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Migrating to Alma: The Changing Role of the Systems Librarian

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ELUNA 2013, Athens, Georgia

April 30-May 3, 2013

What Will Be Covered

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Methodology
4. Analysis/Results
5. Conclusion
6. Opportunities

Introduction

- Central Washington University (CWU) Library
- Orbis Cascade Alliance
- Shared ILS
- Evolution of the ILS

Evolution of the Roles of Systems Librarians

- In the late 1960s and early 1970s
- In the 1970s and 1980s
- The evolution of the Internet throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s
- In the 2010s

Voyager/Aleph

- Traditional ILS
- Client-server computing model
- Modular functionality
- Effective in managing print materials
- Work with ERMS, link resolver, proxy server, digital asset management system, and other add-ons to manage electronic resource and digital collections

Alma

- Next-generation ILS
- Centered data service
- One single, unified workflow and interface
- Replaces Ex Libris' traditional Voyager and Aleph ILS systems, Verde ERMS, SFX link resolver, and DigiTool
- Uses SOA principles and web-based cloud management and deployment
- Supports modularity and extensibility

Literature Review

- Weiling Liu and H. Cai found that *cloud computing* has a significant *impact* on systems librarianship.
- Liu and Cai found there was not enough evidence to prove that cloud computing might negatively impact a systems librarian's career.
- Subsequently, the authors suggested systems librarians *improve* their *knowledge* and *skills* to meet the new challenges in the field.
- Liu, Weiling and Cai, H. "Embracing the Shift to Cloud Computing: Knowledge and Skills for Systems Librarians." *OCLC Systems & Services* 29, no. 1 (2013): 22-29.

Literature Review (cont.)

- Breeding claimed that the next-generation ILS would *eliminate* many hardware and maintenance investments for libraries.
- The next-generation ILS utilizes Web-scale technology deployed via cloud environment.
- Vendors can *centrally manage the majority of systems tasks* that had been performed by local systems staff in a traditional ILS environment.
- Breeding, Marshall. "Agents of Changes." *Library Journal* 137, no. 6 (2012): 30-36.
- Breeding, Marshall. "Current and Future Trends in Information Technologies for Information Units." *El Profesional de la Información* 21, no. 1 (2012): 9-15.

Literature Review (cont.)

- Sutton examined the relationship between the *knowledge, experience, and skills* expected of systems librarians and the *curriculum and support* offered to library students at ALA-accredited programs.
- Gathered and analyzed the contents of online job postings.
- Examined the websites of ALA-accredited institutions.
- Sutton found 6 of the top 10 most frequently required knowledge and skills were *human/organization* related.
- The top requirement was for *communication skills* (70% percent of jobs)
- Sutton, Patricia. “Employer Expectations and Systems Librarians.” Research Rpt., Southern Connecticut State University, 2011.

Literature Review (cont.)

- Xu and Chen examined 133 systems librarian job advertisements.
- Compared the results with a survey of employers and newly hired systems librarians.
- Xu and Chen found that a strong background in *information technology* is required for the job of systems librarians
- Xu, Hong and Chen, H. "Can We Meet the Challenge? The Educating Systems Librarian Research Project Report 3." *The Electronic Library* 19, no. 5 (2001): 315-26.

Methodology

- Definitional Criteria
- Free Online Job Postings
- Gathering and Grouping
- A Typical List of Responsibilities and Duties
- Vendor's Claims

Table 1: Job Posting Distribution By Year

Year	Aleph	Alma*	Voyager
2007	0		1
2008	1		1
2009	2		1
2010	1		1
2011	1		1
2012	4	2	12
Total	9	2	17

Source: Code4lib, ALA JobLIST, various university job listings

Table 2: Aleph Job Posting Distribution by Titles

Title	No.	%
<i>Systems Role Only</i>		
Integrated Library Systems Librarian	2	
Systems Librarian	3	
Senior Systems Librarian	1	
Systems Librarian Position-Web & Mobile Based	1	
Systems Specialty		
Subtotal	6	78%
<i>Systems Role Plus an Additional Role</i>		
Head of Library Systems	1	
Technical Services and Systems Librarian	1	
Subtotal	3	22%
Total	9	100%

Source: Code4lib, ALA JobLIST, various university job listings

**Table 3: Alma Job Posting Distribution
by Titles**

Title	No.	%
<i>Systems Role Only</i>		
Systems Librarian	1	
Subtotal	1	50%
<i>Systems Role Plus an Additional Role</i>		
Systems & Metadata Law Librarian	1	
Subtotal	1	50%
Total	2	100
		%

