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Preserve Local and Institution-Specific Data During Migration to a Network Cataloging Environment

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Abstract

During the fall of 2015, the Augusta University Libraries began the process of implementing Ex Libris' next-generation library management solution, Alma. This process is occurring in various phases, with the initial steps being data clean-up and migration. As part of the migration process, cataloging records that are currently created and maintained by both university libraries will be migrated into a collaborative Alma network zone comprised of 29 institutions in the University System of Georgia (USG) consortium. The network zone will allow for collaborative cataloging among multiple libraries. One of the main challenges for Augusta University, however, was finding a way to preserve the libraries' local data which included medical subject headings (MeSH) used by the health sciences library. This paper addresses the challenges faced and strategies employed by Augusta University Libraries to ensure local information was migrated from the existing Ex Libris' Voyager traditional integrated library system (ILS) into Alma.

Introduction

In the summer of 2015, the USG entered into an agreement with Ex Libris to migrate to the cloud-based library management system Alma across all its institutions. With the implementation of this new system, all USG's 29 institutions would be able to share bibliographic records in Alma's Network Zone, which Ex Libris defines as "A management tool used by a collaborative network to centrally manage certain features, such as configuration tables, licenses, and records. A virtual institution (also called the network zone) is used as the management interface and central repository and catalog" (network zone). The use of a network zone will greatly increase collaboration among all USG libraries and reduce redundant cataloging for the same resources that are currently being processed by each institution on its own. This new collaborative cataloging environment, however, will be a fundamental change from current cataloging practices that were performed in each institution's stand-alone Ex Libris' Voyager ILS.

Augusta University has two libraries: Reese Library, a medium-sized academic library, and Robert B. Greenblatt, M.D. Library, a health sciences library.

With the stand-alone ILS, Augusta University Libraries, like most other USG institutions, uses machine-readable cataloging (MARC) bibliographic records to store local information included in the 09x, 59x, 69x, and 9xx fields. There are also some additional fields being used for local data (including the 500 field) which, based on MARC21 format for bibliographic data, are not designed for such purposes. The 09X fields are for local call numbers; the 59X fields are for local notes such as donation information; 69x fields are for local subject headings; and the 9xx fields are used for various information such as vendor related data. As an academic library, Reese Library uses Library of Congress subject headings (LCSH) for its cataloging; however, as a health sciences library, the Greenblatt Library uses medical subject headings (MeSH) for its cataloging records. In addition, the Greenblatt Library is the only public health sciences library in the entire USG, which means it is the only library in the system using MeSH. The other USG libraries predominantly use LCSH and will likely have no MeSH headings in their cataloging records. As important as maintaining local information, ensuring complete migration of the MeSH subject headings is one of top priorities for Augusta University during the Alma implementation.

Overview of Data Migration Process

In preparation for Alma's data migration, the Augusta University Libraries conducted a thorough data clean-up of the cataloging records based upon guidelines and recommendations provided by the USG's Alma implementation team. The clean-up involved bibliographic, holdings, and item records, as well as patron records in Voyager. One goal of the data clean-up was to identify and remove any records, fields, and field values that are no longer needed. This included retiring outdated location codes. Another goal of the data clean-up was to ensure the records in Voyager met specific requirements of Alma. For example, in Voyager it had been permissible to use duplicate barcodes, while in Alma this practice was not allowed. As a result, all duplicate barcodes had to be removed during the data cleanup process, and in some instances, new barcodes had to be added.

After data clean-up, each institution submitted a data migration form and a configuration form to Ex Libris. Subsequently, institutional records would be loaded into the network zone in a predetermined order and would then go through a deduping process based on Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) records. During the deduping process, an individual libraries' record could be deduped (disregarded) if there was already a record from another institution with the same OCLC number loaded into the network zone. A unique challenge for the health sciences library was to ensure all relevant MeSH headings residing in the bibliographic records transferred into Alma. According to Ex Libris, however, certain MARC fields in the bibliographic records could be preserved if they were marked with a "subfield 9 local." Those preservable fields include the 09x, 59x, 69x, and 9xx. These fields provide a mechanism to keep the local information in the collaborative cataloging environment. The medical subject headings needed to be tagged as local fields so they would not be lost during the initial loading process.

How Local Data Was Preserved?

