Usability Validation of Electronic Resources Management System  
(Annual Report: FY2017)

1. Background

E-resources Data Sharing Working Group has been conducting validation studies on improving the workflows of e-resource management. From the workflow validation of ProQuest’s 360 Resource Manager Consortium Edition conducted in FY 2015 and 2016, we found out that it is effective on improving efficiency of e-resource management at each library level and on improving user services. With regards to data-sharing between the JUSTICE Office and member libraries, however, it turned out that it does not necessarily conform to Japanese contract models that are adopted by JUSTICE and so on. In the meantime, it has become increasingly popular for overseas universities and regional or national-level consortia to implement a Library Services Platform (LSP), which allows them to manage ‘printed materials’ as well as ‘e-resources’ in a centralised manner. Also, the transition from the existing Integrated Library Systems (ILS) or Electronic Resources Management Systems (ERMS) is being taken place.

In response to this, the Working Group has increased the number of collaborators from JUSTICE member libraries and conducted a workflow validation of e-resource management using Ex Libris Alma. This is the report of the results from the validation study conducted in FY2017.

2. Outline
a. Implementing Body: E-resources Data Sharing Working Group
b. Implementing System: Alma (Ex Libris)
c. Implementation Period: One Year (January - December 2017)

3. Workflow Expected from the Validation Study
The charts below show the current workflow of e-resource management and the expected workflow as the result of using a LSP.
4. Key Findings –

In this validation study, we tested the operation procedures of various functions offered by Alma (Please refer to ‘5. Details of the Validation Results). In this report, we focus on the three operations that are currently conducted by JUSTICE member libraries: 1) Renewal of Subscriptions; 2) Access Management and Service Provision; and 3) Analysis and Assessment of Subscriptions. For each operation, we describe a typical workflow expected at a library that does not have an Electronic Resources Management System, and present potential solutions to the existing issues.

a. Renewal of Subscriptions

JUSTICE member libraries are currently renewing their subscriptions in the following procedures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>①</td>
<td>Examination of Subscriptions for Next Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>②</td>
<td>Acquisition of Proposals &amp; Check on Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>③</td>
<td>Replacement of Subscriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>④</td>
<td>Adjustment to Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>⑤</td>
<td>Conclusion of Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑥</td>
<td>Creation of Contract Data</td>
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<tr>
<td>⑦</td>
<td>Placement of Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⑧</td>
<td>Payment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the current workflow, there are some issues as follows:
(1) At ‘② Acquisition of Proposals & Check on Details’ stage, member libraries compare the terms of contract/provision to those of the previous year; however, it is a time-consuming process and causing the duplication of work at each library as JUSTICE Proposals and Agreements are neither standardised nor complied into data adequately.

(2) At ‘③ Replacement of Subscriptions’ stage, each library has to examine the differences in title lists (i.e. transfers or comparison to the previous year) including those of JUSTICE-proposed packages.

(3) As it is difficult to manage the yearly contract information and accessible titles systematically, it can be difficult to justify the cost.

From the validation study, it is expected that Alma will bring the following improvements to the operations:

1) We confirmed that all the operations (i.e. ① to ⑧ in the flowchart above) are supported by Alma, which offers subscription management functions catered for both printed materials and e-resources. As Alma allows users to pull up information on budget, prices, etc. from the previous year’s data and to create the following year’s contract information comprehensively, it will be possible for member libraries to carry out ‘② Acquisition of Proposals & Check on Details’ and ‘③ Replacement of Subscriptions’ by comparing to the previous year’s terms of contract/provision.

2) Alma is equipped with such functions as reminding renewals and contacting publishers for a quote/order request via the contract management screen. If a publisher is equipped with EDI (Electronic Data Interchange), it also allows libraries to place an order automatically via the system.

3) As the past and present contract information for e-resources are recorded within the system, it is expected to improve the accounting transparency.

Given that JUSTICE Office conducts the following operations, it is expected to reduce the duplication of work at member libraries considerably.

(1) Registration of normalised data on the negotiated outcomes of Proposals and Agreement samples on the system, and their provision to member libraries.

(2) Extraction of information on the negotiated outcomes of the differences in title lists to the previous year (i.e. new/renewal/transfer/cancellation), and their provision to member libraries. By doing so, it makes it easier for non-user libraries of the system to check if there are any subscription journals missing from a contract.
b. Access Management and Service Provision

JUSTICE member libraries are conducting access management and service provision of e-resources in the following procedures.

