ERM Use Case - "Cancellation of a journal title"

Developed with the University of Westminster (23 February 2011)

Generic Description – UC8 - 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 of the title impacts on any 'total spend' (or other) agreements with supplier.

1 – Use Case Description – What happens?

Activity – As with University of Warwick and University of Salford the cancellation process can generally be split into a 'selection' phase and then 'cancellation' of those titles selected.

Lists of journal titles are created for a 'cancellation review'. These are drawn up by the Collection Management team, and are informed by knowledge of those titles that are elligible for cancellation. These lists are given to the Academic Liaison Librarians (ALLs) who consult with academic staff on those titles that can be cancelled. ALLs are asked to return agree lists for cancellation to the Collection Management team, then cancellations are enacted by relevant Collections Assistant. This basic process is carried out annually. Additionally every 3-5 years a more thorough review will be carried out during which qualitative information regarding journal titles is collected from academic staff using a questionnaire and voting.

While the 'review' process is an annual occurrence, it is important to note that the process of cancelling a title can also occur when a publisher ceases to publish a title, or when a cancellation is forced on the library through unexpected circumstances (e.g. a significant and unaffordable price rise for a specific title). This type of occurrence shortcuts the usual 'selection' process.

The process of 'cancellation' includes a number of updates to local records/systems which are also covered in this use case.

Volumes – Potential cancellations are identified annually, and a more detailed review is carried out every 3-5 years. However, much of the 'cancellation' process from the perspective of the e-services team is identical to the cessation of publication of a title, which is a regular occurrence.

For some parts of the process small numbers of titles may make up a disproportionate amount of the work. For example, most large academic publishers are able to supply usage statistics in a standards compliant manner, while gathering evidence from smaller publishers can be much more difficult, so obtaining usage data for journal titles from smaller publishers may take up a disproportionate amount of time.

Actors – Academics staff; Academic Liaison Librarians (ALLs); Collection Management; Agents/Suppliers

Data involved – Cost; usage; voting; ALL input; cancellation dates; post cancellation access

Workflows – For the 'cancellation review' process the workflow is:

- Draw up lists of titles eligible for review (Collections Management)
- Circulate lists to ALLs (Collections Management)
- Discuss cancellations with academic staff. Last year this included a voting process referred to as 'Sussex Survey' in which academic staff could distribute 100 votes to titles on the list - although the response was patchy (ALLs)
- Provide lists of titles for cancellation to Collections Management (ALLs)
- Check titles on final list are eligible for cancellation (Collections Management)
- Enact cancellation (Collections Management)

The actual 'cancellation' process (also applies to journal titles which have ceased publication):
- Contact agent/supplier to notify of cancellation (for ceased publication titles, the reverse occurs as the agent/supplier notifies the library)
- Inform relevant library teams/staff that the cancellation is happening. This happens through a number of mechanisms:
  - Lists (printed)
  - Notes on Aleph (the LMS)
  - Emails to those responsible for updating either print holdings (on the LMS) or electronic holdings (in the link resolver) (Collections Management team and Metadata Librarians)
  - The 'master list' spreadsheets which hold details of e-journal subscriptions (past and present) will be updated by the Collections Management team.
  - Forms (there are 'cancellation forms' for both electronic and print cancellations which provide the relevant information and can be circulated to relevant staff, however these are not used in all cases due to varying working practices between campuses/staff
- The point at which information is updated in systems may be significantly removed in time from the point at which a cancellation decision is made
- In some cases Collections Assistants check access once the cancellation has been enacted to ensure that the correct post-cancellation access is now being granted. It may be that records on the LMS/Link Resolver are not updated until a supplier has changed the access rights (which may be well after the notional 'cancellation date')

Current Examples – The most recent review provides many examples of the cancellation workflow

2 – Motivation – What are the pain points?

What are the current problems – Establishing when a subscription is ceasing and establishing rights to ongoing access and checking that this is being fulfilled is problematic. There can be lots of conflicting information. The whole process is both time consuming and relies on 2 key staff (the Collections Assistants) and their ability to work efficiently and accurately.

