

# Exploit Your E-collections to Full

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## **Abstract:**

The increasing number of Electronically available material poses new and growing challenges for the libraries: it is not shelf space and physical logistics which is the main challenges, but URL management, license agreements, linking problems and first and foremost how to make the users aware of this invisible virtual cornucopia of e-books, journal articles, text and images. A plethora of tools are developed to help libraries meet these challenges: A-Z lists, link-resolvers, federated search, ERMS, tools for managing statistics, new interfaces and new search methods. With academic publishing moving rapidly to e-only it is imperative that the libraries not only devise best practices for acquisition and management of e-materials but also for the dissemination and usability of these materials.

## **Introduction**

The first e- resources usually appears as from auto-genesis, they come as “free with print” , part of a bigger deal, the open access journal this researcher or that subject librarian find is indispensable.

Then perhaps the library has an offer through a consortia and a decision has to be made: do we want to spend money on this, how much extra is it if we also want it electronically? The reply : a few % extra seems reasonable and the first big deal is signed. Somewhat later, money has to be saved and today that normally means that the library goes e-only, cancelling the print subscription which saves perhaps 10% in the acquisition budget.

However, even though the budget swings from primarily print to primarily electronic, even if the number of print material arriving to the library plummets, even though the library suddenly can rearrange its expensive shelf space and forget about the former oh so necessary new building, and can let go of most of the staff employed for reshelving, even then, very few libraries actively budget and plan to cater for the needs of this kind of material.

But, without proper resource management structures in the back-office to maintain links and licenses and monitor overlap, trials & statistics and without proper show casing out in the public view the electronic collections remains all well preserved and expensive secret for most, only revealed partly by a Google. This brief paper is the story of which tools a large University library used to move from all print to 95% electronic in a spate of 5 years.

## **2000- 2002 The initial needs**

Most libraries starts managing their e-resources manually: a dedicated person collects the URLs of journal and collections perhaps even recording the individual journals and holdings

within the collections. My library was the same – one member of staff was assigned to – among all her other duties – to take care of all that “URL stuff”...

But soon the other duties were neglected: the URL's kept changing, holdings was expanded and new titles added to collections. Today the solution is easy: numerous vendors' offers externally maintained title lists at prices varying from almost nothing to very expensive. In 2001 the situation was different, I could dream of the concept, but nothing attractive was on the market in Europe and my URL lady labored more than full time especially as the University users were exacting and not happy if a link was out of order. However the times were changing – at an American Library conference two new companies stuck out both offering to solve my problem of maintaining my title lists: one offered an elaborate platform with many features the other a simple professionally (run by Librarians!) maintained A-Z list – at one of the discussions I attended one of the speakers compared them like a all stops out Limousine to a functional Lada, both would get you to your destination, but at a different price altogether.

My choice given my requirements and my budget was not difficult and I went back to Denmark with a business card from Serials Solutions in my pocket.

Shortly after the library's IT department signed an agreement to implement Sfx to enable an easier flow from the databases to the full text collections. At that time I did not see this as in any way overlapping –but today I would definitely take care to buy a system which could not only take care of my immediate needs but also had a lot of room for expansion.

## **2004 Too little money and not enough space**

There are a few rock-solid facts in a serials librarian's life: journals increase with a considerable percentage every year; there are more journals out there than ever – due to the pressure to publish; and most yearly budgets are decreasing more often than increasing.

As the electronic collections grew and became more popular than ever, the budget and space limitations of the old library made it high time to take a very close look at the library's holdings for overlap, at first just overlapping electronic packages, but soon also any overlap between print and electronic which would free space on the cramped shelves.

Some hard decisions was made:

- first, to cancel subscriptions to all unused print titles as well as all print journals having reliable e-access
- later, to go through our entire print collection and discard all journals with secure e-access and archiving.

This was a daunting task and would not have been possible just a few years earlier.

Firstly all the print subscription of e-journals with a perpetual access licence, including all our 'big deal' licences as well as a few more, was cancelled. As all of these journals were part of big deal packages and the online editions still had to be paid for, the actual savings after cancellation were about 10 percent.

Then the serious shifting began with the help of Ulrichs Serials System, all remaining print, current as well as older holdings was loaded into the system along with usage statistics.

Firstly everything was checked up against J-Stor and whichever title available there was first offered to J-Stor for permanent storage and if not accepted discarded.

Then title lists with the remaining titles was pulled from USAS with data on subject, if it was peer reviewed, as well as a good few local data such as usage and location. This was enough for the subject librarians to make final decisions.

When the exercise was over more than 10,000 titles had been evaluated, 17 kms of shelf space freed and more than \$90,000 saved.

