Practical Applications Q&A

Patron purge: Does anyone with an fine or lost/overdue item get kept in the system?

We follow these procedures - https://knowledge.exlibrisgroup.com/Alma/Product_Documentation/010Alma_Online_Help_(English)/050Administration/030User_Management/030Purging_Users and do not waive fines when we purge. So those users with lost items or with fines and fees do not get purged. This works for us as we need to retain the financial records for 7 years vs. 3 years for regular circ transactions.

Is the registrar's department connected to library alma workflows to help with student status?

We have an indepth patron load process that depends on the main feed from campus, this includes registrar's data. The patron load process expires our students twice a year a few weeks after the end of the previous semester. Staff and students are also immediatedly expired when they leave employment or withdraw from campus. We also place holds on student's accounts who have more than $200 in fines in the registrar system. This is a manual process that staff facilitate.

Do you have documentations related to republishing RapidILL sets? We need to do this at our institution but are not sure how to go about it.

We have had our RAPIDILL Sets setup for quite some time. We set them using the instructions - https://knowledge.exlibrisgroup.com/Alma/Product_Documentation/010Alma_Online_Help_(English)/090Integrations_with_External_Systems/030Resource_Management/060Setting_Up_OAI_Integration and these instructions to setup sets and profiles - https://knowledge.ag-software.clarivate.com/rapidill/Implementation_Guides/Rapid_OAI_Holdings_Step_1_Creating_the_OAI_Integration_Pr.html. Following any updates in locations or collections moves we advice campuses to review their sets and edit them as needed. Then go to the Resource>Publishing Profiles and republish the full index of the OAI output. We then open a ticket with exlibris to ensure the campuses get fully updated (we have found that are larger campuses with many holdings don't automatically update / refresh. Following that they may also need to review the block table which is available in the RAPIDILL platform.

Did you have any strategies for cleaning up records linked to order records?

As part of our shutdown library procedures we do check for on order items in the library that is being consolodated. See our documentation - https://kb.wisconsin.edu/uwlss/74414. We run anything tied

to our acq workorder over to acquisitions staff and have them move them or cancel them. Then we remove the work order department.

Please give an example of your Resource Sharing clean-up. What is being cleaned up and how does that happen?

It depends. In the presentation I alluded to an issue we caught where items were not completing properly on either side, when they were returned to their home institution. For our consorita borrowing and lending these uncompleted requests would have greatly messed up our statistics. So in this example I ran analytics from the NZ to pull all requests that were in a status of "returned by patron" or "returned to partner" and were over 14 days old (since their status update). We then shared the google sheet with our campuses via Redmine ticketing bit and had them double check the items and manually complete the ones that were in fact returned. In short, we also have our resource sharing lending and borrowing instructions that campuses should review to help catch items that might be stuck. Lending - https://kb.wisconsin.edu/uwlss/57923 and Borrowing - https://kb.wisconsin.edu/uwlss/57922

What is a RapidILL set?

If you subscribe to RAPIDILL you usually set up OAI publishing following instructions - https://knowledge.ag-software.clarivate.com/rapidill/Implementation_Guides/Rapid_OAI_Holdings_Step_1_Creating_the_OAI_Integration_Pr.html - essentially you create a set of physical monographs or physical serials that you are willing to lend and those you are only willing to lend to your own people (local-only). These sets are published out and RAPIDILL uses them to build your holdings index on what you will and will not lend.

Do you find that your students request a book and expect it to be available within days? If yes, how do you let them know that some items can take a week or longer to be ready for check out?

Yes, our patrons are typically quite impatient, especially as the semester winds down. Many of our campuses have adopted RAPIDO. The messaging from the pods helps set these expectations for patrons either for loans or for digital requests. These can also be acheived by updating the public note in your GES service links for ILL requests.

Is a mini bib the same as a quick record?

I believe what I refer to as a mini bib is the same as exlbiris' quick record - https://knowledge.exlibrisgroup.com/Alma/Product_Documentation/010Alma_Online_Help_(English)/Physical_Resource_Management/015_Managing_Physical_Resources The records in question are created automatically by the system when a Resource Sharing borrowing request. The record has minimal metatdata copied from the record the patron place a request on, it also has the holding usually in our rsborrow location, and an item for the loan to circulate to your patron on. If workflow is not followed correctly, the records can remain in your system. That is what we needed to clean up and what the re structuring of Resource Sharing solved.

