

E4LIBRARIES LIBRARY SYSTEMS WORKSHOP
Monday 26 November 2007

Part One: Outcomes

1. What are the obstacles which prevent us from moving to a fully e-enabled library supply chain and what needs to be done to overcome them?

1.1 The chief obstacles were seen to be:

- Existing non-standard implementations.
- The variety of potential standards available.
- The variety of systems models and procedures needing to be accommodated within any standard process.
- Reluctance/resistance to change, among librarians but also in the finance and audit areas.
- Lack of vision, and lack of awareness of internal deficiencies.
- Lack of understanding of the benefits of full-cycle e-commerce; and why it is important.
- Local classification.
- Shortage of IT resource at library level.
- Failure of some library systems to comply with standard messages.
- Lack of portability and interoperability between library systems.
- Cost of changing systems and processes: shortage of financial resource.
- Some smaller library suppliers unable to adopt and implement EDI.
- Issues with character sets/work rounds.
- Requirements to handle non-book material as well as books.

1.2 The solutions were thought to be:

- Closer adherence to BIC and EDItEUR guidelines; and additional enforcement of best practice.
- Accreditation of libraries and systems providers who adhere to standards.
- Greater willingness on the part of systems suppliers to support standards and to be 'more accommodating'.
- Better tendering for library systems by libraries, and especially the inclusion of specific EDI requirements.
- Promotion of best practice through case studies and other means.
- National classification standards.
- Adoption of XML EDI to increase overall flexibility.
- Extension of EDI standards to accommodate non-book material.

2. How can libraries, library management systems suppliers and library suppliers best work together to exploit the opportunities offered by current and new technology?

- 2.1 A more collaborative approach by all parties in the supply chain
- 2.2 Greater promotion of standards and more sharing of information about new technologies: improved communication of the opportunities available.
- 2.3 Underlying importance of adhering to standards; and more rigorous enforcement of mandatory fields in EDI (though it was not clear whether this was an action on BIC and, if so, how it could be achieved).
- 2.4 A common view on the management information required from library systems, to enable information to be shared and compared.
- 2.5 Better communication between library systems suppliers and their customers.
- 2.6 Greater participation from the library community in BIC and support for its objectives.
- 2.7 Proposal for a library systems suppliers' forum to be held, perhaps at the London Book Fair.

3. In the systems arena, what are the seven (or more) quick wins which would make a real difference to the efficiency of the public library service?

- 3.1 Consultancy on EDI implementation: how much has been done; how much could be quickly added; what the obstacles are.
- 3.2 Detailed case studies on EDI implementation and value of standards.
- 3.3 RFID implementation guidelines and standards.
- 3.4 Simplification of servicing standards and consistency across library consortia (at least).
- 3.5 Simple guide to EDI (EDI for Dummies).
- 3.6 Annotated guide to the EDI standards.
- 3.7 Regional seminars and groups on EDI implementation (led by systems suppliers)
- 3.8 Identification of a 'key contact' at national level to police systems and EDI implementation and to provide a basis for benchmarking best practice ('name and shame' approach).

3.9 Definition of national standards for financial systems and communication with LMSs.

3.10 Recommendation that each library authority should appoint an EDI 'champion'.

3.11 Guidance on using standard procedures to measure the impact of implementing new processes and systems for audit and management reporting purposes; and to enable benefits to be charted more effectively.

3.12 Set a timetable for compliance with EDI requirements and publish a manifesto to support it.

3.13 Publication of a 'live trading document' to show which versions of software are in use and by whom.

4. How can we use technology to make the library service more cost-effective and provide a better service to users?

4.1 Technology needs to be more accessible and user-friendly.

4.2 Technology needs to be used to encourage library use, e.g. the provision of remote access to digital content and to catalogue information. Information should be available to users about what books might interest them on the basis of past activity (in the Amazon way). Home delivery of books ordered online needs to be investigated.

