ERM Use Case - Cancellation of a journal title

Developed by the University of Salford (25 February 2011).

Generic Use Case 8 – Cancellation of a journal title - The library needs to cancel a journal title (print or electronic). The library has to check what post-cancellation access they have (print or electronic), the reliability of that access, and whether cancellation impacts on any 'total spend' (or other) agreements with supplier.

1 – Use Case Description – What happens?

Activity - As at the University of Warwick (see alternative UC8), the activity can be divided between 'selection' (identifying titles that could be cancelled and consulting with academics on priorities) and 'cancellation' (notifying agents and publishers and following through with Knowledge Base notifications and catalogue / ERM / discovery adjustments). This use case focuses mainly on the selection phase.

At Salford, unlike Warwick:
- The consultative journals review is a yearly project; the move to annual from a 3 years cycle aims to save time (easier to repeat a regular process than to revisit occasionally) and to increase responsiveness;
- The review includes titles that are in packages and could in the future include Open Access Journals in the process, which can play a promotional / awareness role as well as serving a budgetary purpose;
- New title requests are identified in the same process;
- The process is not conducted online, though a database is under construction to assist in the gathering and annual re-use of evidence and to provide mappings of titles to subject areas and their reported use in teaching and research;
- Salford has not as yet had to conduct the review under duress to find mandated savings, whilst recognizing that as a not too distant requirement.

The workflow is described below

Volumes - Salford has a centrally managed information resources budget of c£1.4m, journal subscriptions are c.75% electronic and 25% print; the e-journals collection is 1500 titles excluding Science Direct and c.40% of the collection is in packages, including SD RF to provide no. of new titles

Actors – The Collections team; the Academic Support Librarians; the ASLs work with academics in the 12 departments

Data involved -
- Titles list generated as above
- Cost data from Talis (i.e. expected cost)
- Usage data – click through data from link resolver was previously judged unreliable; now using counter stats as available (both automated and manually entered), pulled together in ExLibris Ustat; the JUSP service will be used where applicable
- Locally gathered data about which subjects and what research and teaching titles support

Workflows - The sequence is as follows

- The titles list is derived from SWETS, the sole Subscription Agent, though this does not identify the titles in packages, which is separately checked in Talis using the package code.
- The list is increasingly augmented by usage statistics whereas academic had in the past simply exercised their judgment
- Academic support librarians work with the 12 schools to identify cancellations
- New titles requests are added to the list at the same time, typically to be used in one-for-one switches
- For the selected cancellations, the library team
  - Cross checks against reading lists
  - Checks terms of secure post-cancellation access, typically going of SWETSwise for license terms and checking both LOCKSS & Portico

Current Examples – The process as described was last run in 2010

2 – Motivation – What are the pain points?

What are the current problems – The workflow has to address underlying issues with how journals are licensed (Lock in to bundles, uncertainty of actual costs v. expected cost), the range of data sources required to support decision making (e.g. title lists for packages, title status in Portico). There are also local issues relating to academic staff (e.g. triggering review of historically acquired titles) and to university budget processes (e.g. uncertainty Strategic Investment Fund contribution at the point of decision to cover inflation and new courses).

Efficiency assessment – The process is currently inefficient in a number of respects, which will be partially addressed by the development of a local database which will bring together decision support information (as above) but which would benefit further from a sector-wide service to gather much data on a once-only basis and perhaps to provide a platform for entering the rest.

Economy assessment – This process is all about spending the available funds better and managing the challenges of the budget in a transparent manner

Effectiveness assessment – Regardless of economic imperatives, the underlying and ongoing driver is to maximize the relevance of resources, ensuring they reflect the focus of teaching and of research.

3 – Intended Benefits – What is the business case?

Library Service – This process allows the library to offer a better-tuned and more responsive service and to manage its budget proactively; it will serve the service well as a process and as an evidence base should budget reductions be required in the future.

Users – This process is crucial in making sure the collection is best aligned with the taught curriculum and to the needs of researchers

Suppliers – Such a locally developed response to the challenges imposed by supply chain is unlikely to assist suppliers (subscription agents or publishers) in the ways that a consortium system might do.

4 – Consequences of doing it 'above campus'

What will happen? - Building on the JISC Usage Statisitics Portal (JUSP) development, a shared service provider will harvest and manage usage stats for all – dealing once only with publisher and format. Title lists generated from the Knowledge Base will be available for web-based entry of local teaching and research mappings and other qualitative feedback (e.g. by faculty or by ASLs); such data may be designated as private or shared. The service provider would take on other 'once for all' tasks such as post-cancellation checks and the operation of a shared LOCKSS service.

Potential Risks – (a) The local mapping of a title on to teaching and research could be lost or obscured in an above campus service; (b) the confidentiality of the system for non-shared data is not trusted; (c) the solution will not be integrated with the JUSP development.

Potential Opportunities – (a) The service provider would be crucial in bringing usage stats together; it would be particularly advantageous if that were to be JISC Collections; (b) Some institutions will be interested in sharing both quantitative and qualitative data for the purposes of achieving best deals and benchmarking; (c) the shared service model may make the sharing of costs less of an issue to publishers.

Consequences of not doing it – It is suspected that many universities do not have efficient ways of undertaking an evidence based journals review and / or lack a database to make the most of the data over time. Local solutions are costly to develop and current vendor products (e.g. Ustat) only cover part of the requirement. Therefore there is likely that many journal reviews will be inefficient and ineffective.

5 – Implementation Pointers – Things to take in to account

Mechanism – As planned at Salford, an enhanced local solution requires a database that brings together the range of current year and historic data required in the decision making process. An above-campus solution would have advantages so long as it still supports local data entry alongside the data that can be more efficiently gathered by the service provider.

Inputs & Outputs – The inputs benefit significantly from third party systems (e.g. SWETSwise, JUSP, ExLibris Ustat); these data need to be combined with locally generated data about costs (from Talis) and areas of use (from schools and from the Reading List application). The output takes the form of reporting on the database that combines these sources.

Standards & Protocols - The standards in this Use Case relate to usage data (e.g. Sushi)

Existing systems – There is no single system; as noted above, this process draws on a variety of external and internal systems, but not in an integrated manner:
- Local – Talis, Ustat, forthcoming database
- External – JUSP, SWETSwise

Staffing – Currently, whilst the ASL dialogue with the schools is valuable, this process overall is staff intensive to an unnecessary level. A shared service would reduce the burden on the library collections and faculty facing teams.

6 – Challenges & Costs – Direct and indirect

Set up and Transition – In addition to system development, establishing a solution requires clear decisions about the data sources and the responsibilities for data collection. As there is no current system, there will be no transition issues.

Ongoing – The ongoing costs will be in data collection, especially for a local solution. The university will need to be clear about the extent to which data collection effort is justified relative to the gains that can be made through more effective decision making.