

# On the Dublin Core front

by Norm Medeiros

Associate Librarian of the College  
Haverford College  
Haverford, PA

## Accommodating Consortia within Electronic Resource Management Systems: Extending the ERMI Specifications

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*"Baseball players are smarter than football players. How often do you see a baseball team penalized for too many men on the field?" -- Jim Bouton*

### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the needs of library consortia with respect to electronic resource management systems. The paper notes areas where the ERMI data dictionary fails to accommodate groups of libraries that by choice or necessity share an ERMS. The article documents areas where extension of the ERMI specifications is warranted in order to support library consortia.

### KEYWORDS

electronic resource management ; e-resource management ; electronic resources management systems ; e-resources management systems ; ERMS ; Electronic Resource Management Initiative ; ERMI

**T**he commercial electronic resource management system (ERMS) marketplace is maturing. Earlier this spring I attended a session hosted by Palinet, OCLC's Mid-Atlantic Regional Network, that featured four of the leading ERMS vendors. Each presenter noted his system's alignment with the "ERMI specifications," a robust set of guidelines for ERMS functionality and data storage that grew out of the Digital Library Federation's Electronic Resource Management Initiative (ERMI). This commendable work has been discussed numerous times in this column as well as in countless other publications -- promotion that is well deserved. However, the ERMI report released in August 2004 fails to provide well for the needs of consortia and other library groups that operate as a single entity. As a result, libraries interested in sharing an ERMS will discover significant hurdles to implementation, since these commercial systems are based on the ERMI guidelines. One of the goals of ERMI2, the successor to the original ERMI group, is to review the data dictionary. Presumably one result of this effort will be to provide more flexibility in terms of repeatable fields and other consortia needs.

### SHARING AN ERMS

Not long after networked electronic resources became common purchases for academic libraries, groups of libraries banded together to form buyers clubs in order to take advantage of more attractive pricing. Some library groups are more strongly connected, having relationships that extend beyond

mere collective purchasing of e-resources. Even in cases where the relationship is somewhat looser, it's not hard to imagine such a federation interested in sharing a single ERMS. Given the information dissemination and workflow tracking a robust ERMS can facilitate, sharing a single system may make perfect sense, both for consortia as well as for large, decentralized research libraries. Before this can become a reality, however, ERMI's data dictionary must either be revised or commercial ERMS must extend the element set and definitions to accommodate consortial needs, a concept supported, albeit cautiously, in ERMI's final report.

Here are a few examples where such expansion should take place to accommodate groups of libraries:

ELEMENT	ERMI DEFINITION	CONSORTIA EXTENSION
Electronic Resource Status	The current standing, or status in the workflow of the electronic resource	This field must be made repeatable in order to allow multiple libraries to share electronic resource entities, as is the case with some shared catalogs.
Local System Number	The record number that is assigned by the local library management system (LMS) to the bibliographic record	This field must be made repeatable to support libraries that share an ERMS but do not share bibliographic records within a LMS.
Subscription Identifier	An identifier assigned to the resource by a publisher or like organization intended to verify the library's subscription to the resource	This field must be moved from the Electronic Resource Entity to the Acquisition Entity in order to provide each consortium member to record their unique subscription number.
Electronic Holdings	The extent of material that is made electronically available	As with Subscription Identifier, holdings may vary from library to library. Moving this field from the Electronic Resource Entity to the Access Information Entity provides a mechanism for supporting unique library holdings.
Trial Username	The user name that must be used to access the product on trial	These fields must be made repeatable in order for a group of libraries to test an e-resource simultaneously. Often, licensors provide separate usernames, passwords, and/or URIs for each library evaluating the resource. Making these fields repeatable would allow the flexibility to record each library's data.
Trial Password	The password that must be used to access the product on trial	
Trial Uniform Resource Identifier	The URI used to access the product during the trial period	

The next phase of commercial ERMS development must be able to accommodate and leverage the needs of library groups, whether these groups are completely autonomous institutions linked only by a common interest in collective purchasing of electronic resources or whether these libraries are part of a single, research library system.

## HARVESTING USAGE STATISTICS WITHIN ERMS

An exciting area of e-resources management beginning to emerge is the NISO-sponsored SUSHI (Standardized Usage Statistics Harvesting Initiative) protocol. SUSHI provides an automated means of collecting COUNTER-compliant usage statistics and transporting them into a repository. Although the ERMI functional specifications smartly identify the ERMS as being the repository where usage statistics should exist, this functionality is not easily built into such systems, as evidenced by the lack of such functionality in the majority of ERMS now on the market. Furthermore, marrying these statistics to historic pricing information (another desirable that will require extension of the ERMI specifications) and other collection development decision factors is really the ultimate goal, and where many hope to see SUSHI leave its mark. SUSHI is not without challenges - the versioning problem comes immediately to mind - but nonetheless warrants close monitoring for those interested in automating the usage statistics gathering process. For more information on SUSHI see <[http://www.niso.org/committees/SUSHI/SUSHI\\_comm.html](http://www.niso.org/committees/SUSHI/SUSHI_comm.html)>.