ERM Use Case – Manage Subscription Workflows

This crosscutting use case was developed with the University of Huddersfield (7 February 2011)

Generic Description – UC19 – Manage subscription workflows
The library wishes to inform the decision-making processes underlying the subscription and platform lifecycle relating to journals and to e-resources more broadly. In order to do this the library team gathers and shares intelligence and evaluation data at key stages. The checklists involved inform multiple workflows.

Use Case Description – What happens?

Activity – As set out in UC19 (above), this activity is about the definition and deployment of checklists to ensure that the necessary information is collected to manage the subscription lifecycle. This data is collected by and supports decisions involving a significant body of library and faculty colleagues. It is assembled from diverse sources, including previous experience, and is often not reliably or readily available from the expected players in the supply chain (i.e. publishers, subscription agents). Similar and often identical data is collected in all HE and many FE institutions.

Huddersfield examples of checklists specific to different Use Case processes (i.e. workflows) are appended to this document:
- UC1 - Selection of a new e-journal
- UC2 - Trial of a new e-journal
- UC7 - Renewal of a e-journal subscription
- UC8 - Cancellation of a journal title
- UC13 - Publisher changes platform

Volumes – As illustrated in the appended examples, multiple data items are involved in a range of workflows relating to core subscription entities (e.g. Publisher, Package, Platform, Title, License). Whilst less important for existing subscriptions (until events such as cancellation or platform changes crop up), the volumes are still significant.

Actors – This involves anyone who is involved in data collection and decision-making around the subscription / electronic resource lifecycle: library acquisition, collection management and academic support teams, faculty members, publishers, subscription agents

Data involved – Each data item will be related to a core Knowledge Base entity (e.g. Publisher, Package, Platform, Title, License). Whilst some will be institution specific, much of this data is common and need only be collected once only across the sector. It is arguable the rigid application of FRBR is not essential.

Workflows – Most processes (aka workflows) involved in ERM (and also in the management of print subscriptions in the current hybrid environment) involve the collection and validation of checklist data that will either determine

a decision automatically (e.g. based on local policy) or will support a human mediated decision (e.g. based on consultation with faculty). The workflows involve collection of this data, which informs decisions and generates alerts. The workflows are rarely linear at a granular level and therefore a checklist-like application will be more useful than a highly automated and constrained decision tree.

Current Examples - Huddersfield has modeled a number of Use Cases, which illustrate the significance of this data in informing or triggering workflows (see Appendix to this Use Case). Similar checklists were identified elsewhere around other workflows; for example, by Southampton re- Risk Assessment.

Motivation – What are the pain points?

What are the current problems - There is a range of decision support data that needs to be collected from multiple sources at various stages in the subscription lifecycle. This is considerably more complex for e-resources (for databases and e-journals and also for e-book platforms) than for print resources. The data collection tasks and decisions involve workflows between a number of library and faculty teams.

Efficiency assessment – The data needs to be collected, exchanged and acted upon in an efficient and timely manner

Economy assessment – More cost effective decisions might get made, but the real cost benefit lies in effort saved

Effectiveness assessment – Asking the right questions ahead at the selection, trial and licensing stages will mean that resources will be more useful to the range of users (e.g. in the VLE, for overseas users, for franchises)

Intended Benefits – What is the business case?

Library Service – Saved time and effort; better dialogue with faculties; less problems for users; staff resources can be re-deployed to other areas, e.g. maintenance of the knowledge base, access issues

Users – More timely responses to resource requests involving faculties and service issues for any user

Suppliers – Better structured and organised data means less need to keep returning to the same questions; even better if it is shared across a consortium

Consequences of doing it 'above campus'

What will happen? – The above-campus platform will provide a configurable and structured place to record the necessary data at institution level against key entities (i.e. title, package, platform, publisher). Such data will optionally (ideally) be sharable across the institutions using the service. The data items will be linked to site defined checklists (see appended examples from initial

analysis at Huddersfield). Processes will be driven by the underlying messaging / alerting / calendar services.

Potential Risks – There are local risks relating to working practice, notably that some individuals do not respond to the electronic alerts. There are risks in the wider system relating to the veracity of information originated elsewhere (for example, feedback from a poorly planned platform trial); it is however suggested that an organization such as JISC Collections should be involved in the verification of critical data such as license terms (e.g. Use in VLE).