In the current workflow, there are some issues as follows:

1) At ‘⑨ Renewal of Title Lists’ stage, the title lists provided by publishers to JUSTICE Office are used in many cases; however, the data format is not standardised and it is causing the duplication of work in standardisation among member libraries.

2) At ‘⑩ Activation’ stage, the archival access right, which remains after the cancellation of subscription, is not managed systematically; therefore, there are cases in which cancelled titles are not provided appropriately.

3) With regards to ‘⑬ Response to Users’ Inquiries / Renewal of Package Lists (as required)’ stage, it is common that JUSTICE Proposals and Agreements are stored as files or in paper formats by the department in charge of contracts within a member library; therefore, it is difficult for end-users or service personnel to refer to the licence terms as necessary.

From the validation study, it is expected that Alma will bring the following improvements to the operations:

(1) We confirmed that all the operations (i.e. ⑨ to ⑬ in the flowchart above) are supported by Alma’s activation function. Subscription journals are managed systematically with ‘contract, licence and package (title lists)’ inter-linked. The operations at ‘⑩ Activation’ stage, such as the activation of the next year’s packages or de-activation of the previous year’s packages, can be done in block. Also, the access can be checked directly on the system.

(2) With regards to the archival access right after cancellation, it can be checked by referring to the licence information linked to a package and
can be maintained on the knowledge-base. The quality of Alma’s Global KnowledgeBase, however, has to continue to be evaluated as it was not examined thoroughly during this validation study.

(3) With the API function offered by Alma, the licence terms can be displayed on Primo, a search interface for end-users.

Given that JUSTICE Office conducts the following operations, it is expected to reduce the duplication of work at member libraries considerably.

(1) Registration of normalised data on the negotiated outcomes of title lists on the system, and their provision to member libraries and KnowledgeBase vendors used by them. By using title lists in the standard format provided by JUSTICE Office, it makes it easier for member libraries to import data to OPAC or commercial KBs. Also, by providing information on whether a title list is shared with the Global KnowledgeBase or unique to JUSTICE, it saves the duplication of work in data creation and management.

(2) As title lists can be replaced during a contract period, they have to be updated as necessary.

c. Analysis and Assessment of Subscriptions
When reviewing the subscriptions due to the restrictions on budget and so on, JUSTICE member libraries are conducting analysis and assessment of subscriptions in the following procedures.

In the current workflow, there are some issues as follows:

(1) At ‘⑭ Acquisition of Usage Statistics’ stage, the usage statistics for each publisher need to be acquired and accumulated manually every year; therefore, it is a complicated procedure.

(2) At ‘⑮ Review of Subscription Prices’ stage, it is sometimes necessary to examine the amount of contract, budget, and whether the printed version
is also subscribed or not; therefore, it requires gathering of information from a library system or materials such as Excel sheets created at the time of entering into a contract with a publisher.

(3) At ‘⑭ Calculation of Cost-benefit Performance’ and ‘⑭ Data Creation for Evaluation or Simulation’ stages, the analyses have to be done across different publishers, which require the comparison of the usage statistics obtained at the stage ⑭ or of the standardised data on prices collected at the stage ⑮; therefore, it is causing a vast amount of data processing operation.

From the validation study, it is expected that Alma will bring the following improvements to the operations:

(1) Alma is equipped with a statistical system that is compatible with SUSHI and COUNTER standards; therefore, it is possible to obtain monthly access statistics provided by publishers automatically and to upload access statistics in the COUNTER format.

(2) The Alma’s statistical and analytical modules employ Oracle Business Intelligence (OBI); with its powerful and flexible reporting functions, it is possible not only to compare cost-benefit performances over time but also to conduct more advanced statistical analyses.

5. Details of the Validation Results

The validation results other than described above are summarised in a separate reference material as follows:

a) Reference material: ‘Validation Results of Alma’s Functions (Individual Functions)’ <<only available in Japanese>>

6. Next Action

In FY 2018, based on the validation results described above, we will continue the work to further identify the potential issues that may occur during the actual operations; in so doing, JUSTICE Office will work together with several JUSTICE member libraries to register the same information on the LSP as accumulated by the current ILS during actual operations, and carry on the operations of the LSP on a trial basis.

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