

Chapter 6.7

Process Mapping for Electronic Resources: A Lesson from Business Models

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ABSTRACT

The number of electronic resources is continually growing and the processes associated with managing them are ever more complex. Consequently, completely new ways of managing these resources efficiently and effectively must be invented or borrowed from industries that also must manage complex processes. This chapter describes how a method generally employed in business and industry can be applied in managing electronic resource-related processes in libraries. Specifically, a technique called process mapping and its potential application to electronic resource management in libraries is described. Existing electronic resource

management guidelines are conceptually linked to actual management situations. A case study is presented which is intended to illustrate the process.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic resource management differs from long-established collection development and technical services operations in that the latter have largely dealt with physical items. Over time, libraries and other information organizations have had a wealth of experience in how to select, acquire, and make accessible physical materials. With the emergence of virtual and electronic resources, the types of processes that libraries have traditionally employed do no adequately serve these new formats. Moreover,

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there is no clear consensus on how to manage these virtual materials efficiently and effectively within the information organization. Efforts to standardize how to manage electronic resources from a technical perspective were originally begun at the Digital Library Federation (DLF) and the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) and are still ongoing. Because of the delays inherent in organizational work, these efforts are moving along slowly and are not yet widely adopted. Vendors offer a variety of solutions based on early standardization efforts but the systems are not yet mature. In the meanwhile, libraries that must process these resources are confronted with questions about how to respond both technically and organizationally to the continuous change in the acquisition, management and delivery of electronic resources. Specifically, it is often not clear what types of skills are needed for different aspects of electronic resource management and who in the information organization should be responsible for the work. In this chapter, process mapping is presented as a mechanism to systematically manage the people and processes involved in electronic resource management in libraries.

BACKGROUND

Over the last 10 years the number and variety of electronic resources have been continually growing and the processes associated with managing them appear to be ever more complex. In a review of the serials literature, Corbett (2006) concludes that the literature reflects a rapidly changing environment. Although she found a good variety of articles relating to collection management of electronic resources, she found only a few articles in the areas of management and archiving of electronic serials products. The way libraries and other information organizations are handling this type of management differs from place to place. Breeding (2004) divides electronic resource management functions into back-end operations

and user delivery. This chapter is concerned with how the back-end delivery can be accomplished in a changing library environment.

While some organizations integrate electronic resource management into technical services processing, others rely on a variety of options in different parts of the organization to accomplish these tasks. In all these models, staffing for managing electronic resources has been challenging because a diversity of new skills are necessary. These skills are not always easily defined and typically are learned by experimentation and self-training and not by means of formal training. In a survey of staffing for electronic resources management, Duranceau (2002) found that the libraries surveyed felt that they were understaffed and unprepared for the many facets of electronic resource management. Since then, Srivastava and Taglienti (2005) have observed in a larger survey of mostly smaller and midsized libraries that close to 50% of respondents identified as “Other” the job titles of the employees who managed electronic resources. A scan of job postings for electronic resource librarians during the last year, for example, finds a variety of position responsibilities and skill requirements. Furthermore, staffing levels have not kept up with the explosion of the number and diversity of electronic resources. Specifically, either existing personnel must be retrained or new personnel with appropriate skills must be hired to accommodate the management of electronic resources.

DLF’s Electronic Resource Management Initiative (ERMI) has provided recommendations for the management of electronic resource collection development, acquisition, access and delivery from a technology and systems perspective. The workflow chart from *Electronic Resource Management Workflow Flowchart* Appendix B, pages B4-B7, shows a template for such processes but is too extensive to reproduce here.

Their overview flowchart, reproduced in Figure 1, shows the differences between physical and electronic resource management. While the ERMI

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