

Transition to Consortium Subscription

A library decides to move from an institutional subscription to a resource (via an agent, or directly with the supplier) to a consortium subscription. They need to ensure that the consortium license meets their requirements and transfer their subscription to the consortium, recording all necessary details.

In the case of the SHEDL (Scottish Higher Education Digital Library) consortium and its members, the process of moving from direct supply of an e-resource through to consortium supply involves three processes. These processes are: Planning (deciding which titles or publishers to transition), Negotiation (engaging with the suppliers to arrange the terms of the new subscription), and Enactment (cancelling the local subscription, setting up the new subscription).

This SUM addresses only part of this with software. That is, that license information can be applied to e-resource information. How that license information is obtained is largely out of scope, although for completeness some detail is provided to provide context.

Problem description

Libraries are running out of space in which to store resources, and are also required to deliver resources to off-campus users. These pressures have increased in magnitude over time, and many libraries are transitioning their existing print subscriptions into “e-only”. Transition to e-only is widespread (all libraries are facing issues with lack of space), and in many cases the same resources are being transitioned in many different libraries – which is a huge duplication of effort.

A consortium based approach has the potential to reduce the amount of duplicated effort; rather than each consortium member individually transitioning the same title to e-only, the consortium can arrange the subscription for all members of the consortium.

There is an added advantage in that consortium members will get access to new content. This would be particularly true for smaller institutions, which perhaps have more limited budgets. In such cases, larger institutions foot more of the bill for resources; and thus smaller institutions spend the same amount of money (or less), but gain access to a wider range of resources. This does create something of a dependency on the larger institutions, and potentially these organizations could try to leverage their buying power and “bully” the smaller organizations. That said, any consortium effort is trust based.

Goal

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The SHEDL model shows that organising licenses “above campus” can and does work. Benefits have been reported which include direct savings in staff time coupled with increased access to resources via the consortium. Staff time is saved because there is much less time spent on negotiating local deals and licenses. Additionally, the institution may experience direct cost savings on a per use basis.

It should be noted that the consortium model does create some new issues. Some internal work is required to update local records to reflect the transition to the consortium model; effort is required from the library staff to compile information on subscriptions and costs, with no guarantee that the consortium negotiators will be able to make a deal; and negotiating takes time, and the library has to freeze all activity with the publisher during negotiations.

It is proposed that an above campus service knowledge base be created which contains license information for resources. This information will include formal detail, as well as more informal “allowed uses” or “notes” in a format that can be understood by individuals outside of the legal profession.

It is proposed that the license information be entered and maintained by an above campus service provider (e.g. JISC Collections, SHEDL, etc). Whilst this SUM considers the knowledge base from solely a licensing perspective, it would be envisaged that such a knowledge base would contain more than just licensing information. Licensing is but one part of the story when it comes to e-resources; such a knowledge base would need to be designed to address the other issues of effort duplication in the sector (e.g. usage information, link resolution, sales order processing).

Use case (Business Process Modelling)

Actors:

Library staff:

- Represent the institution to the consortium.
- Work with academics and senior staff at the institution to identify the e-resource needs (e.g. which e-resources, VLE access, post cancellation rights).
- Supply lists of publishers to the consortium for consideration.
- Supply lists of subscription titles and subscription values to the consortium negotiators.
- Confirm commitment to consortium based on current subscription levels, prior to negotiations.

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- Hold local subscriptions, cancellations and new purchases whilst consortium negotiations are underway.
- Where negotiations are successful, handle the local transition (e.g. pay share of consortium subscription, cancel local subscription, update access information).

Licensing Service Staff:

- Represent the consortium to the institutional members, and also to the publishers in negotiations.
- Create shortlists of publishers to open negotiations with.
- Negotiate consortium wide deals with publishers for specific titles.
- Apply a standard pricing formula for subscriptions, and pass on individual costs to the consortium members.
- Update and maintain license information in the central service knowledge base.

Publishers:

- Negotiate access, price and licensing terms with the consortium.

Business Objects:

License Data – this data covers the license agreements between the publisher and the consortium. The data consists of two parts – the formal license (described in ONIX-PL), and a more informal statement of “allowed uses” which describe in plain English the scenarios in which the e-resource can be used (for example, from a VLE, offshore etc).

Resource Data – this data covers the e-resource itself, allowing the license data to be linked to particular e-resource or set of resources.

Processes:

Identify Negotiation Targets

This process is concerned with the determination of the publishers that the consortium wishes to negotiate with.