The next step the libraries took was to identify records with the previously mentioned fields and add a subfield 9 local to them. The systems librarian ran various reports in Voyager for the different local fields, including the 09x, 59x, and 69x fields, as well as the 9xx fields. The cataloging staff then examined those records and determined which ones should be

migrated over, since certain 9xx fields will be reserved for consortia use, and the Augusta University Libraries had to adapt the 9xx fields according to the USG requirements.

In addition to the above local fields, other MARC fields such as the 500 field, the 650 field, and the 54x field were sampled to determine whether there was any local information there. When there was local information in those fields that the libraries wanted to move over to Alma, the information was moved into one of the aforementioned fields for migration purposes.

How MeSH Headings Were Preserved?

Preserving MeSH headings has been one of the libraries' top priorities, as it directly affects patrons' discovery experience. MeSH headings reside in MARC field 650 with indicator 2. The first step was to identify bibliographic records with those headings by running reports in Voyager. Since 650 is not considered a local field by Alma, these fields would need to be retagged as another local field. The systems librarian copied the 65X field into a new 69X field and added indicator 2 and subfield 9 "local" field as required by Alma implementation for migration into institutional zone. After the full migration is completed, the plan put in place is to retag the 65X field in the network zone to be searchable by MeSH headings in Alma.

Special Note

At the time this paper was written, a decision was made by the USG Alma implementation team to load Augusta University's records into the network zone first. This decision was made in large part to address the issue of preserving the MeSH headings utilized by the health sciences library. Loading the AU records first is a more direct way to ensure that access to the headings is retained rather than by adding the local extensions in the same way as the other local fields.

Additional Thought: How to Manage Local Information in a Collaborative Cataloging Environment?

During the data migration for ALMA implementation, how to preserve local data created by each library has been a concern for all the USG institutions. First, most libraries have been using a stand-alone ILS for a long

time, and based on MARC 21 format for bibliographic data, libraries have been using different MARC bibliographic fields to record local data. This practice has become a challenge during this process since everyone is moving into a collaborative cataloging environment. Even though MARC standards indicate some fields are intended for local use, there have been cataloging practices in individual libraries using some general fields such as 500 to describe local information. This has been the practice with the Augusta University Libraries. In this case, it is almost impossible to quickly identify which information is local unless each record is reviewed individually. Given the number of bibliographic records and the timeline of the implementation, it is not possible to identify all local data that should be migrated; however, it provides an opportunity to think about the best workflow for future cataloging practice.

Functional requirements for bibliographic records (FRBR) describes four groups of entities including work, expression, manifestation, and item. A MARC bibliographic record could contain information of all the above entities. Resource description and access (RDA) is the most recent cataloging standard based on FRBR, where works held by a library are defined as entities and include various levels of metadata such as items. Including item (copy) specific information in a bibliographic record would not cause problem in a stand-alone cataloging environment, however, in an era where collaborative cataloging such as Alma is the trend, item (copy) specific information relevant to one institution could be totally irrelevant to others and can actually add confusion to users. How can local information be handled in Alma?

USG is using Alma's network zone to manage collaborative cataloging. Even though bibliographic

records are shared by all libraries within the system, Alma allows for using bibliographic local extension fields in its bibliographic records. Libraries can add a local field in the network zone record such as 59x, 69x, 09x, or 9xx. The local information will then be saved to the institutional zone where the libraries have full control of editing. The local fields added to the network zone bibliographic record are only visible to the library that creates it. Since the local fields will reside in the institutional zone, it is safe from future overlay of the linked bibliographic records in the network zone. The network zone provides the advantage of sharing the bibliographic record yet still providing libraries the flexibility to create institution-specific information. Other locations where local information can be stored are in the holdings and item records. Holdings and item records belong to each institution. Both Alma's holdings and item records have various note fields. Augusta University maintains that if there is item-specific information, it should be stored in each item. This will make it less confusing for future migrations.

Conclusion

Migrating to a new integrated library system is a complex process fraught with many challenges. In particular, moving data from a long-established traditional system to a next-generation system with a completely new architecture presents its own set of hurdles. Long-time cataloging practices may not integrate with data requirements in the new system, necessitating a large-scale data clean-up prior to migration. Institutions planning to migrate to a new system should try to build in sufficient time for detailed data clean-up as well as data and workflow testing in the new system.

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