

ERM Use Case – Move to e-only

Developed with the University of Southampton (12 January 2011)

Generic Description – UC11 - Move to e-only.

The library wishes to move a significant proportion of its journal collection e-only. In order to do this the library must calculate the financial impact, ascertain whether it believes the electronic access for each title is 'sustainable', which includes ensuring there will be long term access to the collection in the case of the publisher going out of business, or the library ceasing a current subscription.

Use Case Description – What happens?

Activity – Migration to e-only is a matter of policy at Southampton (UoS) for both journals and books. The library no longer buys new journals in print unless unavoidable. This has been negotiated with the academic community with relatively little trouble, which may arise from subject focus or perhaps trust in the library, which manages budgets centrally for all periodical acquisitions. Prior to the major exercise to clear print in summer 2008, the library conducted an online consultation of students and academics.

This UC is based on the following background. It assumes that there is buy-in (above) and that the users have access to electronic infrastructure in the library and more widely on campus and beyond. At UoS, it was predicated on the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) principles to guarantee continuing availability of a print copy and the university commitment to achieve the transition even if some titles required investment (though the overall pattern represented a net saving, despite the VAT hit).

The exercise was broken in to two blocks – (1) titles requiring a move from print to electronic and (2) existing electronic subscriptions where there may be issues about back files and terms of ongoing access.

The workflow started with a title level enquiries - UKRR coverage (therefore retain, put in to storage or skip), whether and to what extent available electronically, who from and at what cost (back files). This was followed by publisher level risk assessment covering quality of publisher infrastructure, terms of e-access and what happens on cancellation. The major publishers were covered first, because they are well geared up to the requirement. All these enquiries are both complex and tedious.

Having identified candidate titles for change the workflow moves to the removal of the print items for boxing and storage (a commercial storage partner was selected) or for skipping. This process involved simultaneous catalogue amendments, with separate records created for print in storage (linked by storage box ID) and for electronic. Skipped items were hidden from the catalogue view or edited if the impact was only on part of the holdings statement.

Volumes – The key volumes are (1) the numbers of publishers (links to risk assessment, clarifications and negotiation) and (2) the number of print journal titles to be migrated (about 8,000 for UoS).

Actors – The Library (initiating and managing the end-to-end process), UKRR, publishers, agents, and the commercial storage provider. The prior consultation involved by students and faculty.

Data involved - Risk register, catalogue records, box identification (labels, bar codes, catalogue link), Ebsco orders database, Link resolver (TDnet)

Workflows – The workflow is critical and must be designed in advance integrating the steps including (listed in order) target identification, risk assessment, acquisition, removal (store or skip), re-shelving other stock, catalogue changes, link resolver changes

Current Examples - UoS noted positive exemplars such as other UKRR pilot partners. However, exemplification of likely pitfalls is more important – especially those arising from ‘organically’ (chaotically) developed publisher practice. For example, at UoS a set of titles had been acquired under a free electronic with print subscription, but it only transpired later following loss of access that post cancellation rights may only be applied to years where the subscription specifically included the electronic version as a paid element.

Motivation – What are the pain points?

What are the current problems - The strategic problems for the library service are principally a combination of pressure to free space and customer expectation of e-access, especially in STEM subjects and those involving off-site placement (such as nursing).

There is a further set of tactical problems when enacting a move to e-only, which will be exacerbated if the move is undertaken incrementally. These relate to title-by-title enquiries about cost and risk, current coverage, post-cancellation rights, UKRR coverage. The UoS approach indicates that a publisher-by-publisher approach is much more optimal, especially if underpinned by strategic approval.

Efficiency assessment – UoS notes changes in staffing profile in the periodicals department - smaller (less process) but more senior (specialist expertise)

Economy assessment – UoS has been able to secure better deals, which compensate for the addition of VAT, and sometimes to get more for the money.

Effectiveness assessment – User benefits are noted, including convenience of access, especially for STEM academics. This also assists in the direction of travel in teaching and learning and in developing C21 information skills. However the user and the library service are more exposed when things go wrong; it does generate more calls to the IT help desk, but it is not a major pain point.

Intended Benefits – What is the business case?

Library Service – For most libraries, movement towards e-only is mission critical because it is at the heart of two key agendas – cost saving and user satisfaction. The realization of these benefits seems however to be impeded by the up front operational challenges.

Users – The UoS consultation and rollout experience suggests that both students and academics will be supportive. The move to e-only directly addresses expectations in STEM subjects and for off-site learners.

Suppliers – Publishers will see benefits in agreeing e-access as part of securing long term patterns of business. The proposed shared service element would save them repeated effort by streamlining and coordinating the knowledge needed to move to electronic.

Consequences of doing it 'above campus'

What will happen? – The Risk Register and related publisher and title / series intelligence relating to transition would become part of the shared service's extended Knowledge Base (aka KB+). All this information relates to 'back tracking entitlement' and much is likely to be in common across the UK sector.

The risk register would be researched and maintained by the shared service on behalf of the participants. Further intelligence and practice could be submitted by institutions as it arises (i.e. Crowd sourced). Whilst not every library would treat the intelligence in the same way, the appropriate subset would form the basis for decision making that took months to prepare on the case of UoS.

Potential Risks – Three risks are identified

- Error – The provider gets something wrong. This will happen but errors will typically be resolved during the downstream process leading to rectification of the KB; the key will be 'good enough' underpinned by a transparent methodology
- Insignificance – The coverage is not comprehensive. It will be essential over time to cover the range of publishers and titles; the order will to some extent be determined 'just in time' in response to demand
- Duplication – The Suncat service already / potentially covers some of this KB+ ground and this UC could certainly add value to its core mission of providing and standardizing records and recording coverage. There is a case for Suncat being 'integrated' (whatever that may mean) within the shared service KB+.

Potential Opportunities – Whilst emphasizing the importance of quality assured intelligence, there will be opportunity to crowd source improvements to the risk register and the licensing knowledge base from every participating library. It would also be logical to integrate these shared developments with the knowledge and practices arising from the PEPRS and PECAN projects – such a shared knowledge base would represent a highly valued centre of expertise in access to scholarly publications.

Consequences of not doing it – The alternative is for each university to work through the same risk register for the same publishers and titles with the same pitfalls. That is a war of attrition when time is of the essence. The consequences are therefore serious – one assumes that some will take a very long time.

Implementation Pointers – Things to take in to account

Mechanism – This would add further data to the Knowledge Base Plus described in other Use Cases (e.g. Royal Holloway).

Inputs & Outputs – The managed service operator would take overall responsibility investigation and recording of Risk Register information against publishers and titles. The service users would have opportunity to add their knowledge and experiences (crowd sourcing information and practice as it emerges and evolves).

Standards & Protocols – There are no special standards or protocols involved. However, industry standards for such as bar coding are key to managing boxes of stock in storage.

Existing systems – Local site systems will remain the key to local print records – whether skipped, in store or on the shelves. The shared service would provide the knowledge to assist in decision making and also the new ERM records.

Staffing – The transition process requires strong leadership and intensive rostering of teams when the physical change is taking place. The shared service will however take the considerable pressure off the time consuming investigative workflows.

Challenges & Costs

Set Up & Transition - The major challenges are in the decision-making process leading up to the resulting to acquisitions and reorganization. These incur considerable skills and time – therefore high indirect costs - and can be addressed by the shared service.

Ongoing - New direct costs arise principally from storage commitments, though there may be additional licensing costs where there is opportunity to extend back files coverage.