

A New Organization Built on a New Tool?

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Stockholm University Library has seen a rapid increase in the number of electronic resources in its collection and the percentage of the total acquisition budget devoted to such resources. Our print-oriented library organization was used, with minor adjustments, to work with electronic media. It could handle the daily workload, but it was hard to make any progress in the overall management of electronic resources. Licence information was spread in different spreadsheets and e-mails stored in various locations. Two key staff members held in their heads much of the license information and the know-how. We planned the reorganization of our work with e-resources and also bought an ERM system, Meridian from Endeavour. Initially, the new organization and the system went hand in hand, but since then the reorganization has been successful but the ERM system has not become the core tool originally envisioned. In this presentation, I will talk about the reasons why the ERM system has not succeeded in becoming the main working tool. I will also talk about the problems we have had as early adopters, and how we see the future with our ERM system. In spite of the temporary setbacks, I feel positive that an ERM system will be our organization's main working tool, and that it will help us ensure quality and continuity in our handling of e-resources.

In 1998 Stockholm University Library underwent a significant organizational change, moving from a functional model based on traditional areas such as Acquisitions and Cataloging, to one focused on the University's four academic schools (*fakulteten*), namely Humanities, Law, Natural and Social Sciences, plus three departments responsible for Information/Circulation, IT and Administrative Services.

The four "academic" departments, or "faculty groups," handle all acquisitions, cataloging and library instruction related to the schools they serve. The Library organization was previously built on a print environment, with a limited number of electronic resources handled by one staff member in the IT department.

Since then, the number of electronic resources in the Library collection has increased rapidly, and so has the budget allocation for this type of resources, which now stands at more than 50% of the total acquisition budget. Over the years we have made minor organizational adjustments in order to improve the way we managed e-resources. In 2000 electronic resources were divided among three groups staffed by members of the "faculty groups" and the IT department and responsible for e-journals, e-books, and databases respectively. At the same time, an e-resource coordinator reporting directly to the head librarian was appointed to organize the workflow. As a result of this change, fifteen staff members from seven departments found themselves spending as little as 5 percent or as much as 100 percent of their time working with electronic resources. People

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were able to do their daily work, but had trouble making any progress in managing e-resources.

So, early in 2005, we decided to investigate the electronic resource working process. The e-resource coordinator was asked to make a workflow chart documenting the progress from the moment a user requests a particular e-resource to the moment he or she retrieves it. The coordinator created a working group made of various faculty group heads, who received a list of workflow-related questions which their staff should answer. This approach was meant to show the faculty group heads the complexity of e-resource workflow. One major part of the problem was that faculty heads often exchanged the staff working on electronic media. They noticed problems with their workflow, but did not realize they were often due to the need to train new staff in the handling of e-resources. Another issue was that working a limited amount of hours on e-resources did not provide the skills necessary to properly handle this type of materials. There is a big difference between acquiring books and negotiating licences.

The working group met about five times, and once the flowchart was finalized (*see [Chart 1](#)*) we started analyzing it. We saw right away that work on e-resources was time-consuming and too many persons were involved in each step. We also noticed that the performance differed between faculty groups. We started to work on a new organizational structure that would help us to handle e-resources more efficiently (*see [Chart 2](#)*). This occurred at the same time we were implementing the link server SFX and the federated search system Metalib. In Sweden, the National Library had formed a consortium to licence the two systems. This involved one central instance on which all libraries should work. Only a few staff members in each library were instructed in it. This to prevent mistakes that could damage data for other libraries. Our decentralized approach to e-resources was not compatible with this consortial solution, which provided another argument in favor of changing the way we were handling e-resources.

One area that needed improvement was the administrative work generated by licenses. Data were scattered among various spreadsheets, e-mails and computers, and only two staff members who carried most information and know-how in their minds. If one of them left the library, much of this tacit knowledge would be lost. Consequently, while analyzing the flow chart we thought of possible ways to handle more efficiently and safely this administrative work, and the need for some sort of electronic management system became apparent. We figured that we could design our own database, but at the same time we looked at commercial products and realized that an ERM system would fulfil our needs and in the long run it would also result both more comprehensive and cheaper.