How did you document your reasonings for making your changes/combinations for future reference, and where do you have your spreadsheets/documents stored so they are available to your future replacements? Why did you choose that storage option?

As the owners of our respective areas, we set the configuration standards and procedures ourselves. That's exactly why we documented them carefully. All of our documentation lives in Dropbox, organized by functional area, so a future Systems Librarian would find configuration procedures in the Systems folder, and a future Library Specialist of Access Services would find fulfillment documentation in their respective folder. We chose Dropbox because it's the storage platform our library already uses, it's accessible to everyone who needs it, and it keeps documentation tied to roles rather than to individual people.

Were there any instances where Alma's configuration limitations forced a policy decision or required you to adapt an existing policy?

Only one: part-time instructors. A system issue prevented us from adjusting due times for that user group, so rather than fight the system, we adapted the policy and adjusted our overall configuration for leisure loans.

Do you have a limit on how many locations you add to Alma? It seems "more locations, more issues"

Not formally, but our procedures for creating new locations are specific enough that redundancy shouldn't occur. We do agree that the fewer locations, the better.

Did you find areas where changing an existing name in the configuration "broke" a connected configuration? TOUs and Fulfillment Units for example?

Definitely. That's the main reason we found it easier to build new configurations from scratch instead of altering existing ones, and it's what we'd recommend. You can configure everything the way you want it, move everything over, confirm it's working, and only then delete the old configuration. Our goal was a complete overhaul, not piecemeal fixes.

What was your timing for implementing the changes while materials were on loan under old TOUs?

We had an advantage: at the time, we were an all-digital library, and our only physical loans were same-day tech items. Since we're closed on Sundays, we scheduled several Sunday work sessions to make the changes where nothing was in circulation.

Where there any concerns about losing Analytics data when changing loction codes?

Not significantly. Because we were all digital, our physical circulation data was limited, and Analytics wasn't a major part of our reporting culture. We decided the benefits of a clean configuration outweighed any potential loss of historical data. Libraries with heavier physical circulation should weigh this more carefully.

Are you using any specific systems, sites, or software to document/organize the reasons for future configuration changes and which settings were adjusted?

We use Dropbox, and we created standardized maintenance documentation templates so that all fulfillment documents follow the same structure and are easy to find in the relevant folder. Each document follows a "how, when, and why" structure: how to change, when to change, and the reasoning behind it. The goal is to build institutional knowledge that outlasts any one of us.

I have a question about creating user role profiles in your system. Did you find any discrepancies between the permissions and privileges listed in the Alma Privileges Report and those documented by Ex Libris for the same roles? If so, how did you reconcile those differences?

We didn't find many discrepancies, and some issues we ran into turned out to be user error. We worked through role assignments by trial and error until we found permissions that met everyone's needs while following the principle of least privilege.

Wondering what staff requirements are needed to accomplish this?

Because we own our areas, we had the authority to make configuration decisions, policy changes, and procedure updates ourselves. Even so, getting buy-in from our dean and staff on permissions was valuable, since it helped everyone feel included and gave them a stake in the project. Communication with circulation staff was essential: giving them advance notice of configuration testing and policy changes kept everyone prepared and minimized surprises at the desk.

Do you have a standardized process for creating, maintaining, and updating documentation, including guidelines for version control and review frequency?

Yes. All documentation is stored in Dropbox using standardized templates we created, organized by functional area. Each maintenance document records how a change was made, when, and why, so we can refer back to it when questions come up and so future staff understand the reasoning behind our setup. New documentation follows our standardized templates, and we plan to review it annually to make sure our configuration continues to match our workflows.

Can you share how you documented your decisions? Did you use a specific software or how did you organize it so you could refer to it later to answer questions?

All of our documentation is stored in Dropbox, organized by functional area, so configuration procedures live in the Systems folder and fulfillment documentation lives in the Access Services folder. We created standardized maintenance documentation templates so every document follows the same structure: how a change was made, when it was made, and why. That consistency makes it easy to find the reasoning behind any decision when questions come up, and it builds institutional knowledge that will carry over to future staff.

