

Electronic journal management systems: Experiences from the field.

Gary Ives (Ed.). New York: Haworth Information Press, 2005. 157p.

ISBN 0789025965 (pbk).

Price: US\$29.95

Simultaneously published as *The Serials Librarian*, v.47, no.4, 2005.

This indexed monograph consists of twelve chapters all introduced by useful summaries and keywords. Most chapters include a bibliography. Although the authors all work in the libraries of academic institutions in the United States of America, this volume deals with solutions to a scenario common to libraries worldwide.

The fairly recent proliferation of journal titles that are available electronically has forced librarians to seek ways to facilitate access to the content for library users and, in the back office, to manage the subscriptions of electronic resources. The solutions discussed range from the in-house creation of an A to Z electronic journals list, to the sophisticated electronic resources management (ERM) systems currently under development.

Robert Alan (Pennsylvania State University) identifies that the acquisitions modules of "[i]ntegrated library management systems do not support the unique complexities of electronic resource management." This view is supported by librarians from Montana State University, Susan P. Marshall and Jodee L. Kawasaki. For example, acquisitions modules cannot handle the filing of electronic resource licenses and they do not make it easy to track costs and the bundling details often associated with electronic resource subscriptions. Marshall and Kawasaki suggest that due to the extent of the constant change associated with electronic resource subscriptions, the question to ask of commercial ERM products "is not 'Can the system right out of the box track data in the way the library needs it to be tracked?', but rather 'Does the system have the flexibility built into it so that it can be adjusted to meet the tracking needs of each library?'"

One of the solutions to providing access to electronic journal content for library users is through the use of a hyperlinked alphabetical list of titles. TDNet, EBSCO A to Z, SerialsSolutions and SFX are four of the commercial options available to produce this. The reasons for different libraries choosing different products are discussed over several chapters. For example, in 2001 TDNet was chosen at Boise State University as it offered the widest range of services at the time. Back then TDNet's competitor's did not offer statistical information regarding usage and were not able to easily integrate local journal holdings in a variety of formats into one comprehensive journal list. At the Pennsylvania State University of Medicine Library it was decided to use EBSCO A-to-Z to provide a list of journals. One of the reasons for choosing EBSCO was that, as the library used EBSCO to supply journal subscriptions, the knowledge of journal holdings was already available for the implementation of the A to Z service. In another chapter, Gary Ives describes the transition at Texas A & M University Libraries from using a manual SQL database for managing electronic collections, to using Serials Solutions, and then to SFX to produce the list of electronic journals.

The electronic resource management (ERM) module of Innovative Interfaces Inc (III) Millennium system is discussed in a few chapters, from development and beta testing to implementation. On the other hand, at the University of Southern California it was decided not to use a commercially available product, but to develop an in-house ERM as this allowed complete customisation of the functionality of the system to meet the Libraries' needs. As there was a Web programmer on the staff the required skills were readily available.

The final chapter, *Beginning to see the light: Developing a discourse for electronic resource management*, is a very stimulating paper by Jill Emery, Director of the Electronic Resources Program at the University of Houston Libraries. In it she identifies five components of the electronic resources management process: acquisition; access provision; administration; service provision; evaluation/monitoring of access. She writes that these components "all require an interweaving of three basic business processes or systems management: transactional processes, knowledge management, and decision-support processes." Although the management of electronic resources may always entail the same five basic processes, they do not always "fit together" in the same way. This has made it difficult to design ERM tools, as they need to be able to "perform transaction processing, house needed knowledge management elements, and provide room for decision support mechanisms."

The papers in this compilation form a very useful discussion around issues of electronic resource management, illustrating the complexities of the field.

80

Reviewed by: Caroline E Dean, Electronic Resources Librarian, Collections Development Department, University of Cape Town Libraries

Tel. +27 (21) 650 3701

Email: *caroline@UCTLIB.uct.ac.za*