In June 2005 we submitted a proposal to the library management on how to best organize e-resource work. It recommended the creation of a centralized department with specialized staff working full-time on electronic resources and handling all subjects. The budget for subject-specific resources was to be handled by the “faculty groups,” while the e-resource department overseeing the actual management. The proposal included the purchase of an ERM system as a precondition for the reorganization. After some discussion, the library management approved the plan and okayed the acquisition of an ERM system.

The aims of the new organizational structure were:

- To have a limited number of specialized staff members working more focusedly on electronic resources
- To work more efficiently
- To stress the importance of e-resources
- To obtain a stronger mandate for e-resources management and development
- To build the new organization on a new tool

The new e-resource department was created in August 2005 with the coordinator as its head. Shortly after, it acquired six full-time staff members, while the process of acquiring an ERM system started in September.

We explored the market for ERM systems and narrowed them down to two: Verde from Ex Libris and Meridian from Endeavour. Both products met our needs, and both had differing advantages: Verde’s connection to SFX and Meridian’s to the library catalogue. Both product managers guaranteed that there would be no problems connecting their system. The decision came down to a matter of cost. Endeavour offered us a special price since we were already using their integrated library system, Voyager, and in October 2005 we purchased Meridian from them.

Due to various circumstances, we did not receive the software until February 2006. In the meantime, we had to reflect on several things. The main question was the choice of descriptive data elements. Meridian allows for over 400 elements, and while it is unrealistic to use them all, the system can be overworked by filling rarely used fields. Consequently, we had to decide which elements were most important for us and our users, and also the fields for which we had electronic feeds, and those we would have to fill manually.

The first step was to populate the system with our resources: e-journals, e-books and databases. In the case of e-journals, we had electronic feeds for the bibliographic records via SFX. For e-books, we could collect bibliographic records directly from the catalogue, while for databases we thought that we could get electronic feeds from

Metalib into Meridian. We also had to collect information on all the resources to manually fill into Meridian. Information that we found important to gather was:

- license start, end and execution dates
- interlibrary loan, course reserve, course pack and other permissions
- authorized users and locations
- walk-in use
- concurrent users
- administrative pages
- passwords and usernames
- contact information
- URLs, IP ranges

None of this was available in one place. We had to collect data from e-mails, spreadsheets and Word documents, either in paper or electronic form, and fill them in manually.

We had to collect the licenses, scan them, and then try to interpret licence information into discrete fields in Meridian. Another important task to handle was the budget for the resources of the faculty groups and the budget for the e-resource department. The e-resource department became accountable for the budget of all e-resources that cover more than one subject and all the "big deals" for e-journals. We had to gather the pricing information on the resources. All these data were gathered while we were waiting for Meridian to get installed.

The task of implementing Meridian was performed by various members in the new department. Each one was responsible for different types of resources, and for finding the best way to populate the system with information about such resources.

Early on we decided that only e-resource staff would be trained to use the new system and be allowed to populate it. They would have the responsibility of showing other library staff (with reading rights only) how to collect information from the system, a decision that afterwards proved to be wise.

After Meridian was installed in February 2006, e-resource staff began a training program delivered from the USA (via WebEx). However, due to time differences and because Endeavour did not have enough training staff, it took until December to complete the five-session program. The long intervals between each session made it difficult for staff to remember what they had learned, and using the system proved to be far more efficient as a learning experience.

When it came to populating Meridian with electronic feeds, we found that it took longer than expected, and the first load test, originally scheduled for early May, had

to be postponed until the fall. We also found that exporting e-journal bibliographic information from SFX to Meridian was not as easy as they had told us it would be. The import from SFX was something that we wanted to run at least once a week. In October we got the filter running, but each export required more manual work than expected.

