

Joining a Large Academic Consortium: Benefits and Challenges for a Health Sciences Library

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Himmelfarb
Health Sciences Library

Background:

- Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library made the decision to join the Washington Research Library Consortium and migrate from its own ERM/link resolver (360 Resources) and discovery system (EDS), and an ILS shared with the law school library (Sierra) so all GW libraries would be on a shared system.
- The Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) includes libraries of 9 academic institutions in the DC metro area.
- WRLC supported a shared Voyager ILS and online catalog that was used by most member libraries, including George Washington University's main university library.
- WRLC contracted to migrate to Ex Libris Alma & Primo VE in summer 2018.

Methods:

- Himmelfarb migrated to Alma and Primo VE with the other WRLC libraries over the 2017/2018 academic year.
- Migrating ILS, link resolver, ERM, and discovery functions all at once was challenging, especially as the Library Operations unit was not fully staffed as new workflows were being established.

Results/Outcome:

- Himmelfarb's users gained Consortium Loan Services which provides 2 day courier delivery of circulating items in most consortium library collections.
- Primo provides centralized search and requesting of consortium holdings as well as Himmelfarb collections.
- Himmelfarb has less control over quality of metadata in shared records.
- Consortium level decision making can be slow and centrally managed configuration changes can have unanticipated impacts.
- Himmelfarb staff have developed new relationships with other consortium libraries and participate in decision making through consortium committees and communication forums.
- Both negotiation and advocacy skills are required to meet the library's needs as one of only two health sciences libraries in WRLC.



- Storage of 2.9 million volumes & archival boxes
- Support for shared Alma and Primo VE platforms
- Preservation and digitization
- Shared e-resource purchasing and management

Member Libraries:

- American University
- AU Pence Law Library
- The Catholic University of America
- Gallaudet University
- George Mason University
- The George Washington University
- **GW Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library**
- GW Jacob Burns Law Library
- Georgetown University
- Georgetown Law Library
- Howard University
- Marymount University
- The University of the District of Columbia

Himmelfarb Representation on WRLC Committees

Alma Coordination Team: JoLinda Thompson (Systems Librarian)

Metadata Committee: Sara Hoover (Metadata and Scholarly Publishing Librarian)

E-Resources Committee: Laura Abate (Head of Library Operations)

Resource Sharing Advisory Committee: Acquisitions and Resource Sharing Librarian

Positives/Gains:

- Consortium Loan Service – Students and faculty can borrow items from WRLC consortium libraries for free. Items are delivered in 2-3 days.
- Consortium physical items and shared WRLC e-resources can be searched in Health Information @ Himmelfarb/Primo.
- Alma provides a central platform to manage both e-resources and print.
- Network of colleagues at consortium libraries and support from WRLC for troubleshooting issues.

Challenges/Lessons Learned:

- Complex, multi-layered structure of resource management platform (Alma) with records in three zones of origin and control; little control of record metadata for Network Zone and Community Zone records.
- Network level changes have local impacts (sometimes not wanted!)
- As the first consortium to transition to Primo VE, the WRLC discovered many issues requiring resolution from Ex Libris.
- As one of two health sciences libraries in the network, Himmelfarb has to advocate for user needs.



Aug 2017: Contract signed with WRLC

Dec 2017: First test data environment created

Apr 2018 : Second test load to sandbox

June 2018: Pre-migration configuration completed

Aug 2018: Associate Director & Metadata Librarian depart; Sierra & EDS support ends

Jan 2019: New Metadata Librarian hired

Sep 2017: Himmelfarb joins WRLC migration weekly meetings

Feb 2018: Staff training event at American University

May 2018: Third test load in response to data migration failures

July 2018: Go Live! Primo & new web page released

Sep 2018: Consortium Loan Service begins

Apr 2019: New workflows fully established. LibGuide-based documentation platform completed.

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