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JEFF AIPPERSPACH

ERMS, Workflow, and Standards: A Product Development View

The Digital Library Federation Electronic Resource Management Initiative (DLF ERMI) was a successful guide to commercial and private vendors and provided guidance in suggested resource management areas to address when designing an Electronic Resource Management System (ERMS).

One of the problems, however, of ERMI not being a true standard is that vendor interpretation can result in non-standard data elements and their definitions and ultimately in tools that cannot easily communicate with each other.

One of the reasons for those differences is that many ERMS were designed with the workflow of print resources as the foundation of development or at least it has provided a major influence on the design thinking for most ERMS. The workflow for e-resources, however, can be quite different.

Over the next few years, vendor support of services will lead to an evolution of existing services and the development of new tools and software to address the varied workflows among libraries and for different types of resources. We will see new flexibility in working with the “data” associated with e-resources, not just the resources. These data elements are critical to the resource lifecycle; examples include the underlying knowledgebase—which is the most critical element—as well as licenses, contacts associated with the resources, information around the lifecycle of a resource (trials, license restrictions enforcement, resource unavailability, etc.), and management of related information and systems (business systems, RSS feeds, ILL systems, etc.).

The next several years will also bring new flexibility in the creation and maintenance of the knowledgebase. A solid, authoritative knowledgebase is critical to the workflow and management of e-resources. Patrons and researchers require tools to get to the content and if the data in the knowledgebase powering those tools is not correct or current, researchers will become frustrated when access to content is not available and librarians will become frustrated at the amount of time required to maintain the knowledgebase, especially if multiple

knowledgebases require updating to support management and discovery services.

What are some of the future trends that organizations will see in the near future?

- » Data driven systems – Information related to the resource must be actionable.
- » Modularity – Different functionality for different libraries; one size does not fit all.
- » Flexibility – Customization of the workflow will support personnel and organizational interaction with the ERMS.
- » Standards adoption – Implementation of existing standards (ONIX-PL, CORE) as well as new developing standards.

New solutions are required. There are solid solutions currently available in the market. Products are maturing and customers (librarians) are better understanding their needs in managing e-resources. They are also becoming more involved with standards organizations like NISO and the initiatives required to guide vendors in continuing to build out and develop these systems.

Consortia are gaining influence in the procurement and management of e-resources. They see the importance of being able to easily manage and share objects and information with members seamlessly. Consortia desire interoperability with outside business systems and ERMS. The data belongs to the library and vendors will be required to provide easy and complete access to and use of the data by the owner of the data.

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AND WORKFLOW: TWO VIEWS FROM THE TRENCHES



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ERMS and Workflow Analysis: An Implementation View

Successful Electronic Resource Management System (ERMS) implementations require a library to examine its workflows along with the information it needs to track before creating a plan to meet its goals.

One of the challenges of ERMS implementation is that each library workflow is localized, and each library must examine its particular situation and identify how its work can best be supported by an ERMS. The ERMS is not a “magic bullet” that will solve all information management problems; it is a powerful tool that will allow a library to address challenges not met by current systems. A library must take a holistic look at its workflow and determine the best use of all its systems and resources.

During the purchase and implementation process, a library should conduct a needs assessment that includes input from all stakeholders who rely on metadata about electronic resources—from the staff who will be viewing and editing information in the system daily, to those who will rarely log in to the system or who will rely on ERMS information passed to another system. A library should also examine current policies, procedures, and workflow to determine areas for change—both to accommodate the new ERMS and to maximize existing resources. Once an ERMS is purchased, the implementation team should look at the entire e-resource management workflow and determine how the ERMS will fit with other systems, such as the ILS, library website, or services from a consortium. The proposed workflow should outline the steps of e-resource management, where information is stored, and how it is entered or updated in the ERMS. This workflow plan not only outlines specific staff tasks and responsibilities, but provides an overview of the process and a means to determine the best way to obtain a particular piece of information.

The implementation team should also make a plan for migrating existing data into the system. This may be a true migration from one system to another, such as holdings information; or it may involve information that needs to be collected, organized, or coded, such as information in email, notebooks, files, or staff memory. Data migration may need

to be prioritized, with data being added over time in order of priority or readiness. Once the workflow and data migration plans have been made, a library should set dates for the new workflow to be adopted. ERMS implementation is a large task, and the library must determine which parts of the system will be most valuable and implement those first; priorities could be a part of the workflow (e.g., trials) or a type of information (e.g., licenses).

ERMS implementations and ERM workflows need to accommodate change. The workflow plan should not be seen as final, but as an organic document that can be modified as needed. Internal changes in staff and systems, as well as external changes such as new systems and information standards, require a library to assess its current needs and to update the workflow after the initial implementation.

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www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub139/pub139.pdf

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www.r2consulting.org/pdfs/Task-Based%20Strategic%20Planning.pdf

What is a Process? Why Should You Care?
www.rummler-brache.com/case-studies-and-white-papers



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