

## Foreword

I am delighted and honored to provide a foreword for this fine collection of richly informative articles on a wide array of topics within the emerging field of electronic resource management. I think the book will be just as useful to relative beginners as to those like me who have been working in this area for some time.

It is no longer news that libraries continue to invest more and more heavily in e-journals, e-journal back files, “traditional” databases, e-books, and newer types of e-resources of every description—or that something like 500 libraries have now purchased and are implementing e-resource management (“ERM”) systems to help them manage these collections more effectively. As director of the Digital Library Federation’s E-Resource Management Initiative that helped shape many of these systems, I came to realize during “phase one” of that project both how complex they need to be in order to support the many different facets of ERM work and how flexible they will need to be to adapt to changing technologies, business models, and other variables we may now only dimly envision.

With such a challenging and unpredictable environment, what is needed is a collection of articles that strikes a balance between providing background and practical information for the “here and now” and helps build toward and bring order to the future; this volume succeeds in doing this remarkably well. To focus briefly on some immediate and practical organizational concerns, several articles discuss such crucial issues as workflows, roles and collaboration, or explore how strategic planning or less familiar approaches like “process mapping” can be used to promote orderly and efficient operations. Others deal thoroughly and helpfully with more readily defined but still challenging problems like processing and making optimal use of usage statistics for decision-making, how to present journal holdings, or how to work productively with vendors on quality control issues—even across a large and complex consortium like the University of California’s.

Few will dispute that another important and problematic area for libraries, publishers and vendors these days is licensing; while licenses must be understood and negotiated in the present, evolving business models and legal developments are likely to have serious implications for the future environment that libraries will work in. Serious and continuing attention must therefore be paid by librarians to this part of the landscape, and those seeking a deeper understanding of it will be pleased to see three substantive, complementary articles that deal, respectively, with the evolution of license terms over the last several years, the role of copyright, and the negotiation process.

The book also provides much of interest on what might be called the “technical” front, as well. There are, for example, two helpful articles concerning ERM systems—as well as excellent discussions of linking technologies and authentication. In addition, there is a nice survey of standards relevant for ERM systems that describes and explains the important existing and emerging ones and provides useful ideas about how new standards might further simplify and automate needlessly time-consuming tasks. Lastly, two additional articles focus more directly on and discuss possible but achievable ERM

“futures”—including one that argues that ERMs can and will provide the core or essential functionality for future integrated library systems.

That is quite a remarkable notion, since not many years ago there was a pervasive sense among librarians involved in managing electronic resources that they were on their own and had to “make things up as they went along!” Now it seems much clearer that there is firm ground to stand on while we deal with our day to day management and operational issues, and one of the great strengths of this collection is that it helps solidify that place while contributing a basis for intelligent discussions and planning for the future. That is no mean accomplishment!

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