Potential Opportunities – The opportunities to complete publisher, platform and package level checklists once only across the service participants (e.g. UK wide) are highly significant. At the local level, there is also opportunity to involve academics more efficiently in decision making, by evidencing responses elsewhere and by enabling them to add to the wider 'knowledge base'.

Consequences of not doing it – The data will continue to be collected locally through a range of database, spreadsheet, email and paper-based methods. The decisions will get made. However, for each institution to do this job is wasteful, for each to build their own application is even worse.

Implementation Pointers – Things to take in to account

Mechanism – Implementation will require a data model linked to the Knowledge Base (aka KB Plus), configurable web forms for data entry and review, alerting mechanisms, query and reporting interface, levels of security (some data will be private to the originating institution).

Inputs & Outputs – Data is input in to checklists (ideally taking advantage of previous entries by others); the output is that the data informs decisions and also management reporting (e.g. Resources not available to franchises, platforms not meeting accessibility criteria).

Standards & Protocols – The data model should be tightly integrated with the key Knowledge Base entities. Implementation should take account of standard alerting mechanisms including calendars, email and perhaps such as SMS and Twitter.

Existing systems – The key current system will be the Knowledge Base. This type of application will replace some local spreadsheets and databases.

Staffing – This will require new disciplines not new skills. It will be essential for someone to take responsibility for defining checklists, which should take advantage of data items commonly used across institutions. The checklists should be defined to fit operational roles and processes, not necessarily in their current configuration.

Challenges & Costs – Direct and indirect

Set up and Transition – The biggest challenge will be determining the data items (fields) required for each workflow, which will involve local reflection on

practice. Transition is likely to be relatively simple because there is a dearth of established systems or integration to unpick.

Ongoing – Configurability will be the test, including the addition of new fields, creation and revision of checklists, control of data sharing permissions; if such things are readily achievable, the ongoing costs are expected to be low.

Appendix – Use Case related checklists from the University of Hudersfield workflow analysis

Huddersfield examples of checklists specific to different Use Case processes (i.e. workflows) are appended here. The indicative workflow diagrams, of which these form a part, are also provided on the project website.

- UC1 - Selection of a new e-journal
- UC2 - Trial of a new e-journal
- UC7 - Renewal of a e-journal subscription
- UC8 - Cancellation of a journal title
- UC13 - Publisher changes platform

UC1 - Selection of a new e-journal

Evaluation
- Trial available?
- Impact factor
- Peer reviewed
- Indexed on Summon
- On Serials Solutions Knowledgebase
- Start date
- Cancellation policy
- Pricing
- Accessibility (disabled users)
- Published in/editors

UC2 – Trial of a new e-journal – (a) pre-trial

Evaluation
 Impact factors
Peer reviewed
Indexed in Summon
On Serials Solutions Knowledgebase
Cancellation policy
Pricing
Accessibility (disabled users)
Published in/editors
Licensing conditions
Post cancellation access
Usage stats
Authentication (for trial and if subscribe)

UC2 – Trial of a new e-journal – (b) post-trial

Evaluation
Usage
Suitability of content
Suitability of platform
Any access queries?
Feedback

Send details to the Librarian

UC7 – Renewal of e-journal subscription - (a) Individual title

Intelligence Gathering
•Renewal date
•Usage
•Access queries
•Published in/editors
•License changes
•% price increase
•Currency exchange rate
•Cancellation policy

Highlight any areas of concern
•

UC7 – Renewal of e-journal subscription - (b) Package

Intelligence Gathering
- Renewal date
- Usage
- Access queries
- Published in/editors
- License changes
- Pricing model
- % price increase
- Currency exchange rate
- Transferred/added titles
- Coverage changes
- Cancellation policy
-

Highlight any areas of concern

UC8 - Cancellation of a journal title

De-Selection Criteria
- No longer supporting a course?
- Not required for research
- High % price increase
- Low impact factor
- Adverse changes to license
- High cost usage
- Significant number of access queries
- Post cancellation access permitted

UC13 – Publisher changes platform – 3 steps

Intelligence Gathering
Beta version to test?
Platforms running in parallel?
Options for change over date?

Evaluation
Gather technical details i.e. URL, authentication, titles lost
Download list of titles/content can currently access

Evaluation
Queries
Problems that may influence