Source: Code4lib, ALA JobLIST, various university job listings

Table 4: Voyager Job Posting Distribution by Titles

Title	No.	%
<i>Systems Role Only</i>		
Information Systems Librarian	1	
Systems Librarian	8	
Senior Systems Librarian	1	
Subtotal	10	58%
<i>Systems Role Plus an Additional Role</i>		
Acquisitions Systems Librarian	1	
Acquisitions and System Services Librarian	1	
Systems & Web Development Librarian	1	
Systems and Distance Education Librarian	1	
Systems and Electronic Resources Librarian	1	
Technical Services and Systems Librarian	1	
Technical Services/Systems Librarian	1	
Subtotal	7	42%
Total	17	100%

Source: Code4lib, ALA JobLIST, various university job listings

**Table 5: Job Posting Distribution by
Titles**

Systems Librarian's Role by Title	Voyager + Alma + Aleph	%
<i>Systems Role Only</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>61%</i>
<i>Systems Role Plus an Additional Role</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>39%</i>
Total	28	100%

Source: Code4lib, ALA JobLIST, various university job listings

The analysis result shows (see Table 5) a majority of (61%) positions use titles such as “Information Systems Librarian”, “Integrated Library Systems Librarian”, “Systems Librarian”, and “Senior Systems Librarian”, which indicate that the incumbents play a role as Systems Librarian only.

While 39% of the job titles explicitly require that the incumbents must play an additional role to support *another area* other than systems. The job titles appear as a combination of the two areas such as “Systems and Acquisitions Librarian”, “Systems & Web Development Librarian”, etc.

Table 6: Roles Required for Supporting Voyager/Aleph ILS

Roles	No. of Ads	% Required
Administrator/Implementer	20	77%
Data Operator	20	77%
Liaison/Coordinator	17	65%
Technology Leader	17	65%
Project Manager	17	65%
Report Generation Expert	13	50%
Webmaster	11	42%
Trainer	11	42%
Expert Source	10	38%
Supervisor	10	38%
Faculty Liaison	7	27%
Advisor	7	27%
Policy maker	4	15%
Other roles	14	56%

Source: Code4lib, ALA JobLIST, various university job listings

Responsibilities and Roles Supporting Voyager/Aleph

As shown in Table 6, 5 of the top 7 roles are concentrated on *information technology*, which implied that systems librarians must have *certain advanced knowledge and skills* in information technology.

Table 7: The Expected Level of Local Systems Staffing Required for Supporting Alma

Tasks	Local Systems	Vendor (Cloud)
<i>Server, Network and DBA</i>		
O/S management		X
Oracle upgrades		X
Back-ups		X
Disaster recovery		X
Test environment		X
Security infrastructure		X
Logging-debugging	X	
Firewall	X	

Tasks	Local Systems	Vendor (Cloud)
<i>Application</i>		
Service packs		X
Version upgrades		X
Client Deployment		X
Test application environment		X
Command line	X	
Configuration and customization	X	

Tasks	Local Systems	Vendor (Cloud)
<i>Support and Service Calls</i>		
Under the hood diagnostics		X
Implementing proposed fixes and testing solutions		X
Capacity planning & tuning		X
Liaison to vendor	X	
Logging & tracking service calls	X	
Total	6	13

Source: Ex Libris' Response to Request for Proposal of the Orbis Cascade Alliance's Shared Library Management System, February 29, 2012

Analysis Results

- The essential tasks of supporting the next-generation ILS have dropped to 6 from 19.
- Systems *administration* responsibility is potentially limited to a few tasks.
- Greater *communication* is crucial.
- The weight on the roles of serving as *technology leader/expert source/trainer* for Alma, *expert support* for Primo, and *project manager* for ILS migration has increased.

Leadership in ILS Migration

- Planning
- Preparation
- Data migration
- Configuration
- Project management
- Training
- Coordination

Conclusion

The analysis results demonstrate a *shift* is happening where the primary roles and responsibilities of systems librarians supporting Alma are becoming more *human/organizations* related, while those positions supporting Voyager/Aleph show that top roles are concentrated on *information technology*.

Opportunities and Challenges

- Develop more local applications
- Reengineer themselves
- Become an expert to support Primo
- Enhance the integration of Alma with other local systems, digital collections, and applications
- Involve in other library priority projects
- Play an additional role

Q/A

Thank You
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