

## **Sharing an ERMS for an efficient management of electronic resources metadata**

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### **Introduction**

This presentation deals with a French project conducted by Couperin, the French academic library consortium. Emilie Barthelet, a librarian in charge of Couperin's Technical and Prospective department and Kareen Louembé, from the University Library of Lyon 2, coordinate this project. The purpose of this project is to share an ERMS (Electronic Resource Management System) for an efficient management of electronic resources metadata within the consortium.

Couperin is a non-profit organization gathering 206 volunteer academic libraries, making it one of the largest consortia in Europe. Couperin is negotiating e-resources for its members. The cost of those resources is then shared between participating libraries. Last but not least, one of Couperin's missions is to help its members to provide a good service to end-users by expertising technical issues.

This project aims primarily to enable Couperin's members to:

- manage e-resources life-cycle and metadata,
- analyse overlapping collections,
- gather e-resources usage statistics.

Equally important for Couperin is to launch this project in order to:

- better manage negotiations
- store and share e-resources and negotiations metadata with its members,
- better identify its member's collections.

### **A brief French acquisition environment overview.**

French academic libraries own small or medium sized collections. On average, collections of e-journals in French academic libraries contain nearly 7 000 titles and rely on 15 databases. Couperin is considered as a national consortium as it encompasses all public universities as well as many research institutions in France. It must be said, however, that some regional and local groups perform within Couperin, but also outside it.

French institutions, may belong to Couperin, an organization supported by ABES in the licensing process, yet they may also be part of the PRHE (Pole for Research in Higher Education), also connected with Couperin, or the RDU (Regional Digital Universities) as well as of other local groups.

All those groups are based on an opt-in model getting their funding from the academic institutions themselves. The function of ABES (The Bibliographical Agency of Higher Education) is to assist Couperin in dealing with financial and administrative matters. ABES is funded by the French Ministry of Higher Education.

How do French academic libraries currently manage their electronic resources?

In fact, only three libraries are equipped with ERMS today. INIST (The National Institute of Scientific and Technical Information, from the National Centre of Scientific Research), owns the Innovative Interfaces ERMS. The University of Tours library and that of the University Pierre et Marie Curie in Paris are using Verde from Ex-Libris. Apart from those three "pioneers", the vast majority of French academic libraries still use spreadsheets or home-grown databases.

### **The working group**

Couperin is working on the involvement of librarians from member institutions. At the present time, there are only two full-time jobs in the team. As a result, we launched an open working group, back in October 2007, whose role is to:

- define metadata and functional needs,
- evaluate existing ERMS,
- define a scenario meeting those needs.

After one year of hard work, our needs have been defined. With an ERMS, Couperin expects an easier management of negotiations and purchases, an easier management of commercial and Open Access electronic resources, and hopes to be using a central knowledgebase. Besides, Couperin members require an ERMS based on a knowledgebase providing references to materials from French-

speaking publishers as well as a cost-effective tool. In Couperin's view, an ERMS should be able to support yearly provision of indicators too. What is worth remembering, however, is that the needs of Couperin and those of its participating members are convergent.

Those data reinforce the idea of using a common product. Indeed, it seems to be a good way to address the needs of libraries having small collections. Due to the "Big Deals", we may notice, however, that 70% to 80% of descriptive and administrative metadata are similar for both Couperin and its members. Moreover, getting information from 206 members regarding their local negotiations helps Couperin to keep updates and become more efficient in making deals. Finally, sharing and populating a common knowledgebase will enhance the value of the information on French e-resources.

### **The organizational chart**

To find out how to implement such a tool, we first ask ourselves: what does "shared", in a "shared system", mean? First, "shared" means "collaborative". Indeed, many partners own different information, and they use it on various occasions. "Shared" also means "common". Various data populate a unique knowledgebase which, in turn, populates local systems. In fact, an ERMS contains a lot of metadata: bibliographical, licensing, financial, access, administrative and statistic data. All those data feed the central knowledgebase which is accessed by various partners who use it as a "push and pull system". Part of our work was to define the links between partners, data and knowledgebase and define how such a network may operate.

