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We Can Work It Out: What an ERM Needs

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There are, I believe, two types of electronic resources librarians: those who come from technical services and focus on payments, records, coordination between OPACs and link resolvers; and those coming from public services who try to figure out why electronic resources aren't working for particular patrons, field requests for new resources from patrons, and make cancellation and swap decisions.

I come to electronic resources from a collection development and public services background. So when Heather Klusendorf asked me to write an article on the perfect ERM, my first reaction was: that's for the technical-services electronic resources librarians. I'm only a visitor to their world. Then I started thinking about how I spend much of my day managing the electronic resources at the **Columbia University Health Sciences Library (HSL)**. Why shouldn't the **Columbia ERM** contain the information I need to manage electronic resources from my perspective?

The most basic information I require in an ERM is the ability to locate the titles to which my branch library subscribes. This information should include the actual price we were charged — not the list price, preferably including any special costs like vendor's charges or maintenance fees for the historic files. Additionally, titles we have access to via uniform title lists or bundled as part of content packages — like those accessed through **EBSCO** packages or **Ovid's Lippincott Williams & Wilkins Total Access Collection** — should be distinguishable from titles to which we have direct subscriptions. I want to know the publisher and platform for each journal, and that information should be connected to a clear explanation of the publisher's policies regarding cancellation and swaps.

Next, I want a notes field that I can use. This field is needed to keep track of any manner of special information about individual titles. Supplements that are online only after a certain year or can be accessed only from the publisher's society Website are good examples of the information I would record. Information on odd layouts of access screens, for example E-pubs ahead of print, would be located on a link separate from the archive link. I would also use this field to record special faculty or departmental issues with a title, such as "added at request of department because faculty member is on editorial board." I need a place where I can note that a title was swapped out because of low usage and what title replaced it or that a title was canceled due to low use as part of a journal package cancellation allotment.

I would like to be able to list a subject area for the titles so I can identify the titles for medical specialties like pediatrics and oncology. Titles used primarily by a specific school I serve,

such as nursing, public health, dentistry, and medicine, would also be helpful.

This ideal ERM system would also bring together information I need when I make cancellation and swap decisions. I would like to have usage statistics and cost per download appear automatically in my ERM. And I would like a place to note low usage so I can pull those titles out easily when reviewing titles to drop. I would like the **ISI** impact factor and the rank the journal holds in the **ISI** subject breakdown to appear automatically. I would like to have a place for **Eigenfactor** and other journal-ranking systems in case I ever feel my understanding of how they work is good enough for me to be confident in using them. I would like to include interlibrary loan information for titles, as we factor that in when considering cancellation. I would like to include whether a journal is indexed in **MEDLINE**, as well as its language of publication.

I would like this ERM to include titles we are still receiving in print. Review of the ever-dwindling number of journals received in print is an annual effort at my institution. There are often special reasons we continue to receive titles in print. Some of the titles are online but password protected, and we cannot accommodate easily sharing this information in our big institution. Other titles are available on what appear to be unstable platforms or at a premium price so high we cannot justify the additional cost. I need a place to note this information so I don't search for it over and over again.

And while we are at it, I would like to put journals that have been requested by patrons or identified as new titles into this system with much of the same information as we have for the titles we subscribe to — cost, platform, **ISI** ranking, etc. — and information such as who requested the title, their status in the university, and how many ILLs we have done for the title. I would use this information to create a list showing the backlog of titles my patrons would like us to have which we haven't been able to afford.

I would like the system to be flexible enough so that if I realize some piece of information I placed in the notes field is particularly useful, I could add a new notes field and transfer that information to its own field. I like to be able to search and sort titles and create reports as needed over time.

Now your reaction to this might be: well, she doesn't want much, does she? But this is the information I need every time a patron has a problem with a title and when I need to add, cut, or swap titles. You might also say: well, you don't *really* need an ERM like this, because clearly you have been making these decisions all along.

The reality is I have an ERM with all this information in it. I made it with my own ten fingers and **File Maker**. When I first created my own ERM, all it included was the name, publisher, platform, and a notes field. But I added fields for what I needed, most often splitting things off from the notes field as I found information like ILL data that was helpful in managing the collection.

So what's the rub? My database is not complete. The **Columbia Health Sciences Library** estimates we have over 4,500 titles in the collection, and my database has only 2,800 titles. A good number of those are requested but not owned by **HSL**. What my database does have are the titles that need to be actively managed: those titles that give patrons problems, those that have lower use and are swap candidates, and the titles we may want to add. I can produce a list of the titles remaining in print to see if we can finally move them to electronic access or a list of lower use titles by publisher to see if we can swap them for titles more frequently requested by patrons.

A second rub: I input much of the data by hand as I need it. **File Maker** can import data from **Excel**, and perhaps I could import the usage statistics I need (those for **HSL** titles). But I don't. I find it useful to work from the complete **Columbia** usage reports, identifying the **HSL** titles and then recording only in my database the ones we subscribe to falling below certain usage levels. I find it useful to get in and look around at the usage statistics. I often see high use in a title we access as part of a uniform title agreement and low use of a title we subscribe to directly. I find very low or no use on titles that don't appear in our OPAC, and I use this as an opportunity to do some OPAC maintenance. No records? People aren't going to use it! It gives me a sense of overall usage patterns — subscriptions versus access, for example. I ponder the reason for a low use title suddenly having one month of heavy usage.

