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## **Quick guide on criteria that can be used when evaluating ERM systems**

The way this guide is structured is to first describe the concepts customers have to consider and make decisions on; secondly, these concepts have been turned into concrete items that can be used to evaluate an ERM system.

### **Concepts to be Considered**

When evaluating which ERM system to purchase, there are several questions the customers have to ask themselves and based on those answers are they able to effectively compare the different offerings in the market and make a decision for the one that best suits their needs.

The first basic question that a customer needs to answer is what they expect an ERM system to do. Different vendors have taken different interpretations of what an ERM system means. This results in the different providers having systems that can't be easily compared with each other directly. In many cases, a bundle of services from one provider will be equal to a single service of another provider. In the most expanded definition of an ERM system, these are the areas that the ERM system should cover:

- License signing process workflow management
- License conditions administration
- Management of which content is made available under the license
- Trial process workflow management
- Usage statistics analysis
- Price per Use calculations
- A-Z listing of all publications with links to the actual content

For many customers, some of the elements of an ERM system are simply not relevant (e.g. trial process workflow management) due to their internal structure and needs. For this reason it is key for a customer to not simply ask for an ERM solution, but to identify which areas they are interested in. Identifying these areas should not be done with only the present in mind, but also what they think will be needed two or three years into the future.

It can be that at the moment the customer doesn't have a large portion of e-journals and therefore usage statistics

analysis is less important. Although in three years time it could be that the vast majority of the collection is comprised of e-journals, where usage statistics analysis and price per use calculations will become very important. Or at the moment eBooks are not part of the collection, but will be in the future and will have to be managed in the same system.

Customers shouldn't forget that once they have purchased such a system they will most likely have to remain with that vendor/system for at least two years and in some cases even longer in order to obtain some return in their investment. For this reason they have to not only have an idea of what they will need in the near future, but also what the plans of the provider are for the future of their solution. In which direction are they planning on taking the service and will future updates be made available at no additional cost or will the customer have to purchase them in addition to the original service fee. Customers have to ensure that what they find important for the future is also what the provider thinks is important.

Based on the current and future areas of interest the customer can establish the criteria that a vendor has to satisfy. These criteria also have to determine which elements are the most important for them. This will create a basis for a direct comparison of the different vendor solutions.

As part of this, the customer also has to have a preference for what type of "user environment" architecture they want. Are they satisfied with having different systems from different vendors for different areas or do they prefer to have one system that does everything? The user environment is a very important element that can be even more important than if certain functionality is available or not.

Disconnected systems that require users to constantly log out of one system and then login to another to continue working generate much inefficiency. Additionally, it implies that the same information will have to be maintained in different systems increasing the workload and eventually leading to suboptimal utilization of all available systems. This can only be overcome if the different systems can interoperate.

But even in the area of interoperability it has to be made clear what type of interoperability is needed and important. This also covers interoperability with existing systems the library already uses such as the ILS. Is it important to be able to manage the holdings list in only one or maximum two systems and have that list automatically propagated to the other systems? The requirements on interoperability can very quickly limit the options of which vendors can provide the required solution.

Many hosted solutions will not offer the same level of interoperability as a locally installed system can, but the cost of maintenance of a hosted solution is usually lower than that of a locally installed system. But the decision to have a hosted solution or a locally installed system should take into account the total cost of ownership of the solutions. With locally installed systems the customer will have to ensure that there is an IT infrastructure that can manage and backup the system, buy hardware, software, etc.

The cost of setup, both technical and administrative setup, has to be included in the TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) calculation. Locally installed systems will need configuration and potential additional development in order to make the required interoperability work. Independent of the type of system chosen, there will always be the administrative setup cost. Most ERM systems available are an empty box that still has to be filled with the customer's specific data.

If workflow management is an important area, depending on the system, the setup of these workflows can vary from extremely complicated to extremely easy. The more intelligence is required of the software in determining what the next process step is supposed to be, the more time consuming it will be to setup the process.

The last element that has to be taken into account in the TCO calculation is the administrative cost and effort of maintaining the system. Customers many times mistake how much effort this can be. An ERM system will not replace a customer's ILS system. All electronic resources will still have to be maintained in the ILS system of the customer in order for them to be able to have the administrative, financial, and management information needed to manage the library. The ERM system makes certain aspects of managing electronic resources possible, but it is a supplement to an ILS and not a substitute.

It was in this misunderstanding that many customers make the incorrect assumption that they would gain time to work on other tasks once they had an ERM system. What they experienced in the end is that all the time that was saved by using an ERM system was lost in maintaining the information in it.

In conclusion, there are three critical things a customer should do when evaluating an ERM system:

1. Define what they mean by an ERM system
2. Set the criteria for each area of what is important to them
3. Calculate the TCO of the solution including the administrative maintenance cost of the system

By undertaking these steps customers will ensure that they are truly comparing similar offerings and making their decisions based on objective and quantifiable information.

### **Concrete Evaluation Points**

Below is a list of points on which a customer can make comparisons of the different ERM systems based on the different areas an ERM system can cover.

#### **Workflow Management**

- Pre-populated with publisher specific license process (e.g. does this publisher require a license and online registration)
- Can the customer easily add internal process steps to the process
- Status reporting available
- Users can indicate steps have been completed

#### **License conditions Administration**

- Which fields are automatically included
- Can customer add their own fields in addition to standard ones
- Are license conditions pre-populated with the publisher's standard conditions
- Are standard publisher conditions automatically maintained by the system
- Can licenses for different content types be managed (e.g. journals, databases and eBooks)

#### **Content available in Resource**

- Does the system automatically provide a listing of the publications available under a specific license of a specific provider
- Are the bibliographic details of the publications and the link with publishers automatically maintained by the system (e.g. will title moves or mergers be automatically updated in the system)
- Can the customer indicate either manually or via a file upload which publications they have that fall under the specific license
- Is the list of licensed publications, or databases, integrated with an A-Z list system for end user access (e.g. if the customer adds a publication to a license, or a new license, will these new publications automatically display in the A-Z list for end-users)

#### **Usage statistics analysis**

- Does the system automatically collect usage statistics information from the different electronic resources

- Is the customer able to manually upload additional usage statistics to the system
- Does the system automatically match the usage statistics with the cost of the subscription
- Is the system pre-populated with the cost of the subscriptions if they are purchased via the same vendor
- Can the customer upload cost information in different currencies
- Will the system calculate the price per use for both the individual publications as well as for an entire resource
- Can the customer create their own customized reports to suit their needs

#### A-Z listing

- Does the system provide an A-Z listing service for end-users to access the publications purchased by the customer
- Can the A-Z listing service display all content types available (e.g. print journals, e-journals, eBooks, databases)
- Does the A-Z listing allow the customer to add additional information to be displayed to the end user
- Is the bibliographic information automatically maintained for the publications available in the listing

#### Setup & Maintenance

- Is the system hosted at the vendor or does it require local installation
- What is the average technical setup time for the system from time of purchase to having the system available for the administrative setup
- What is the TCO of the system

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