In 2004, DLF ERMI made recommendations regarding ERMS for libraries, but they did not address the consortium issue. Apart from the proper negotiation module, what makes the ERMS for consortia special is the ability of the system to transfer data from one ERMS module to another. This process is called data inheritance. Local ERMS inherit data from the consortial ERMS as the libraries do with their components.

### **What have we achieved with this project?**

The coordination of nearly forty librarians over a period of twenty months has allowed us to provide Couperin with a set of useful metadata and functionalities and to design one demonstration guide. It has also allowed us to provide conclusions to the tests and collect answers from our members and define a book of specifications.

For the demonstration guide, B-on, the Portuguese consortium, provided their support. We adapted their work.

The outcome of a large survey conducted among our members, in November 2008, has shown that the needs expressed by the working group were validated by 128 members. Also 70 member libraries are now interested in taking part in this project.

Above all, our work has shown that there are five key issues that still need to be addressed.

- 1) Commercial ERMS solutions for consortia, are at an early stage of development.
- 2) An economic model has to be chosen.
- 3) We have to deal with legal issues.
- 4) We have to address final technical issues.
- 5) We have to organize the workflows among 70 members, and that is a real challenge.

Some products are on the right track to meet the needs of consortia. All the products we have reviewed, however, do not meet all our needs. Some products do not provide a good public interface, others do not include usage statistics modules, others do not manage well the metadata used for the consortium business. Finally, some products provide a free link resolver whereas some other products do not. Moreover, the question of access, in other words the definition of roles, is a major issue in consortium management, and few existing products are flexible enough for this.

Three economic models have been considered. Acquiring and setting up a commercial ERMS locally is a heavy and expensive thing to do. Financing the development of an Open Source ERMS would take too much time. Therefore, there are three main reasons why we are likely to choose a hosted service which appears as a more flexible solution as it will allow us:

- 1) To face with the changing number of participating members.

- 2) To follow the progressive nature of ERMS for consortia.
- 3) To take advantage of the cost effectiveness of a subscription.

As for legal issues, we have not yet chosen our strategy. Launching a classical tender would be a possibility, but some competing procedures seem to meet our needs in a more appropriate way. Organizing a Public/Private partnership may also be an option. The choice of a legal procedure, however, will rely mostly on the legal analysis of our situation to be performed by a consultant and on the ABES.

Moreover, we have conducted a comprehensive survey of all the available information systems that may communicate with the shared ERMS, namely:

- Information Library Systems; more than five systems are used by the 70 participating members.
- Link resolvers; three of them are present among French academic libraries.
- A to Z type lists; one of them is widely used in French academic libraries.

The interoperability issue raises the question of emerging products such as ERAMS (Electronic Resources Access and Management System), UMS (Universal Management System). ERAMS includes a link resolver and UMS, the acquisition module. It will be a challenge to the providers to ensure efficient interoperability, but we are confident that we will find a mutually beneficial solution.

Last but not least, organizing the workflows among 70 members is quite a challenge for Couperin. We have been able to analyse our situation by reviewing 4 key-elements. First, we are used to working in a traditional national network. Clearly, that is one of our strengths. On the downside; there is a variety of e-resources management organization represented among our members.

We are at the beginning of a new era – the use of ERMS for consortia – and through this, we will have a greater scope for negotiating with providers and that is an opportunity. Finally, the risk is to assume the responsibility of being one of the largest library consortia in Europe using an ERMS for managing e-resources.

## **Conclusion**

All things considered, we have decided to move forward by submitting our requirements and specifications book to a consultant, launching a call for tender or some other legal procedure, and setting up a network of 10 pilot libraries before the final implementation. To conclude, we hope that the libraries committed in this project will be using the Shared ERMS in 2010.