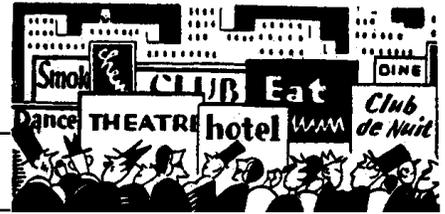
My database is "dirty." Sometimes I get the subscription price from an actual invoice. Other times I get it off the publisher's Website. My feeling is that the price is in the right ballpark. Yet because I don't have actual prices with any added charges that might appear after we see a year-end invoice, I cannot monitor journal price increase as well as I would like. There are many cases where I threw data into the notes field only to find it was a useful bit of information and needed to dig it out and put it

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Revisiting Wayne State University's ERM System: Six Years Later

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Adopting an ERM system, whether it's home-grown or purchased, is not as simple and straightforward as many would think. In many ways, an ERM system is a living, ever-changing and growing thing that requires upkeep, attention, and, above all use. In addition, keeping electronic resources and their increasing growth managed and transparent to the user is a task that is not an easy one for libraries.

In 2004, **Wayne State University Libraries** purchased and put into operation an ERM system after a thorough analysis and research effort. This implementation was represented in my case study "Selecting and Implementing an ERM at Wayne State University."¹ In the case study, I discussed key factors regarding the creation and execution of an ERM system and the critical decision-making and goal-setting process that was involved. More importantly, developing an ongoing evaluation of an ERM system is necessary to make sure that it is meeting the needs of the library. In the six years since we purchased **Innovative Interfaces Millennium**, the electronic resources management at **Wayne State** has evolved and improved in our library system in a variety of ways.

Going through the process of the preliminary analysis and goal setting proved to be a worthwhile practice. As our ERM system evolves at Wayne State, we continuously refer to the original goals that were outlined during the analysis. One of the library system's primary goals is to provide integrated services with enhanced efficiency to our patrons. This is a goal that continues to govern our evaluation of a new or existing service or support for these services.

During our original goal setting, the team evaluating the need for an ERM came up with

questions that helped to define more of what the library needed out of the ERM:

Will we need to hire someone to manage the ERM?

Will the ERM allow us to have more functionality with less staff work?

Will we need a new workflow or e-resource process?

How much training and time to train will be necessary?

It was determined early on that there would be someone hired to manage the ERM. At the time, the systems librarian was doing much of the technical work to get the ERM up and running but did not have the time to populate the ERM and handle the general management of it. The new position of Electronic Resources Librarian would handle many of the daily management and work tasks involved with the ERM, which include creating and populating the records, as well as updating information. As the system began to grow, it was determined that the Electronic Resources Librarian would be moved from the library's technology department to the technical services department. This move was necessary to place the librarian closer to the acquisition and management of the electronic resources.

With the increased use of the ERM by library staff, the functionality of it has improved, as well. Although it has not dramatically decreased actual staff work, it has increased functionality as a unified place for staff to go to when they need information for their work tasks. For example, by having access to information in the ERM, it reduces the need to email different individuals for different information. It also reduces the need to keep and store extra emails, spreadsheets, documents (paper or electronic) for login, contact, or administrative information. Most of the staff has had ERM tasks merged into their job functions.

With the creation of a new electronic resource workflow that heavily features the use of our ERM, the creation and the population of new and existing records with current data were an essential part of bringing the ERM up to speed. These records include access, statistical, contact, and licensing data that are vital to other library services. This is important because the ERM has become more of a time saver. Problems arise when the records do not have the necessary data for other departments to access. These other departments have to invest more time to track down the information that they need to carry out their library services. An example of the integration of the ERM into other library services is **Encore**. With the **Encore** service and the catalog, the ERM contains the holdings information and content descriptions that then display in the catalog.

Training wasn't too much of an issue. We had already had other **Innovative Interfaces** products, and the ERM was a module that was added to them. The staff was already comfortable with the record displays in the system, so adding new ones that were similar did not add too much additional time onto training. The reality is that the staff has decreased their work in other areas of the library with the processing, ordering, and cataloging of print materials. The staff has now increased their work with the ERM with data entry, maintenance, and management of the information contained in the ERM records. All of the necessary administrative data relating to electronic resources are now centralized in one system.

What we expected and what has worked for us is that the ERM needed to adapt to process changes and have growth with flexibility. We also expected the ERM to optimize and organize electronic resources management, which it does. The ERM has also created

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in its own field. The database is flexible, and it responds to what I need. As incomplete and dirty as it is, I remember when managing our journals only entailed checking to see if there was dust on the top of the volumes or by putting a DEMCO colored dot on the spine every time it was reshelfed! Now I have a variety of information from usage to indexing to patron issues to bear on my decisions.

But it would be better to have access to an ERM that was complete for **HSL**. Who knows what patterns I could see if I could easily sort and review all the data I have indicated for all

of our titles? I would dearly love to be able to do subject and school reviews of our titles, something that is just too time-consuming now.

At the present, **Columbia's** integrated library system contains all sorts of payment and vendor information but is a challenge for an infrequent user to use quickly and easily. **Columbia's ERM** is a title list used to maintain OPAC and link resolver connections as well as provide access to usage statistics. But neither system allows me to accumulate the varied information I need to manage the **Health Science Library** collection.

It also occurs to me that an essential aspect of a big university EMR, useful to the many

librarians with selector responsibilities, is the ability to identify the titles for which they are responsible. If librarians cannot sort and find "their" titles easily, the system will be of little benefit. And that is a big problem in a big university. Fund codes are rife and may be shared by many selectors. Selectors come and go, and responsibility by selector name changes over the year. Sometimes there is an advantage in the sciences because of legacy mailing addresses linked back to the delivery of print issues. That certainly is the case with the **Health Sciences Library**, which is located at a completely different address from the Morningside campus and has traditionally been invoiced separately. 🐼