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### Being Earnest with Collections – Improving Access to Electronic Collections Through Enhanced Staffing

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# Being Earnest with Collections — Improving Access to Electronic Collections Through Enhanced Staffing

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*Column Editor's Notes: In this issue of **Being Earnest with Collections**, the focus turns to making use of new staffing by improving services and increasing collaboration with other library units. I recently spoke with **Lori Duggan** and learned of her successful efforts to increase staffing within the Electronic Resources Acquisitions Unit at **Indiana University**. I was impressed with her team's efforts to make better use of ILL data and to improve the user experience. In this article, the ERA team provides a number of practical applications that may help other ER units with requests for new staffing. By improving outcomes for end user, their team contributed to return on investment and reduced various linking errors. — MA*

a higher level and scope of decision making than the clerical staff level, who primarily work according to well-established guidelines with limited decision-making authority. In 2015 we were able to promote one of the unit's clerical support staff members to the professional staff level in a newly created Procurement Manager position, resulting in the unit being staffed with one librarian, two professional staff, and one clerical support staff member (4 FTE). The professional level staff possess a higher level of technical skill, with a broad level of scope and decision making capabilities. This enhanced level of staffing has enabled the unit to engage in higher-level projects with increased impact on the Libraries, and has aligned the unit for success in the current electronic resources management environment.

consult with other areas within the library to see what insight they can share with us about the e-resource user experience. Since the ERA unit typically works behind the scenes, it is beneficial to establish consistent communication with those areas that regularly interface directly with students and researchers. In particular, we were able to collaborate with the Interlibrary Loan department, and this relationship provided us with some very useful information.

ILL request data is a valuable source of information for those interested in examining how patrons are interacting with library resources. From an electronic resources management perspective, ILL data can help us pinpoint where access issues are cropping up. The interlibrary loan ILLiad management software interfaces directly with our discovery system and makes request data available to ILL staff. The data gives us detailed information regarding what database records (if any) from which the patrons are generating the ILL request.

We were particularly interested in reviewing cancelled requests, specifically requests cancelled because the library has electronic access to the requested material. By analyzing those requests, we can attempt to determine whether the patron encountered any errors that had led them to conclude (incorrectly) that the library did not have full text access to the requested book, article, etc. The data allows us to replicate searches and requests with accuracy, so in many cases we can view the search as the patron viewed it. The head of Document Delivery Services is able to generate monthly spreadsheets of cancelled full text request data via ILLiad, and she has begun dispatching these reports to us on a monthly basis.

Using this data, we were able to identify and correct some minor and major access issues. On the minor side, we have been able to discover individual incidents of incompatible metadata communication between systems. Where possible we have reported these inconsistencies to vendors and publishers. We were able to initiate a larger fix for one reoccurring instance of conflicting metadata by including a "check dissertations holdings" link among the openURL search results regardless of whether the metadata indicates the format is dissertation. We identified a number of requests for dissertations to which we had full text access, but when we replicated the patron's search, we saw there was no option to search our

There is no question that approaches to managing library electronic resources have continually evolved over the past several years. Since before the turn of the millennium, these resources have undergone a steady increase in importance, content, and scope, and comprise a growing percentage of library collection development budgets. Given the expansion and increasing impact of these resources, it stands to reason that staffing levels in units working with electronic resources must evolve to meet the multiple challenges presented in managing the electronic resources life-cycle. The Electronic Resources Acquisitions (ERA) unit at **Indiana University Libraries** is no exception.

By 2008, the ERA unit, which manages the licensing and acquisition of databases, e-resource collections, streaming video, and more, was staffed at a level of 1.5 librarians and 1 clerical support staff member (2.5 FTE). As the quantity and complexity of electronic resources increased over the years, it became clear that staffing would need to be adjusted as well. In 2010 the unit added an additional clerical support staff member in order to address the increasing workload of the unit. The ERA unit is also tasked with access management for all licensed electronic resources at **Indiana University Libraries**. Over the years it was evident that access management for the expansive collection of electronic resources the Libraries had procured had become a critical area of need. In 2013, the unit added a newly created position of Access Manager at an increased professional, non-academic staff level. This professional staff rank is able to work at

## Implementation of a Ticketing System

One of the first projects tackled with the creation of the Access Manager position was the implementation of a ticketing system to track access interruption reports. After considering the various options, we chose to use Jira, an issue and project tracking system that other departments and units within the **IU Libraries** also used.

Prior to the implementation of Jira, the unit utilized a spreadsheet to track and document access interruptions. While this worked well-enough, it did not link easily to the email correspondence received and staff occasionally failed to record access problems since the process was manual. With Jira, the first response to any inquiry creates a ticket in the system, and follow-up correspondence attaches easily to the ticket. This reduces the likelihood that a reported interruption will go unrecorded. Additionally, we use reporting functionality within the system to look at trends in our access interruption reports to determine which areas to address not only reactively but also proactively via projects and changes to our resource management procedures. Such projects have included systematic reviews of knowledgebase selections for e-resources access, workflow changes to e-resource activation processes, and the implementation of an annual review of our A to Z databases list.

