



ANZREG Community Day Feb 2013 Taking the Plunge – Alma Panel Session

Panel

Janette Burke, Director Resources, Monash University Library.

Greg Shute, Circulation & OPAC Modules Librarian, RMIT Library

Debbie Storz, Librarian – Serials & Datasets, Swinburne University Library

Melanie Fitter, Director, Resource Management Professional Services, APAC, Ex Libris.

Moderator: Jenny Quilliam, Manager Information Resources & Technology, University of South Australia Library

Questions & Responses

1(a) What benefits did your institution identify prior to becoming an early adopter, and have these benefits been realised?

Janette Burke, Monash

Strategic benefits building capability; improving access to collections; improving management of print and electronic resources; providing a robust, reliable and stable infrastructure; building staff agility to work productively in a changing environment; exploration of a single enterprise model for all campuses; improved management of eformats; reduce workflow silos in resources department

project benefits: opportunity to improve internal business processes; improve interface with primo; contribute to and maintain awareness of the ongoing development of ALMA through IGLu and Eluna; opportunity for staff to develop and lead a training program and become ALMA expert users. As yet we have not implemented ALMA so have not yet realized all benefits.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

We identified Electronic resources as becoming a larger part of our collection and we wanted to have a system that can incorporate both print and electronic.

Benefits – working with a product in development we wanted the opportunity to work closely with the vendor to bring attention to the needs we had for a URM. Many of our processes were being managed by external sources, wikis, work arounds etc.

Greg Shute, RMIT

RMIT chose Alma because Ex Libris:

- has shown long term commitment to development
- has a willingness to involve customers in development of applications
- no other vendor has shown these characteristics ;
- from literature searches it appears no other vendor has thought about or is developing a similar product
- move off local servers in RMIT environment to a fully hosted environment
- reduce reliance upon local centralised IT resources
- reduce operational costs : hardware software staffing
- moving to a fully integrated system – not individual systems
- too early to say whether these benefits are realised, ask us in 6-12 months

1(b) How responsive has Ex Libris been to your institution as an early adopter?

Janette Burke, Monash

Extremely responsive and have answered numerous questions from Monash on a weekly basis.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

First (Aleph library) in our region to use Alma – the system is very ‘immature,’ with few customers and we’re different from existing customers. There are a lot of SI’s for us and it’s important to keep up with for us and them. SI’s are mostly bugs and configuration. We don’t yet understand and we are not certified in configuration. There are some that cannot be fixed – so we are looking at enhancements
ExLibris being responsive - we have examples of items in Alma being changed after we lodged an SI or a Jira request to Melanie.

Greg Shute, RMIT

- RMIT hoped that early adopters would be in a position to influence new developments in a way that suited the Australian/NZ community. Compare this with coming in at the end of several decades in Voyager where many features seem geared to the big customer base of US universities with quite different service offerings to students.
- Moving from one Ex Libris product to another should have provided some stability - in processes and terminology / data and statistical information.
- What we have seen already are monthly releases that incorporate suggestions we raised only months or weeks before. There is obvious evidence of changes being introduced as a result of every early implementation

1(c) What is the mechanism for communication and has this relationship changed as you move into the implementation phase?

Janette Burke, Monash

We are currently in lead up to kick off. We have been communicating with our project manager via phone and email on a regular basis. Conversations have increased as we near kick off and we have started going through the configuration worksheets. Questions have been based on configuration, data migration, clean up, policy and progress, and new enhancements and changes to processes. Our project manager has been extremely informative and has sought out answers.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

We are using Jira project tracker (hosted version) to record our questions and problems and interacting with ExLibris project manager Melanie and the Pivotal system.

Greg Shute, RMIT

The implementation team has been very generous in responding to emails outside of official Pivotal SI communications as well. Responsiveness & methods for communication: onsite meeting, functional training, weekly conference calls, specialist conference calls as required e.g. with staff from our central ITS group and with Ex Libris staff in Israel, daily emails; Ex Libris has shown a willingness to take feedback on how an implementation programme could be refined.

2. What process are being used/or planned to determine the business rules for functionality such as acquisitions, roles, configuration and integrations, etc.

Janette Burke, Monash

We set up 3 working groups Fulfillment, Acquisitions and metadata, and Systems Integration. Currently working through the manuals and the webinars with staff to try and map existing processes with new processes. We have questioned all of our process and identified some work flows that we can stop doing.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

Everyone gets every role in implementation - after 'Go live' need to look at business rules – we are small work group.

