Adventures in Librarianship -- Vandalism

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Future conspectus projects must provide data to help see how collections actually affect client populations, be they college students or the general public. User outcomes then must influence collection development. The people who do the conspectus might not be the same people who examine user outcomes, but the two groups mustn’t compartmentalize their work. Rather, they should create a collaborative “feedback loop” in which subsequent conspectus work examines whether the collection has been properly developed in response to these user outcomes. Your library school collection development professor was right: There’s no “I” in “conspectus.”

Collection Analysis Is No Less Important Today Than Yesterday, and Other Banalities

Budgetary pressures, accreditation requirements, and changes in the format and technology of information all indicate the importance of knowing — and being able to show with data — how your library’s collection is shaping up. Using nothing but anecdotal evidence is cheating — you’ve got to be systematic and objective.

Although the conspectus method has not kept up with changes in the field, there’s no reason it couldn’t. I’m hardly the most innovative sort, yet I managed to adapt the instrument to fit the needs of my library. In the absence of an authoritative update to the WLN conspectus manual (did you hear that, OCLC?), there’s no reason others more clever than me couldn’t make their own adaptations of the method.

So, as I asked before, how’s your library’s collection?

Endnotes

2. My director recently wrote about some of the benefits of our conspectus project: Houbeck, Robert L., Jr. “Linking Students with Collections; or Getting Ready to Meet the Accreditation Train.” Against the Grain, v. 16 no. 4, September 2004, pp. 30-34. For more information about UM-Flint’s conspectus, visit lib.umflint.edu/conspectus.
9. Thanks to Calvin Hsu, Yunah Sang, and Kenji Niki at the Asia Library at the University of Michigan for helping me address this point.
Electronic Resource Management Systems, Part II: Offerings from Serial Vendors and Serial Data Vendors

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Introduction

In the September 2004 issue, I reported on the Electronic Resource Management (ERM) offerings of the major ILS vendors, and promised to follow with a second article covering the ERM tools offered by other kinds of companies, primarily serial vendors or serial data vendors. This is the promised part two. Together, the articles attempt to provide an overview of the ERM market, describing what products and services are currently available to libraries managing and tools to help them manage electronic resources.

Libraries who want support for the full life cycle of electronic resource management from selection through purchase, access, license management, and renewal or cancellation, have had the option of building their own systems, as many (such as Boston College and Harvard University, just in the last year) continue to do. Other libraries have purchased the Innovative Interfaces ERM system which has been on the market for more than a year, or have signed on to be beta testers of one of the new ILS-provider offerings, such as Ex Libris' Verde, which is expected to be available for sale in the summer of 2005. Still other libraries are working with data and support services offered by their serial vendors or other companies, such as Serials Solutions (recently acquired by Proquest). It is this segment of the market that is focused on here.

For the purposes of this overview, ERM is defined as it is by the Digital Library Federation's Electronic Resource Management Initiative (DLF ERM); “tools for managing the license agreements, related administrative information, and internal processes associated with collections of licensed electronic resources,” including ability to present terms of use at the point of access to an eresouce. In order to keep the scope defined and manageable, this article does not attempt to explicitly address link resolver, metasearch, or standard subscription management for ejournals (such as initial registration and activation) unless such a service is clustered with, and relevant to, other ERM services offered.

The table below collates major aspects of the various ERM offerings, and was created based on responses to a common set of questions sent to each company. The companies include those who tend to be identified as serial vendors (Harrassowitz, Swets); those who tend to be identified as electronic/serial data vendors or providers of ejournal management systems (Serials Solutions); and those who are a hybrid of the two or whose partnerships make them a hybrid of the two (EBSCO, which acts as a serial vendor but also has divisions that offer many electronic publishing and aggregation services, and TDNet, which offers a range of ejournal support and access services but has a partner company that is a serial vendor). The questions submitted to the companies were for the most part the same as those used in the September 2004 article on ILS vendor offerings. Some common themes emerge from the responses:

- All of the companies included here sell both software and data. (This distinction did not turn out to be as significant as for the ILS providers’ ERM systems.)
- All of the companies offer hosted web-based services, and those who are out of the planning stages offer an integrated knowledgebase as the place to maintain data.
- All of the companies have made an effort to follow and use the DLF ERM guidelines, although the guidelines’ detailed coverage of license metadata does not appear to be as fully applied in these offerings as in the ILS-provider based systems.
- All of the companies have a means of integrating print and electronic holdings information for staff use (except Swets, whose plans are still in development); however, there is wide variation with respect to what can be displayed to the public end-user.

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