We also encountered difficulties in importing the databases from Metalib. We could not get a working export file from our central Metalib instance. The National Library provided us with the export file, but we could not use it to import into Meridian.

This was a minor problem since there are just about 200 databases and we still had to fill all other database-related information manually.

We decided that we would work with them continuously, and database information is added daily. It is still rather time-consuming, since we have to fill in information about the databases in three different systems: Metalib, Meridian and our own database of databases.

One thing that worked out well was e-books. In Meridian we made a connection with bib ids to the catalogue, and we just had to upload the new ones for e-books once a month.

One major drawback was that we had to use the Voyager acquisition system to fill in the pricing information on resources, otherwise we would not be able to run budget reports. Currently we do not use the acquisition system for journals or databases and we do not intend to start using it in the future. In fact, most likely we will stop using it for books. Moreover, pricing information can be expressed in one currency only. Since we buy in different currencies but keep our budget in Swedish crowns, we still have to use spreadsheets to keep track of our budget in spite of Meridian.

In November 2006 we passed from implementation to production. All e-journals, e-books and databases were in the system, and for the first two types of resources we had electronic feeds running. We still had plenty of information on databases to add, but that was something we had expected. A month later we had our last training session in the Cognos report system, which meant that after more than one year we finally had Meridian in production.

But the story does not end here. In late December 2006 we learned that Ex Libris had bought Endeavour, and shortly afterwards we could read on Ex Libris' Web site:

In terms of electronic resource management, Ex Libris plans to continue to enhance, support, and sell Verde. The organization will also continue to provide support for Meridian through the end of 2008, with Meridian 2.0 scheduled for release in early 2007. To accelerate Meridian customers' familiarity with Verde, Ex Libris will develop Verde integration with Voyager,

as well as a migration kit from Meridian to Verde. Additionally, Meridian customers will receive Verde licenses as part of their maintenance agreement as they choose to migrate.²

When I saw this information I had mixed feelings. I thought about all the efforts we had put into Meridian, wondering whether they had not been just a waste of time and money. My conclusion was that we had learned a lot, but we should not continue working with Meridian, since we had had so problems with it. I thought that it would be better to migrate as soon as possible to Verde, and start familiarizing ourselves with the new system. I am confident that many of our problems will be solved with Verde.

However, I was informed that we would not be able to migrate from Meridian to Verde until the end of 2007. In April I contacted Fujitsu Services, the exclusive distributor of Ex Libris products in Sweden, asking them if we could migrate to Verde earlier. I was first told that the permission had to come from Ex Libris USA, and then in May that we could migrate to Verde after the summer. We will get the software in exchange for Meridian, but we will have to pay for the installation and training of Verde. I am now waiting for a price offer, and after the summer we will start the implementation process of a second ERM system.

Overall, it has been a significant learning experience. Stockholm University Library now has a new and solid structure in place to handle electronic resources. The aim was to build a new organization and implement a new tool at the same time, but the tool did not prove to be as successful as we had hoped. However, in the meantime we learned how such a tool can help us in the future. Even though the system was not particularly expensive at the start, it proved to be so in the long run. Stockholm University Library has been the first library in Sweden to acquire an ERM system, and it can be hard to stand alone. Hopefully, when we get Verde, other libraries in Sweden will follow suit. We have a lot to learn from each other. I am glad we figured that it would take us a long time to implement an ERM system—as a matter of fact, it took us even longer than expected.

We have started to discuss with our providers what we can receive in electronic format. I hope that in the future information will go from the provider into our ERM system via electronic feeds. ERM systems will be improving continuously. One such improvement is SUSHI, the NISO Standardized Usage Statistics Harvesting Initiative, which allows libraries to gather statistics automatically. Once it is implemented into Verde, our work with e-resource statistics will become much easier.

² See FAQ at <http://www.exlibrisgroup.com/>.

I believe that the new ERM system will be able to efficiently manage our e-resources through their entire life cycle: from conducting a trial, negotiating a license, acquiring content, providing access, troubleshooting problems, evaluating resources to renewing access.