3. What has been your data migration experience and plans to date? Is there data that you are not planning to migrate, or data that you are not able to migrate?

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

Pending holds requests that have not been filled are not being migrated – this is a very big issue for us – it involves manual work and additional staff to reenter the requests– and we have 'Go Live' date in the middle of the semester.

Course instructors not migrating for reading lists - goes to a notes field – manual reenter

Interested Users (field) not migrating with Orders

We didn't anticipate and had not budgeted for staff to manually enter data after 'go-live'. Read the data migration documents carefully – even for ExL to ExL transfer

IPS (Item Process Status) migrating into a notes field – IPS does not exist in Alma - we need to come up with a process to capture the IPS data and move it into an Alma workflow.

Additional Notes: Many changes to Alma from Nov until now and updates to our configuration form. It would have been nice to have a 2nd test data migration, even if small. We know about fields that ExL have said have changed e.g. patron now has a statistics tab, but we are not able to see this or test this.

Greg Shute, RMIT

- We are the first site that has migrated Verde data – Ex Libris began work on Verde data migration late last year well before our formal kick-off meeting/project commencement. Verde migration has been extremely problematic and still needs sorting.
- We are still assessing the first round of data migration and logging SIs as we come across issues.
- We are not migrating data from DigiTool : this already appears in our Research Repository and Primo Central Index
- There are some areas of the migration and configuration forms that we were unable to interpret correctly with little (or no) previous experience from other institutions to guide us. As a result, there are some things we would love to see re-migrated to verify that the final migration will be satisfactory.
- Being a completely new system, it took some time gain familiarity with Alma enough to conduct a thorough check that the data had migrated as expected. E.g. how to count numbers of current patrons, numbers of books, journals etc. in Alma.
- Generally patron data migrated well. All patrons migrated as external, instead of all non-RMIT patrons as Internal.
- We would like not to migrate old unsupplied orders, and various other unwanted legacy data that are difficult to delete in any library system. However Acquisitions data migration is "all or nothing". Still seriously thinking about arguing the case not to take Acquisitions data so can leave problems behind

- In circulation (fulfilment) area, a major misgiving is the current inability to migrate any pending holds. RMIT students will have placed between 2 -3000 of these by post Easter, and it would be a major failure in service to students to lose all these.
- Reserve migration has lost links to the lecturer, which we'll need to manually link up again. Course code has not matched up correctly with corresponding reading lists.
- Items with lost or missing status (from Voyager) lose this in the migration, where it is carried across in a note requiring individual attention to convert back into a system function.
- Some things we'd like to leave behind in Voyager , e.g. dodgy bib records, obsolete eReserve bib records, expired Reserve courses, acquisitions records etc.
- Would love to do another test migration after seeing what the data migration table terminology meant in actuality.

4. Have you undertaken or plan to undertake any data cleanup projects prior to your migration to Alma?

Janette Burke, Monash

The three working groups went through the powerpoint documents provided by Ex Libris from ELUNA in 2011, and the Migration form from Voyager to Alma document outlining data clean up and determined what were show stopper items for implementation eg items with no barcodes won't be migrated (although this has now been changed with a new release). We have prioritized those that require actions, in some instances employed casuals and involved other staff from other areas to make inroads into the work, knowing not all will be completed. As we are getting to kick off, we are continually reprioritizing, have stopped doing some and concentrating on those with the biggest impact if we don't do them. We are running lots of reports, gathering facts and figures and working with a large number of people in other areas to do the work.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

Data cleanup of Authorities – gotten rid of everything without a See or See also reference and scope note and we removed old patron records. We removed HOL records for monographs – [Aleph monographs had holdings from migrated Dynix records and our new records in Aleph do not]; deleted clean expired patrons (older than two years); we are rationalizing collection codes and material types; cleaning up old courses from course reserve; reducing loan types; changing new orders to sent orders (they migrate as closed)

