

Managing a Rapidly Growing E-Collection Using 360 Resource Manager



The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) boasts an annual enrollment of 25,000 students with 15 colleges. The Richard J. Daley Library is the main repository with a collection of over 48,000 electronic resources including journals and multimedia collections such as videos, DVDs, streaming video, and more. Two other large libraries complete the system: the Health Sciences (Medical) library and Sciences library. In addition, the Daley library manages the e-resource acquisitions for three rural medicine programs in Rockford, Peoria and Urbana which became affiliated with the UIC College of Medicine in 1970.

Sara Blaszcak, Electronic Resource Librarian, is responsible for managing all e-resources across the library system. Prior to 2005, e-resource management was scattered throughout the libraries with no one person coordinating all activity. With a background in IT and knowledge of library collections, Sara was able to quickly bring order to the collection management process.

At that time, the library used an in-house system based on FileMaker Pro for resource management. The Database of Library Licensing Electronic Records (DOLLER) was a relational database. Data entry and retrieval took many steps and required a great deal of skilled staff time and labor. The system ran on a local server that required a manual restart by the library staff when the system crashed, which was often. In addition, DOLLER data wasn't "clean" or standards-based, and was therefore not compatible with other technology the library was using.

An internal committee at the library, comprised of Sara, Ellen Starkman and Nancy John, was charged with finding a new and compatible resource management service. Sara presented the results of the review, made recommendations to the library administration, and received permission to purchase a subscription to 360 Resource Manager e-resource management service.

Sara was very familiar with Serials Solutions because UIC had been an early adopter of the company's services. In the early 2000s the University's head librarian, Nancy John, met the Serials Solutions founder, Peter McCracken, at an ALA conference. She was so impressed with the new Serials Solutions technology and the vision the company had for e-resource management that she wrote a personal check on the spot for the A-to-Z list — then called AMS.

Nancy determined that the UIC library needed that revolutionary technology to support its growing electronic collections. That early vote of confidence has evolved into a strong, ongoing association with Serials Solutions. Now, the UIC libraries use a full complement of Serials Solutions services including 360 Core, 360 Link, 360 MARC Updates, 360 Counter, and 360 Resource Manager.

Sara explains, "We really felt that with Serials Solutions, we could migrate our data out of our old system and have cleaner data in a standard format, so that the data would be portable if we ever needed to move it to a different system. Our general relationship with Serials Solutions had been excellent, so we felt with the new 360 Resource Manager service, we would get the

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kind of support we were used to. Serials Solutions customer support is staffed by librarians who understand what we are trying to do and we like working with them. We felt we would not find that level of support anywhere else.”

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UIC subscribed to 360 Resource Manager in March of 2006. After the close of the school year in June they hired Leslie Lapham, a Serials Solutions 360 Resource Manager consultant, to work with the librarians on-site for two days helping the library staff learn how to use the service. Sara says, “Leslie was a great help and we started entering data right away. By the time she left, we had some of our data input and we sent back spreadsheets with the data Serials Solutions would load. At the end of the two days, we were confident enough with 360 Resource Manager that we promised her we would abandon DOLLER.”

By the summer of 2007, UIC had gone through one cycle with all of the library’s e-resource data in the system. During the year, they course-corrected many times, and made ongoing changes to data and workflows as needed. Sara’s past experience with Serials Solutions also had familiarized her with the company’s rapid development of new features and functionality, which are deployed online and require no installation by the library.

When new features were implemented, Sara says, “We didn’t have to recreate our data. We could change the method and start using the new tools right away because everything integrated with everything else.” She adds, “Serials Solutions is very responsive to suggestions for improvements, In fact, I feel more like a driver than a passenger. We have had open discussions with them and I have talked directly to the developer a couple of times. Several improvements we had been asking for are now available, including a Cost Data Upload and the new Consortium edition.”

As Sara reflects on the impact 360 Resource Manager has had on the electronic collection, she feels the service exceeds her expectations. For UIC, having the journal databases, titles, and publishers all in the same, hosted, integrated knowledgebase (Serials Solutions KnowledgeWorks) is crucial. “It has made my job easier,” Sara says. “We could not have created that kind of database on our own and certainly could never have kept it updated. We simply do not have the staff.”

When asked about the ongoing value of 360 Resource Manager, Sara uses her own experience as an example: “In October of 2006, just after we started the full implementation of 360 Resource Manager, my family and I had a weather disaster. A tornado blew the roof off our house and that was followed by six inches of rain. Trees were down, our roof was in the backyard and the house was a mess. For the next four months, we had to live someplace else while the repairs were underway. I was working part-time but I didn’t fall behind because I could access the 360 Resource Manager service at any time, from any location. I would come into the office whenever I could but often I was working off campus. Because of Resource Manager, I didn’t have to answer as many questions — I could direct others to look up information and they could find what they needed. Serials Solutions saved me at a really bad time.”

Another Serials Solution service that has exceeded Sara’s expectations is 360 MARC Updates. She says, “It’s a very fluid service that has helped us a lot. With the hosted 856 fields, we don’t have to modify a catalog record every time a publisher makes a change or a link is broken. That is all done by Serials Solutions and it saves our catalogers a great deal of time.” She continues, “We also find that the Overlap Analysis saves us time and money; I use the Overlap Analysis to vet faculty proposals. Information from the Overlap Analysis helps the bibliographers avoid paying twice for the same resource.

Sara’s responsibilities extend to the UIC medical school as well. As one of the largest medical schools in the country, the library at the College of Medicine is highly visible. The Collections Development department selects, licenses and orders all the electronic resources for the Health Sciences library including eBooks, e-journals, medical reference materials, [clinical knowledge environments – S.B.], anatomical videos, podcasts, and PDA downloads. The collection at the library is evolving, and the e-resources available play a critical part in the library’s role as a comprehensive teaching tool.

As the e- collection grows, having reliable and comprehensive technology is critical to Sara. She is the only person managing *all* the e-resources for the university libraries. She is supported by the cataloging and acquisition departments, the subject bibliographers, and one part-time serials specialist who is located in Rockford. All help make sure the collection is up to date and relevant. In particular, the subject bibliographers play a key role. Because of established relationships with faculty, they are able to determine their needs and make sure the library is buying the right books and resources for the right reasons. As the majority of journals now are purchased electronically, this ongoing communication with the faculty is even more important.

Sara explains, “As faculty become increasingly interested in new online resources to support their teaching and research, we also provide them the terms of use and availability information for journals and e-books at the point of use through 360 Resource Manager. We have made available a large number of open-access titles. Faculty can see the difference between terms of use for open-access journals and proprietary journals.”

Sara concludes, “The big win for me with Serials Solutions and 360 Resource Manager is continuity and having one central location for all our e-resource information. It’s not in one person’s brain or note or email. We generate so much information with a lot of complexity that having all that in one place and having it available to find data and get a good picture is very important. E-resources account for about half of our budget and we have so many—hundreds of databases, thousands of journals—that having easy access and not having to remember all of that information is great.”

Find out more!

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