- Library staff consult academic staff and others to determine the journals that they wish to transition to e-only as part of the consortium.
- Library staff pass on the consultation information to the consortium.
- Consortium staff create a shortlist of publishers based on the consultation information received from the members. The shortlist is returned to all of the members.
- Each institution confirms their commitment to the consortium at their current subscription level.

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- Each institution supplies list of current subscription titles and the values of those subscriptions (for those publishers which have been shortlisted).

Negotiate with Publishers

- The consortium staff advises all members to freeze all current subscriptions, cancellations and new purchases for the duration of the negotiations.
- Negotiations commence with the publishers. Typically, the negotiators need to offer fixed term (e.g. three year) deals to the publishers. In return for cheaper access to the resource, the publisher has guaranteed income for the fixed term, and does not incur sales costs.
- Negotiations can succeed or fail. Where negotiations fail, members are so advised and thus will need to unfreeze current subscriptions or cancellations.

Transition

- The consortium staff update the knowledge base with the new subscription / licence information.
- The consortium staff apply the pricing model and advise the members of their contribution towards the total cost.
- Library staff need to alter access details, arrange the financial side and undertake any other required activities to facilitate the move from local to consortium based subscription. Not least the old subscription needs to be cancelled and the new consortium based one commenced.

Functionality

In terms of a software system, “all” that is proposed is that consortium staff can aggregate license data with e-resource data. The license data is finalised at the end of the negotiation process; it is added to the knowledge base as part of transition. How the license data is obtained is largely the result of a manual process (talking with members and publishers). The other business processes are not examined here, but are included in the diagram to provide context.

Note: Software could support the identification and negotiation processes (CRM software might be appropriate).

Note: the license data can only be modified by the consortium staff.

Create (Add)

An add request needs to be made to the central knowledge base. The Add request contains:

- The resource business object, as defined in the BPM section.

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- The license business object, as defined in the BPM section.
- Authentication details of the consortium staff.

Behaviour:

1. The request is validated to ensure that it comes from consortium staff.
2. If the resource business object does not exist, then it is created in the database.
3. If license data exists for this resource, then the request is rejected.
4. Otherwise, the license data business object is added to the database.

Update(Replace)

An update request needs to be made to the central knowledge base.

The update request contains:

- The license business object, as defined in the BPM section.
- An identifier for the resource business object, as defined in the BPM section.
- The authentication details of the institution.

Behaviour:

1. The request is validated to ensure that it comes from consortium staff.
2. If the resource does not exist in the database, then the request is rejected.
3. If the license data does not exist in the database for the indicated resource, then the request is rejected.
4. The existing license data is updated to reflect the changes in the supplied license data.

Examine License Data (Read)

A read request is made to the central knowledge base. The service responds by returning the license data for the subscribed resources.

Note: It is assumed that a software system will only address the needs of one consortium, rather than several consortia. In the case of the latter, this function would need to filter results such that a particular library only saw the subscription data for its own consortium.

Behaviour:

- The license data for all subscriptions is returned to the requester

Service arrangement

Create

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Description: this function needs to validate that a request to create new agreement data has come from a consortium staff. If so, and if the license data does not exist, it is created on the system.

Orchestration:

- Call Authenticate
- Call Add (Resource)
- Call Add (License)

Service Name: Authenticate

Actions:

- The central knowledge base needs to satisfy itself that the request received has come from consortium staff. The model is silent on how this is achieved.
- If the request fails authentication, the request should be rejected.

Service Name: Add (resource)

Target Data Source: Resource database

Target Business Object: Resource data

Actions:

- If the resource data does not exist in the database, then the resource needs to be added.

Service Name: Add (license)

Target Data Source: License database

Target Business Object: License data

Actions:

- If the License data already exists in the database, then the request should be rejected.
- Otherwise, the License data is added, and then associated with the relevant resource.

Update

Description: this function needs to validate that a request to create new agreement data has come from consortium staff. If so, and if the license data exists on the system, it is updated.

Orchestration:

- Call Authenticate
- Call Read
- Call Replace

Service Name: Authenticate

Actions:

- The central knowledge base needs to satisfy itself that the request received has come from consortium staff. The model is silent on how this is achieved.

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- If the request fails authentication, the request should be rejected.

Service Name: Read

Target Data Source: Resource database

Target Business Object: Resource data

Actions:

- If Resource data does not exist in the database, then this request should be rejected.