## Using Interlibrary Loan Data to Improve Access to Collections

We do not rely on ticketing data alone to determine areas of improvement. We also

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dissertation databases. This was because the metadata was not reflecting the format, and so the “check dissertations holdings” option was not triggered. Instead of requesting a fix for the metadata on each individual record, our electronic resources manager worked in collaboration with our Discovery and User Experience (DUX) department to make sure that the “check dissertations holdings” will always be an option. In this way, patrons can easily access the desired dissertation.

ILL data has also alerted us to missing content, both on the vendor side, and in our own catalog. We have come across requests for articles that were missing from certain publisher sites and databases. In these cases, the article was available via another one of our subscriptions, and we were able to contact certain vendors to notify them of missing content. A cancelled request for a historical document caused us to realize we were missing not just one record in our catalog, but a number of additional records from that particular primary source database. Although we had access to the digital document when we searched directly in the database, patrons searching our catalog would not have had the opportunity to discover it. With this particular database, we rely on MARC records supplied from the vendor, which are loaded periodically. It turned out we were missing a relatively large number of records.

Reviewing cancelled ILL requests also clued us in to a number of e-journal title changes and splits. Journal titles often change over the course of publication, and we found that sometimes an incorrect iteration of the title was being cited or searched. Additionally, we found that some titles were incorrectly represented in our catalog. Recognizing this trend steered us toward another project, a review of our e-journal holdings. We undertook this project in collaboration with the Serials Acquisitions unit. The two units reviewed the Library’s e-journal holdings to confirm that titles and years accessible were accurate, and correctly described in the catalog. This project contributed to the substantial decrease in holdings problems reported to ERA. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of holdings problems reported decreased 11.9% and number of openURL problems reported decreased 15.4%.

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through the South to newspapers that were produced in Japanese-American internment camps during World War II, the featured applications showcase striking images from the Library’s collections and use data to map the attributes and history behind some of the

## Uncovering Hidden Access Interruptions Through EZProxy Data

Another cross-departmental project with significant impact occurred in conjunction with our DUX department and Library Technologies. When a URL has our proxy prefix prepended but the URL itself has not been added to the EZproxy configuration, a needhost error occurs. Previously, we would receive very few reports of these problems throughout the year. The error page that the user saw did not always inspire confidence as it lacked any sort of **Indiana University** branding, and it was suspected that users might fear it was a malicious site. Additionally, unless the patron chose to click on the link to request assistance, the libraries did not know that the error occurred.

ERA staff worked with DUX and Library Technologies to create a new error message page that included **IU** branding, more user-friendly wording of the error, and a way to contact the library to report the problem. Moreover, Library Technologies configured a log file to be sent nightly to ERA’s helpdesk that provided a list of all of the needhost errors that occurred during the day. With this list, ERA professional staff are able investigate the source of these issues even without patrons reporting the problem.

The statistics available from compiling the log files confirmed what had long been suspected: patrons were not reporting these errors to the Library. We launched the updated needhost setup on September 7, 2016. Over the remaining weeks of September, the system logged 217 needhost errors. None of these errors were reported to ERA. Through the logs, we discovered significant linking issues throughout our subject guides and other library interfaces. As we discovered issues and made the necessary changes to either library links or the proxy configuration files, the number of errors decreased significantly. Although we only have data for 4 months in 2016, there were only 129 more needhost errors in the whole of 2017. Comparing

September through December of 2016 and 2017, the number of errors compiled in the log decreased 44.5%. At this point, many of the items that appear on the log are due to bad links on non-library sources (e.g., course syllabi). Although these problems were not explicitly apparent to us previously due to infrequent reporting, this project clearly identified a hidden problem that greatly affected library users.

These high-level projects completed by the Electronic Resources Acquisitions unit illustrate the impact higher level staffing has had on the operation. The development of a trouble ticketing system for the unit has been especially useful in tracking and resolving access reports as efficiently and thoroughly as possible. Electronic resource problem reports decreased by nearly 11% after the first year of implementing the system, and the unit is now poised to proactively locate and address potential access problems before they are encountered by users. While increasing the amount of staff in our unit was necessary over time in order to address the increase in electronic resources acquisitions over the years, increasing the classification and skill level of the staff in the ERA unit has allowed for more complex troubleshooting and collaboration with other library departments on technical issues such as the management of our proxy server, user experience, and more. The result has been a vast improvement in the overall experience and access for our users, maximizing problem-free usage and cost effectiveness of our crucial electronic resource collections. 🐼