Greg Shute, RMIT

- Cat/Acq are doing huge tidying of bib records, and as much item deletion of weeded items as possible before migration.
- Attempting to rationalise items into appropriate locations in cases where this has become messy.
- Missing, In-transit, lost item status lists are being checked to remove as many of these as we can resolve.
- Reserve data is being tidied up - we could do more in this area.
- Cleaning up MARC tags
- Cleaning up acquisitions data and more to do before final migration (see above)
- More clean-up as we trip over things that are going to cause problems as we test. I really wish we had the ability to extract large batches of records and run them through various validations, dump them back into Voyager for final migration - not going to happen though

5. What has been the impact of the regular releases during your implementation phase? How have you managed this?

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

We've had 2 releases during implementation – we've distributed the email from ExLibris with the details of the changes, nothing to manage – just noticed things have been changed e.g. Enumeration and other things that we have reported as SIs or in Jira

You do have to keep an eye on changes – there are updates that may change how we look at migrated data

Greg Shute, RMIT

- New functionality is appearing quickly as we began preparation in Nov, migrated and tested Dec, met for functional workshop in Jan release. Some things we identified as major problems suddenly were resolved as we discovered new buttons that had not been available days before. Ex Libris staff were relieved that what we wanted was due next month. Sometimes new user roles with new functionality had become available and needed to be added before we could see functions. Each release came with a new set of updated manuals. There will come a point where new releases may catch us out with out-dated training instructions for staff, or possibly our configurations may need to be altered if new releases change the possibilities of workflows.
- I suspect each new release probably required changes to the questionnaire, migration form, and configuration form, but we didn't always get to work with the very latest release.
- Have to commit to having staff involved in the project (almost full time) that keep a track of releases, alert other staff to changes, download new updates to manuals, etc. The upgrade process occurs overnight Australian time so it doesn't impact on the use of Alma test environment.
- The fact that releases go live automatically in a hosted environment will need to be part of our awareness. We don't want our staff surprised by new practices, or some familiar function suddenly working in different or opposite ways.

6(a) What are your plans for ensuring staff are trained to use Alma at go live?

Janette Burke, Monash

We have scheduled blocks of time (twice a week for an hour) for all staff impacted by Alma to attend the webinars, and together go through the Ex Libris training sessions together. All staff impacted by Alma will have access to the sandbox and will work together through the processes in Alma. A general staff update through emails, demonstrations and articles in our staff bulletin will be provided to staff that will need to know what impact Alma has on their area of work. Working group members (mostly supervisors) will be attending the functional training and we will include experts in the field as required. This group will be responsible for mapping the current processes to the new processes.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

Equivalent of one staff training day for staff to learn fulfilment a few weeks before go live. So few staff in Acquisitions and Resource Management so we are learning together as we go.

After data migration and our own Alma system in Nov, we realised that we didn't know how to do anything – Training prior to having our own data was useless. We asked for separate WebEx sessions to have Melanie watch us use our Alma and take a workflow start to finish – this finally started to help us make sense of how the system works. (Pre-functional workshops).

Functional workshops: Configuration issues stopping us, Melanie saw it; she could change it immediately or report the problem. Our configuration data sheets weren't added properly to Alma (through ExL auto load system) and had to be manually added.

At our Functional Workshops we were able to continue to work through detailed workflows and also identify and resolve technical problems. E.g. \$9.99 for fine block rather than \$10 – vendor lists were not properly in the system (Melanie fixed) – Created ISS (Tech services) as library (rather than acquisitions depts. at each library campus) – then changed workflow to keep items in department rather than process status of cataloguing and end process

6(b) Have your staff found the Ex Libris training and documentation to be helpful so far?

Janette Burke, Monash

It has been helpful to visualise what Alma will look like, but until we have our own data in the sandbox it is difficult to make decisions around changes to process. I think this will become more apparent as we move into implementation.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

Documentation: is fairly generic.

6(c) Do you anticipate that you will need to develop supplementary training resources? If so, why?

Janette Burke, Monash

We are not anticipating rewriting manuals but will need to develop policy and procedural documents. Ex Libris documentation lacks detail in some areas and with the constant improvements and new releases it is hard to keep up with the monthly changes and what the impact is.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

Yes we will be creating our own documents/workflows.

Lending staff are developing resources to train a large number of lending staff. Ex Libris does not have enough details with our workflows.

7. Does your implementation project incorporate a formal change management strategy? If yes can you briefly outline the main components and indicate how successful it has been?