Service Name: Replace

Target Data Source: License database

Target Business Object: License data

Actions:

- If license data does not exist in the license database, then this request should be rejected.
- Modify the values of the existing license data in the database.

Maintain License Data (Read)

Description: this function needs to return all license data for all subscriptions.

Orchestration:

- Call Read

Service Name: Read

Target Data Source: License database

Target Business Object: License data

Actions:

- The system returns all license data objects.

SUM diagram

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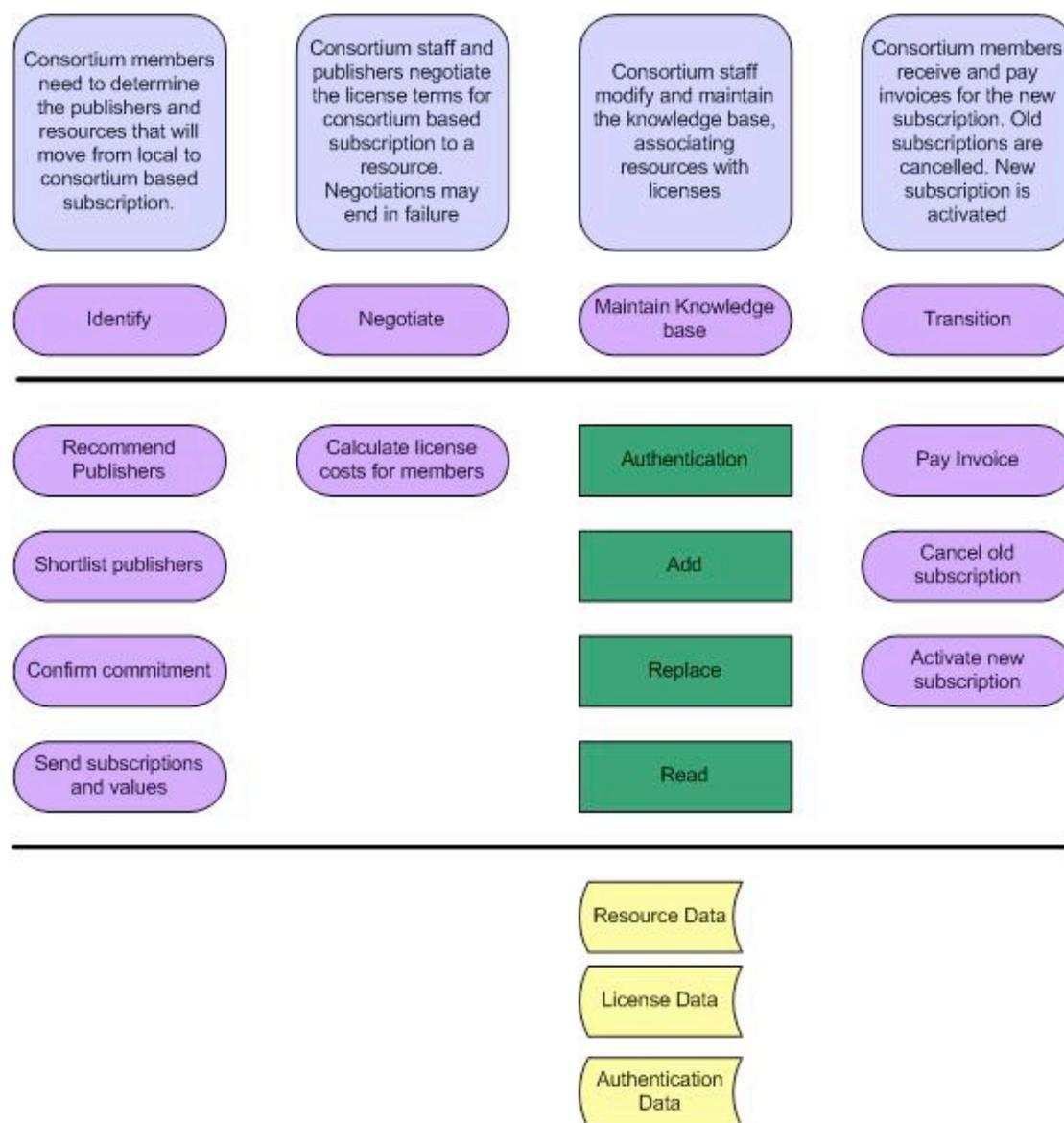


Figure 1: Transition to Consortium SUM