Efficiency assessment – During cancellation reviews, creating cancellation lists for review, and working with ALLs to agree cancellations is extremely time consuming. When a cancellation is enacted, the number of pieces of information that need to be collected, the number of systems that need to be checked and updated and the communication with agents/suppliers takes up staff time, as does checking that the correct access has been granted post-cancellation.

Economy assessment - Better efficiency would reduce costs. In the case of cessation of publication there may be a small amount of money to be saved by ensuring that any outstanding amounts already paid for a ceased title are recouped by the library (from the supplier).

Effectiveness assessment - An improved process in establishing titles for cancellation and ensuring all relevant titles are cancelled could lead to more appropriate collection profile as needs of institution change, through effective cancellation of unused/unwanted titles and ordering of titles on wishlist. This could provide economic gains if cancellations not replaced from wishlist; Note that print subscriptions are a big part of this area because the print collection often reflects 'core' titles (i.e. those that directly relate to spend on a collection). Improved processes in this area could help ensure that all titles are moved to e-only where appropriate.

3 – Intended Benefits – What is the business case?

Library Service – Efficiency; Save money (via retrieving subscriptions in the case of title cessation)

Users – Users stand to benefit from an improved collection and accuracy of holdings in the LMS/Link Resolver

Suppliers – Perhaps the key gain for suppliers is better customer relations, especially if more accurate information available from them. Subscriptions agents part in the process is minimal, so unlikely to deliver much in the way of savings to them. There may be some time saving delivered to publishers if transition from subscription to post-cancellation access was both clearer and better communicated as it would result in fewer institutions contacting them for this information.

4 – Consequences of doing it 'above campus'

The proposition – Centralised service provides place to records and access information to information cancellation decisions - e.g. holdings for title in other institutions, local qualitative and quantitative information. Centralised service also provides share knowledge on post cancellation (e.g. 'retain access to holdings covered by subscription period). Centralised service offers mediation with publisher over what access there is (checking cancellation has taken effect and correct post-cancellation access being supplied).

What will happen? - Libraries able to make better decisions on cancellations based on wide range of information supported by central service. Library saves time and money, publishers save time and money, efficient resource sharing across the sector (reduction of unnecessary duplication across institutions), Publishers assured that libraries not getting more (or less) post-cancellation access than agreed.

Potential Risks – Cancellation workflows and post-cancellation agreements vary too much across institutions to provide effective centralised service and shared data.

Potential Opportunities – Cross-institutional and cross-sectoral decision making on collection management ensuring that unnecessary duplication of subscription is reduced across the UK (public and academic sectors and national libraries)

Consequences of not doing it – Libraries and publishers continue to expend unnecessary effort; Libraries unable to make best use of materials budgets

5 – Implementation Pointers

Mechanism – Shared data allows for provision of Authoritative, Consistent, Robust and Reliable data at a single point. Local decision making and workflows use this centralised information either for querying or for direct import into local systems.

Inputs & Outputs – Inputs would be: quantitative and qualitative information to support cancellation decision making; details post-cancellation access (common agreements and local specifics); access to change of publisher to enable libraries to answer the questions outlined in the 'Workflows' above. Outputs would relate to ability to download data for updating local systems where necessary. Depending on demand this could include MARC records for the catalogue and reminders for action in ical format among other data.

Standards & Protocols – SUSHI and COUNTER are the relevant standards relating to collecting usage data (quantitative). At Westminster they also use the 'e-measures' developed by Angela Conyers of EvidenceBase for SCONUL (http://www.ebase.bcu.ac.uk/emeasures/sconul.htm).

Existing systems – There is no single system; this process draws on a variety of external and internal systems, but not in an integrated manner:
      Spreadsheets (Master lists and cancellation lists circulated to ALLs)
      LMS (for updates post cancellation)
      LinkResolver (for updates post cancellation)
      Forms (for workflow)
      Email (for workflow)

Staffing - No extra local staffing, aim to reduce local staffing (or staff time) spent collecting data (e.g. usage statistics) and checking correct access is made available post-cancellation. Also an opportunity to standardise cancellation workflow (once titles for cancellation agreed) and reduce dependence on specific staff with specialist knowledge. Local effort would be focussed on the collection management aspects of canceling (and subscribing to, where funds available) the most appropriate titles to fit the needs of the institution.

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.