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Original Citation

Stone, Graham (2011) The E-Resources Management Handbook. *Against the grain*, 23 (1). pp. 36-38. ISSN 1043-2094

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The E-Resources Management Handbook

Introduction

Ten years ago, UKSG¹ published the *Serials Management Handbook*², edited by UKSG's present chair Tony Kidd and Lyndsay Rees-Jones. The publication provided an overview of best practice in the area of serials management.

In 2005, UKSG was approached to publish a second edition. However, the committee felt that even after 5 years, the world of serials management had moved on, as had the remit of UKSG. The original book touched on electronic developments, but acknowledged that the majority of serials information was delivered to libraries via print.

The remit of the UKSG is to:

- facilitate community integration, networking, discussion and exchange of ideas
- improve members' knowledge of the scholarly information sector and support skills development
- stimulate research and collaborative initiatives, encourage innovation and promote standards for good practice
- disseminate news, information and publications, and raise awareness of services that support the scholarly information sector

It was felt that any new publication needed to reflect these aims in addition to developments in the e-resources industry. Originally, it was envisaged that the new publication would be a member benefit, however, it was soon decided that open access was the way to go and the *E-resources Management Handbook*³ was born!

The handbook is now in its 5th year and contains 30 chapters to date, all available as open access. It is hoped that by constantly adding chapters to the handbook, it will continue to provide relevant information covering developments within the wider electronic information resources industry. The handbook is designed to order the chapters by publication date; this way it not only keeps up with changes, but also provides a snapshot of developments in the industry over time.

The editorial board

In 2007 Rick Anderson (well known to AtG readers) reviewed the handbook in the *Charleston Advisor*⁴, describing the 10 chapters as 'collection of essays dealing with a variety of topics related to ERM from different perspectives'. Rick made a number of very valuable comments about the relevance of some of the chapters to a worldwide audience. The UKSG Committee welcomed the critique and no sooner than the article was published, Rick was approached to become part of the editorial team as our 'American correspondent'.

Scope

The scope of the handbook is to provide chapters which cover the whole range of issues and challenges facing the e-resource industry and are contributed by experts in the field. It includes the full range of UKSG membership, including chapters for librarians, publishers, agents and everyone in between. Chapters are particularly useful for students studying librarianship, indeed the latest chapter by Lizz Jennings at the University of Bath entitled 'Electronic resources management for electronic resources librarians: a bibliography'⁵, was commissioned directly from Lizz's MSc after an email to lis-e-resources⁶. The handbook is also aimed at those new to the industry or simply for those who want to catch up with the latest developments in e-resources.

Chapters in the last two years have included introductions to peer review, journal impact factors and the role of the editorial board. UK copyright and the semantic web have also been comprehensively covered.

E-resources management is a fast paced industry, this means that some chapters can date very quickly. The editors periodically check those chapters that may need a newer version, so far two chapters-the first by Jenny Walker on new resources discovery mechanisms and the second by Angela Conyers on usage statistics and online behaviour - have been updated. Angela's chapter was also accompanied by a new chapter on the current developments and future plans of COUNTER by Peter Shepherd. While the revised chapters allow readers to keep abreast of the latest developments, the older chapters are still listed so that library and publishing students can see the rapid development over a relatively short space of time.

Thought leader interviews

In 2008 it was decided to commission 5 'thought leaders' interviews with leading experts in the industry. A list of five questions were drawn up, ranging from the icebreaker – "How long have you been in the industry and what is the most significant change you have seen?" – to the more demanding – "Where do you see the industry going in the future?" The handbook approached Catherine Jamieson to interview a number of professionals from varying backgrounds – Stephen Abram, SirsiDynix; Martin Marlow,(then at) Ingram; Peter McCracken, (then at) Serials Solutions; Jim Mouw, University of Chicago; Alison Mudditt, (then at)SAGE.

The resulting interviews make fascinating reading, giving a range of very different perspectives on the information industry at the time. It will also prove interesting to re-visit the interviews in a few years time to see whether the predictions for the future were true.

NASIGGuides

With Rick Anderson on board it was decided to see if any of the authors of the NASIGuides⁷ would be interested in publishing in the handbook. To date three guides have been revised and co-published on the NASIG website and in the handbook – Trina Holloway on cancellation workflow; Joseph Thomas on a beginner's guide to working with vendors and Glenda Griffin on how to survive as a new serialist. A cursory glance at the NASIGuides website shows there are more interesting guides to come in the future.

Usage

Since the handbook was first published there have been over 22,000 full text views, with the top 5 all time favourites being:

1. A general overview of the e-resource industry by Chris Armstrong and Ray Lonsdale
2. Usage statistics and online behaviour (1) by Angela Conyers
3. The vital link: the role of the intermediary in e-resources by Rollo Turner
4. Licensing and negotiating: exploring unfamiliar ground by Nol Verhagen
5. Impact factors – the basics by Jo Cross

While the top 4 are the 4 oldest chapters, Jo's chapter on the impact factor is relatively new to the Handbook.

Usage and popularity of the handbook is growing, with approximately a quarter of all downloads coming in 2010 alone. This year's top 5 most downloaded chapters so far are:

1. Usage statistics and online behaviour (2) by Angela Conyers
2. A beginner's guide to working with vendors by Joseph Thomas
3. New resource discovery mechanisms (2) by Jenny Walker
4. Cancellation workflow by Trina Holloway
5. E-resource management and the Semantic Web: applications of RDF for e-resource discovery by George Macgregor

It is reassuring to see the two revised chapters in the top 3 clearly showing that the updated versions are proving useful. The NASIGuides are also well used. The chapter on the semantic web by George Macgregor, a lecturer in Information Management and a member of the Information

Strategy Group based in the Information Management & Systems section of Liverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University was a departure for the handbook, but it does go to show that there is significant interest in this area.

Forthcoming chapters

The next chapter to be published will be 'Show your true colours: devising advocacy for an institutional repository' by Mary Betts-Gray and John Harrington at Cranfield University. This chapter will be a very practical introduction to advocating open access repositories.

Other chapters in the pipeline include usage statistics from the publisher's perspective, an introduction to open access, a view of library consortia and a guide for publishers on what libraries do and do not like when talking to suppliers. Finally it is also hoped that the chapter on intermediaries and e-resources will be revised for 2011.

It is possible to sign up to get notification of new chapters when they are published by following the link on the UKSG website at <http://www.uksg.org/serials#handbook>.

Ideas for new chapters

The editors are always looking to commission new content for the handbook. If there is something that you think needs to be included in the E-Resources Management Handbook, the editors need to hear from you. Contributions are welcome from around the world and from any aspect of the e-resources industry, commercial and the non-commercial sector alike. Chapters are typically 4-5,000 words long and because the handbook is an open access publication, authors sign a licence to publish, rather than a copyright transfer agreement, so that copyright is retained by the author(s).

The author would like to thank all of the editors of the handbook over the past 5 years, Jayne Burgess, Jill Taylor-Roe, Jessica Feinstein and Rick Anderson, all of the contributing authors and Ally Souster and Alison Whitehorn at UKSG for making the handbook what it is today. Finally, a great big thank you to Hazel Woodward and Helen Henderson, outgoing editors (in every sense of the word) of Serials⁸ for backing the original idea.

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