

RTSS and CUS Workshop, October 13, 2000 *The License Process: We Promised to do What?*

Breakout Session *Routes Through The Maze: Dealing with Overlapping Access to Electronic Information*

Survey Summary

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On October 13th at the RTSS and CUS Workshop *The License Process: We Promised to Do What?*, I asked participants at the breakout session *Routes Through the Maze: Dealing with Overlapping Access to Electronic Information* to fill out a brief survey (see below for survey). My intent was to find out what were the prevailing practices and the most pressing problems

Most of the twenty-one respondents were from academic libraries (90%), and all but one have OPACs. Most catalog at least some aggregates as single entries in their OPACS (66%); even more catalog at least some of the content included in aggregations (85%); and most link from their OPACs to the e-resource (66%). Only three respondents (14%) (one from the single public library, one from the single special library, and one from an academic library) do not catalog at least some of their aggregations as single entries, or catalog selected titles within the aggregate

Nearly all of the respondents work in libraries that, in addition to the OPAC, have separate web page listings of electronic resources with live links to the resource (95%). The same number of respondents post single entries for aggregates on the web page (95%). Most also include entries of journal titles (or, at least some titles) contained in aggregates (76%). No one catalogs or lists all the aggregations and all the aggregations' content, though many wish this were possible.

The decision making process for displaying or cataloging e-resources was varied. A few indicated these decisions were made by an individual in their library (19%), others indicated specific committees made the decision (also 19%), but the majority indicated that this process was not formalized but was either decided by a combination of committees and individuals, or was in flux or ad hoc (57%).

The problems with aggregates, from the perspective of participants, were many, but fell into three general categories. The first concerned lack of stability of content, the "here today, gone tomorrow" syndrome that plagues so many aggregations and makes it so difficult to determine what the library actually has. It is also difficult to know who we can legitimately use these resources, as license prescriptions and prohibitions vary from publisher to publisher, and there are nearly as many different licenses as there are resources. The second pointed to the untenable maintenance effort that keeping up with changing URLs, changing content, and changing technology requires. And the third addressed the problems of establishing and coordinating internal communication and processing strategies.

In general, participants value having direct access to these resources and tend to provide it in both their online public access catalogs (OPACS) as well as through separate web listing of electronic-only resources. There is no standardization across libraries with cataloging or linking to aggregations as single entries, but there is an effort to make full text and stable titles available through the OPACs and web listings. The major aggravations of aggregations concern the difficulty we have knowing what we have, how to get to it, and how we're permitted to use it; the labor involved in keeping up with the changing content of aggregations and creating records to provide access; and re-organizing the library personnel, workflow, and procedures to create effective responses to the changing electronic environment.

There were 21 surveys returned, and below is a brief question by question summary:

1. The first question asked about the areas in which participants work. (Since participants were encouraged to indicate as many areas as applied, the sum is greater than 21.) Five participants work in reference; 4 in cataloging; 1 in systems; 6 in acquisitions; 2 in circulation; and 10 in collection development.
2. The second question asked about the type of library the participants were from. There was 1 special librarian; 1 public librarian; and 19 academic librarians.
3. The third question asked about cataloging practices. One of the difficulties of providing access to titles within aggregations is having the resources to first catalog them, then maintain them (as titles drop out, are added in, change URLs, and vary as to their similarity to their print counterparts in completeness).

A. The first part of this question asked if aggregates were cataloged in the OPAC as single entries (e.g. "JSTOR"), and if so whether this is done always, or sometimes; and if there is a live link from the OPAC entry to the resource.

Fourteen respondents said their library does have single entry records for aggregations in their OPACS. Of these, seven responded that they "always" cataloged aggregations as single entries, thought one qualified this by saying "searchable and browsable titles;" one left the "always/sometimes" question unanswered; six answered "sometimes" but one of these was only for accounting purposes (in an integrated OPAC acquisitions system), another one of the six answered that they excluded aggregators like Academic Universe (with a mixture of full and partial text, and frequent additions/subtractions in the titles they offer). [*My intention in asking this question was to find out if libraries differentiated between relatively stable, and full text aggregations like JSTOR and very large and very variable aggregations like First Search. Unfortunately, the question wasn't phrased well enough to convey this successfully, and the intent wasn't always clear.*]

Of the remaining seven respondents, four (including the one from the public library) do not have single entry records for aggregations in their OPACS, and one (the lone special librarian) does not yet have an OPAC. Two respondents left this question blank.

B. The second part of this question asked about cataloging in the OPAC each journal title within an aggregate.

Eighteen respondents indicated that their libraries cataloged journal titles within an aggregate. Three indicated that they always catalog all

titles (or try to, the full text ones), and 15 sometimes catalog aggregated journal titles (some only for aggregations like JSTOR, Project MUSE, etc), but tend not to do so for large aggregations (like NCLive, or large aggregations).

Three respondents do not catalog journal titles within aggregates separately. One respondent (from a special library) is currently without an OPAC, another is from the public library, and the third is from an academic library.

C. The last part of this question asked how many respondents' libraries link from the OPAC to the resource.

Fourteen respondents indicated their library links from the OPAC to the e-resource. Five do not, but one of those hopes to soon. Two respondents left the question blank.

4. The fourth question asks whether a respondent's library has a web page separate from the OPAC that lists e-resources. Twenty respondents' libraries do, and of those, 20 list and link aggregations (like JSTOR), and 16 list and link titles within aggregates.
5. The fifth question asks about decision-making responsibility for displaying or cataloging e-resources. While the responses varied, four identified individuals as the decision makers (two in cataloging, one unspecified, and one the electronic resources serial librarian); four more specified committees (in technical services, systems, or a special Consortia Advisory Committee); twelve listed various committees, a mixture of committees and individuals, or ad hoc decision making. One respondent left this question blank.
6. The last question asked respondents to identify, from their perspective, the greatest problem with aggregates. There were thirteen responses, which fell into three categories. The first was about lack of stability of content, the "here today, gone tomorrow" syndrome that plagues so many aggregations and makes it so difficult to determine what the library actually has access to. The second addresses the untenable maintenance effort that keeping up with changing URLs, changing content, and changing technology requires. The third concerned the problems of establishing and coordinating internal communication/processing strategies. In addition, there is the problem of knowing how you can use your e-resources (especially important for distance education and electronic reserves).

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