in the newly emerging world of managing “big deal” bundles? Negotiation services have already been discussed as a possibility. If a library does all the negotiating and up-front work, perhaps a lower service fee could be charged for that publisher’s package. Perhaps subscription vendors should provide libraries with an ERM system or part of the service fee instead of charging an additional fee. Libraries invest huge amounts of money, time, and human resources in maintaining and implementing ERM systems, and they have become necessities. In the past, subscription vendors developed tools to make managing print journals easier. These tools included complicated spreadsheets replete with subscription information, billing integrated with ILS acquisition modules, and Web-based administrative portals. It makes sense to me that ERM systems replace and supplement many of these older systems, but not for an additional fee. Librarians are performing different tasks with new and different systems, for the same managerial purpose. Perhaps subscription vendors should be maintaining OpenURL knowledge bases as part of their fee. Perhaps librarians should demand that publishers allow subscription vendors to activate online subscriptions. Maybe subscription vendors could offer an annual rebate for libraries that have a low number of service requests. These are simply ideas at this point: it is hoped that they will contribute to a long and productive dialogue with our subscription vendors.

Endnotes

2. ibid.
5. supra n. 3.

Rumors

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digital collections such as historical documents, photos, newspapers, audio and video on the Web. OCLC has been the exclusive distributor of CONTENTdm software to libraries, cultural heritage organizations and other nonprofit organizations since 2002. Greg Zick, founder of DiMeMa and former Professor at the University of Washington, will be Vice President of OCLC Digital Services, and will report to Phyllis B. Spies, Vice President, OCLC Collection Management Services. The DiMeMa staff of 11 will maintain its office in Seattle, Washington.

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