4.3 RFID should be seen as an enabling technology which provides benefits far in excess of just self-service. It should permit better use of staff and other resources, improved stock management and enhanced management information.

4.4 The Espresso print on demand machine, installed in the New York Public Library, may have a role to play in enhancing users' experience of libraries. Similarly, library vending machines have been introduced in the Netherlands.

4.5 Use of EDI makes for quicker, more targeted availability of stock.

4.6 Library management systems should develop enhanced capability to address stock rotation issues and identify slow-moving stock.

4.7 National arrangements for access to online resources.

4.8 Expertise in adoption of new online resources and other technology needs to be shared between library authorities because of resource limitations.

4.9 It was suggested that public libraries should make arrangements to share online resources with academic libraries, as had happened with the University of Central Lancashire.

5. To what extent do the efficiency or systems needs of the academic library community differ from those of public libraries; and how might they converge in the future?

5.1 The significance of e-resources – and the way they are used both in the supply chain and by users - is the chief difference between the two communities at present. Issues around preservation and licensing are paramount in the academic sector; and convergence with the needs of the public library sector is limited as a result.

5.2 Delivery of digital content, however, will clearly grow in the public library sector, and similar processes will develop to accommodate it. However, academic libraries have a different requirement for metadata, particularly as far as the maintenance of data for journal subscriptions is concerned.

5.3 Issues with financial systems and their relationships with LMSs are broadly similar; so are the players in the market.

5.4 Supplier selection is developing in the academic sector but not yet to the same extent as in public libraries. Much selection will continue to be either through discovery on the web or by acquiring bundled resources from intermediaries.

5.5 The academic sector has a wider range of suppliers, especially for specialist subjects or foreign language material.

5.6 Bibliographic data use shares common ground. Both sectors need high quality accurate data. The academic sector needs to take advantage of the rich product data held by publishers to enhance OPACs.

Part Two: Themes and action points

1. The recurring theme of the workshop was that, despite the multiplicity of standards available, there was a need to agree on the standards to be used and to ensure that they are applied in a standard way. One of the first challenges is how to address this and police it, in the absence of any direct business driver. This is a key requirement for the success of e4libraries and BIC would expect to play a part in getting the message across, using both existing and new communication channels. E-commerce accreditation might well be a helpful tool in doing so.

2. Library systems suppliers need to establish better communications between them and other players in the supply chain. Greater levels of interoperability with other systems are to the benefit of all. It was emphasised that the implementation of standard EDI messages does not threaten the competitiveness of individual offerings.

3. A clearer vision of how the library supply chain fits together is needed. The library has specific core activities and these should be mapped and addressed in a single workflow, not necessarily to the exclusion of alternative approaches but certainly within a fixed overall framework.

4. Libraries need to have a better insight into the way the supply chain works and to analyse where costs can be saved and activities prioritised to optimise their service to customers.
5. More information, in the form of case studies, benchmarking reports, statements of best practice is required to pressure libraries to take up the realisable benefits of new technologies.
6. The Havering case study, showing the cost savings available from full-cycle EDI, and Essex's success in integrating LMSs with financial systems need to be fully documented and publicised.
7. Processes such as EDI or RFID are enabling technologies which open up a new range of opportunities for serving customers better and using resources more productively. Libraries need to look beyond electronic ordering or self-service in RFID implementations to the management information and workflow benefits which are available.
8. These technologies must also be seen as key instruments in providing better value for the public money invested in the service.
9. The e4libraries project, with the support of MLA, CILIP and individual organisations in the supply chain, must be expected to deliver much needed leadership in improving efficiency in the library supply chain. At present the supply chain has too limited and loose a structure, and this encourages half-hearted implementations and work rounds which are unhelpful to interoperability and the maintenance of robust standards.
10. The establishment of better communications between all supply chain players is essential: to understand and reconcile different points of view; and this must be a key part of e4libraries. Further events such as this workshop, but also seminars and one-to-one dialogue, are likely to be necessary to ensure momentum is maintained.

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