### **2004-2005 The end users perspective...**

The end users were happy; they did not miss the never used journals in the closed stacks, but rejoiced in having even more online content. To be able to access all these wonderful e-articles the library naturally subscribed to an ever growing plethora of databases 150 – 200 – 300 , some large and comprehensive, some narrow and exact. The list of names kept growing and even if the library tried to organize the list it was obvious that some help through the maze was needed.

A new decision had to be made – Federated Search? As the IT department was continuously over stretched and only could slot a Federated Search implementation in after 2-3 years – that didn't seem too feasible. But again, times were changing and a couple of new hosted solutions were emerging. My choice fell on Multisearch from CSA as they had the most connectors, our users knew and loved the Illumina interface, the price seemed reasonable (possible within my own budget without involving external funding) and the set-up was a doodle.

The hosted solution was a sheer pleasure to work with (due to mergers Multisearch has now been exchanged for Serials Solutions 360 Search) and is still working well, all maintenance is taken care of externally and the local efforts are limited to deciding which databases to cross search in which subject bundles and the search fields are well integrated into the library's web pages. There is no limit to the number of databases which can be cross searched – but bundling more than 30 often leads to confusing results.

All this meant that the users could search and access the content of more than 30,000 journal titles from wherever in the world they were located – but, it also meant that the old ways browsing the library shelves to keep aware of new articles did not work any more..... DEFF the Danish National consortia did at that time license with TDNet for national access to consortia titles – it was decided that the TDNet TocAlerts could be set up to keep users informed of the latest new articles within their area.

For the users to keep track of all this information it was decided to subscribe to another hosted solution: the reference management system RefWorks

By mid 2005 the library/university now paid for A-Z list (Serials Solutions) SFX (Exlibris), Ulrichs and Ulrichs Serials Analysis (CSA), Federated Search (CSA), Reference Management system (RefWorks) and TDNet.....

### **2004-2005 back office clutter**

But actually, everything ran smoothly and efficiently, the users and the librarians were happy – only in the back-office things were once again getting somewhat out of hand. We were now down to four persons from the initial fourteen who had cared for the acquisition of print journals and license maintenance, trials, getting in touch with the right persons for the right problems, statistics and all the other nitty gritty of daily life in a electronic acquisitions office was a full time job – too much information was in just one head and far too much in the over 23 MB of spread sheets with information about our licenses.

It was time to look for an ERMS – as early adaptors the selection of mature systems wasn't wide and after a very exacting investigation we decided that Endeavours Meridian was just the right thing for us. My hand did shake when I signed – because just the day before Serials Solutions had announced their new 360 ERMS system, but information was incomplete and the product still too new, so hosted version of Meridian it was and papers were signed in the summer of 2005.

Little did we know that more than a year would pass before the system was fully functional, but since then the now discontinued Meridian have faithfully and efficiently monitored and maintained all licenses.

A good thing actually – as the staff now was down to three persons.

## 2006-2008

With all the achievements the library did not stand still, Federated search might be great for a quick cross search of external databases, but even with the smoothest set-up and most efficient clustering it was still dependent on the underlying databases. A search which could search all materials, books, locally owned digitized material, music, images as well as external articles would be ideal and the library's IT development department took to the new chore with gusto, developing Summa, an open source integrated search. It has not replaced the need for a well maintained A-Z journal list, not for the ability to search and cross search selected databases, but provides quick access to library holdings internal as well as external.

This of course has made a great difference for the users, as have the advent of several other Web 2.0 and other innovative applications. For me personally I think that two things in particular will change the information landscape once again: RSS feeds instead of ToC email alerts and the advent of deep indexing of images, tables and graphs (CSA Illustrata) to utilize the electronic journal collections to a much fuller extent than Google or any other machine indexing is able to do.

## Conclusion

To be an early adaptor is not easy, many of the systems subscribed to is now gone out of production and in rear sight my advice to libraries embarking onto this long road to Electronic Resource Management would be to look for one or two systems which can manage most of the problems arising as collections develop. For me the quality of the basic knowledgebase was paramount, if the basic information is not well maintained and correct I do not see how users and librarians can readily embrace going totally electronic. I am also a very strong believer of hosted solutions if the host has a sufficient size and structure to maintain it.

**Links to still functioning solutions mentioned in the text:**

<http://www.serialssolutions.com>

<http://www.exlibris.co.il/>

<http://www.serialssolutions.com/ulrichs-serials-analysis-system.html>

<http://tdnet.com/>

<http://www.refworks.com/>

<http://www.statsbiblioteket.dk/summa/features-text-in-english>

<http://tictocs.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.proquest.com/promos/product/csillustrata.shtml>