Janette Burke, Monash

Monash has a formal change management strategy incorporated into the project plan and charter. As part of this a communication strategy has also been developed. A project Steering committee and three working groups have been established. Informing staff through all of our meeting with monthly updates of what is happening. Where possible staff from other areas have been involved in assisting with data cleanup and other aspects of the project. We have been discussing with staff in functional areas changes to work flows, the need for multi skilling and sharing of work. We have been working with work areas to consider changes to work flows, streamlining work flows and making processes as simple as possible. Staff have been given 'permission' to identify what work can be reduced or stopped with the Steering Committee providing direction in decision making and prioritizing of work. It has been a long journey but everyone is engaged. Being involved in the collaborative partnership from the onset has given us 12 months to set the change process in motion. The installation of Primo and the process we used to make quick decisions also assisted with the change process. I am hoping that the product encourages multiskilling and doesn't demark/silo the work flows. Alma uses new and old terminology inconsistently throughout the workflows e.g. metadata management is used in one module and cataloguing referred in the following section. Some of the terminology aligns to 1970s work flows and it is a pity that the new terminology e.g. fulfillment is not consistently applied throughout the layers as it reverts back to the use of 'old' terminology e.g. circulation desk etc.

8. How will Alma change your current workflows? How are changes being identified and implemented? What efficiencies and/or overall savings in TCO do you expect to gain?

Janette Burke, Monash

See question 7. We hope that many processes will be streamlined. Use Alma to simplify work flows as much as possible. The use of web based client however may mean for staff that there are many more layers to click through before a task is actioned and the development of short cuts will be paramount. We are not sure what the TCO will be until we implement.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

We are so busy just implementing that we are not yet looking at workflow changes until we go live – we don't have many staff – no big changes until after April
Anticipate quite a staff load for the data that are not being migrated

9. Many institutions import and export records either directly or via Z39.50/SRU/OAI-PMH from OCLC, Libraries Australia and Te Puna. How will your institution interact with these sources in the future?

Janette Burke, Monash

Monash is keen to implement passive OAI PMH data harvesting by Libraries AU & OCLC, following the model set up by UNSW. It would be exciting to see ExLibris lead this type of development rather than providing sftp file exchange with Libraries Australia.

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

We currently use them and will continue to use them. Currently working on getting L.A. – not major – acq is the same. – no other options for importing – we have not yet exported.

UPDATE: We are now successfully linked with L.A.

10. One of Alma's goals is to simplify some areas such as circulation set-up. Have you found any issues with moving to a simpler configuration?

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

We had business rules to simplify –Initially we were worried that we couldn't manage all of our rules – but we found there are exceptions.

Terms of Use are not yet settled and we don't know if they work – [We went from about 20 patron types and 30 loan periods]

Greg Shute, RMIT

It is admirable for Alma to decree that there should only be four types of simplified lending privileges, but the reality for us is that we'd need to extend or curtail current service arrangements to fit into this. RMIT does not want to change services to patrons mid-semester just because we have a new library tool. So we've pushed our borrower types from 4 up to 7 for sake of service continuity, and maybe we'll work on the simplification idea for next year...? The configuration implementation spreadsheet makes the TOU matrix appear simpler than it really is in Alma, but overall it seems an improvement on the way it worked in Voyager.

Printing remains an issue, and while we're happy to send every communication to users by email, there are times (around 800 times per day) when we want to print a slip to insert into a book (i.e. patron name for holds that have just been returned) , and would love to see an on-screen print option, formatted ready for slip printing.

11(a) How do you plan to update your patron records?

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

Initially, exactly the same way as in Aleph – batch upload, and writing an in house transformation from ASCOL to Alma.

Greg Shute, RMIT

We want as many of our patron records, staff records as possible imported from University systems (PeopleSoft and SAP). We are still in early stages of developing this integration, but are likely to work on transforming the existing output designed for Voyager, rather than starting from scratch with a new output from the SIS. There is not a very good one-to-one correspondence in the formats required for Voyager and that for Alma, even in terms of address types. The January release introduced greater security for ftp transfer of self-check transaction data, and we trust the security for patron upload data is also adequate.

11(b) As Alma is a hosted solution, have any security and privacy factors influenced change to the personal information you manage with your patron records?

Debbie Storz, Swinburne

No

Greg Shute, RMIT

In answer to the second part, no, these issues were explored at the contract stage both at the legal and technical levels, at this time we haven't considered making any changes to the way in which patron records are managed.