The Workflow DB: A Better Tool for Learning and Tracking Acquisitions and Licensing Workflow

Nat Gustafson-Sundell
Minnesota State University, Mankato
Journals/ Reference Librarian
Assistant Professor
• 12,400 Undergrads
• 1,400 Grads
• 7 Colleges
  o Arts & Humanities
  o Allied Health and Nursing
  o Business
  o Education
  o Graduate Studies and Research
  o Social and Behavioral Sciences
  o Science, Engineering, and Technology

• Aleph ILS
• Serials Solutions ERMS
  • OpenURL
  • License Term Manager
  • Contacts
  • Etc.
• 1.3 Million Volumes
• 68-72,000 Periodicals
• 350 Databases
• 19 Librarians + about 30 Technicians + Grad Assistants + Student Workers
What prompted me to develop the Workflow DB?

The Context:
- Started AY2012-13 in a position carved out primarily from:
  - Serials Librarian (Acting Chair after 9 years as Chair)
  - Collection Development & Acquisitions & Budget Librarian (Also fairly new, with WAY too much responsibility)
- 2 Serials Techs – 1 new
- A newish organizational model and division ("Technical Services") which had never gelled
- Very flat, faculty-led organization

Problem:
- Despite newish organization model, there was confusion about workflow processes and policies and no clear model for how to resolve that confusion

Contributing Issues:
- Multiple committees requesting reports about acquisitions or licensing volume
- Large format conversion and new acq project paused since 2009
- New collection development initiatives (such as big deals – Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, ...)

Bottom-line:
- Backlog of work
- Problematic workflow
- New Serials Tech in need of training
- And...
  - Several committees expecting reports of work undertaken
The Solution (year 1):

- Observe and document all aspects of acquisitions workflow, as well as related responsibilities
- Check documented workflow against individual Librarian expectations
- Develop standardized documentation
- Develop spreadsheets to track acquisitions workflow

Develop the Workflow DB (beginning as a what-if exercise at the reference desk):

- Takes the place of documentation
- Produces reports based on the data fields which describe the workflow

After a couple of hours of initial design, I completed programming the first draft of the Workflow DB over a day or two during the summer.
Cancellation/Cessation/Suspension Form

Initiated by: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Vendor Number & Name

TITLE:

Call Number: (Or attach a printout of the record)

Cost ___________________________ Type(s): Standing Order Electronic Print Print+

Holdings – please attach a printout of the Journal List screen shot (for journals only) or the catalog record (non-journals).

Archived? Yes or No

Comments from Initiator (Optional):

Recommendation:

Dean’s Approval: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Subscription End Date: ___________________________ Order number: ___________________________

OR

Last Volume Received: ___________________________ Aleph Sys #: ___________________________

Steps Completed: Acq: Date: ________ E-Access: Date: ________ Cataloging: Date: ________

Print ________ Date: ________ System: ________ Date: ________ Revised 8/1/17

***Word on yellow paper***
See live demo.
Admin Status: Approved
Admin Status Date: 2/24/2015
Agent: EBSCO
Agent Identifier: 
Agent List Price: $507.00
Acq Librarian Notes: 

License: Example License
License Type: 
License Scope: 
License Status: 
Related Order Number: 
Related Order Budget: 
Related Order Encumbrance: 

Add New License?
Do you want to add a new License: Example License?
Yes
No
LicenseID: 45
License: Example License
License Notes:
License Type: Negotiated Agreement
License Scope: Review, Revision, and Signatures
License Status: Waiting for return of counter-signed agreement from vendor
License Status Date: 2/24/2015
Add License Clause to License
For multiple related orders, total the current encumbrances of all of the orders and enter that number here.
Bib Status: Brief bib needs 935
Aleph Sys Number (Bib #): 78987654
Holding Status: Needs prediction pattern work
Purchase Order Status: Complete
Aleph Order Budget: 1ER-EBSCO-ARCH
Aleph Order Number: S-887234
Aleph Order Encumbrance: $507.00
Sub Record Status: Needs Work
Vendor Order Status: Complete
Link Resolver Status: Needs to be activated
Adds And Cancels: Orders Per Budget:
Erproxy Notification: URL Check:
Acq Technician Status: 
Acq Tech Status Date: 

(From demo)
AY2013-14 (year 2):
• New Serials Tech trained using Workflow DB
• Over 800 Acquisitions Records tracked
• Nearly all mysteries were easily resolvable
• EBSCO EDI was 1 point away from perfect

Think of the Workflow DB as “Interactive Documentation”
... which also leads to easy workflow reporting and checking

But can the Workflow DB do more?
Summer 2014 Wishlist

1. Add License Clause Tables
2. Add License Clause forms and form fields
3. Add “Login”
   a. Add field highlight feature, so person knows which fields to populate
4. Main form:
   a. Change Department to College
   b. Change Access fields to combo fields (ezproxy notification, URL check, Orders Per Budget, Adds & Cancels)
      i. Orders Per Budget:
         1. Options
            a. N/A
            b. Send to Technician
            c. Complete
         2. Button 1
            a. Produces example report (query)
         3. Button 2
            a. Sends report as spreadsheet to email
            b. Updates status from Send to: to complete
5. Program more effective search feature
6. Reports (for specific fields):
   a. Link Resolver Status
   b. Holding Status
   c. Etc.
Add pop-ups to block attempted data entry. Instead, use buttons.
See live demo.
(from demo)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serials Technician:</td>
<td>Jeff Rosamond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acq Technician Notes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bib Status:</td>
<td>Brief bib needs 935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleph Sys Number (Bib #):</td>
<td>78987654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding Status:</td>
<td>Needs prediction pattern work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Order Status:</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleph Order Budget:</td>
<td>1ER-EBSCO-ARCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleph Order Number:</td>
<td>S-987234</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adds And Cancels:</td>
<td>Orders Per Budget:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(from demo)*
(from demo)

License: Example License
License Type: Negotiated Agreement
License Scope: Review, Revision, and Signatures
License Status: Under Review - Nat
Related Order Number: ?
Related Order Budget: ?
Related Order Encumbrance: ?
Acq Librarian Status: ?
Acq Lib Status Date: ?
Serials Technician: ?
Acq Technician Notes: ?

Microsoft Access
This button is used to update the terms of the license already attached. If you want to change the license altogether, enter a new license name in the License field.
Is there an ERMS for this?
- Flexible workflow tracking, reporting, and documentation
- Enables research into the success of contract negotiations

Leads to/ Combines with other ERMS needs:
- An automated spreadsheet which accurately predicts recurring costs
- A Journal Collection Analysis database to compare our collection to the universe of available journals by discipline

Does it matter if there’s an ERMS for this?
(CORAL, Verde, Next Gen ILS)

The Workflow DB is easy to build, light-weight, and recyclable.

The learnings from one project can lead to another ...