Other than Admin roles, are their any roles you felt main circulation staff did not need to have access to?

Yes. Some circulation staff previously had cataloging roles they no longer needed for their day-to-day work, so we removed those. We treat role assignments as flexible, though. If a circulation staff member needs additional access for project work or professional development, we add it for that purpose and remove it once it's no longer needed, in keeping with the principle of least privilege.

Follow up to staff requirements -- what did you need to learn before you could make decisions? what did you already know? would more people have helped or hurt the process?

Because we each own our areas, we already had a strong understanding of our workflows and the authority to act on them. We did involve staff when assessing permissions, asking what access they felt they needed, but final decisions rested with the two of us, which kept the project moving.

The biggest thing that filled in our knowledge gaps was outside expertise. We were fortunate to get information and advice from the Head of Circulation at a previous institution that had a strong configuration. We'd highly recommend building and maintaining professional relationships with peers at other institutions, since learning from a library that has already solved a problem can save a great deal of trial and error.

As for team size, a small decision-making group worked well for us. More voices at the decision stage likely would have slowed things down, but involving more people for input and communication was valuable.

How much authority did you each have to make the changes once you identified them? We've been trying to clean up our locations lists since our migration a couple of years ago, but it feels like every step has to go through multiple departments and approvals every time, which significantly slows down progress, momentum, and motivation.

We had full authority over our areas, along with strong support from our dean, and we'd recommend that setup going in if at all possible. We likely couldn't have accomplished so much in such a short time if every change had required universal buy-in.

If full authority isn't possible at your institution, one approach that may help is seeking upfront approval for the overall project scope and guiding principles, such as a set of location-creation standards, rather than approval for each individual change. Once the relevant team has signed off on the framework, individual changes that follow it may be able to move forward with less review.

Because the TAP books were mostly textbooks from the bookstore do you think that affected the quality of the metadata that the Metadata Assistant produced?

We don't necessarily think the metadata would have been better with other books -- most of these books are readily available with full records either elsewhere in Alma or other databases like OCLC, and many of these books were fiction or nonfiction that were not traditional textbooks. The bulk of them

were straight forward cataloging and we do not have reason to believe this affected the quality of the metadata for the worse compared to other resources we could have given it.

Can it transliterate accurately?

We only had one non-English book in non-Latin script, and while it did not transliterate that we cannot say necessarily that it cannot.

Did you catalog any books in other languages? If so, how did AI do?

We had one series of Japanese books, and it actually handed it quite well (according to the cataloger who did it, who knows some Japanese), although it did not transliterate. One of us catalogs a large amount of foreign language material, and the idea of catalogers using AI to translate materials that they themselves cannot verify makes us very nervous. Whenever I use AI, I see enough misinformation and false-pulls that I want to be verifying everything for correctness, and if you don't personally have the language expertise it's hard to validate the AI's output.

Did you evaluate the "Enhanced with AI assistant" feature in your study?

No, but testing that tool we think would be the way to effectively go about a more successful study is to run experiments using something like this on small, targeted pieces, instead of on the whole record. Our colleague tried playing with this tool outside of our experiment and didn't find it extremely successful, but we have heard people have had more success using AI on metadata for small pieces of information consistently. Thank you for the question, it's worth pursuing farther.

When you create the record with AI in Alma, do you still contribute it to OCLC? If so, can you share instructions on how to do that?

This was not part of the workflow for our experiement, we ran this experiment on books cataloged in our Institution Zone. No OCLC records were harmed in the making of our data.

Curious if the AI assistant included Linked Data URIs, and if any of these were checked & found to be hallucinations?

We didn't recall seeing linked data URIs, but it at times did not seem to know what to do with names; i.e. it did not give you the authorized form for the name, which would create linking issues in the future. But no, we don't recall seeing URIs hallucinated or not.

Were there any trends in record types (maybe by publisher) that were more consistently ok?

That'd be something that'd be interesting -- the only related "trend" that we noticed was we had a hunch that the FRBRization was tripping it up a little bit, because it was pulling more wrong data when it had related records that already existed in Alma. If there was another edition, or another format, it would pull data it had from those related records instead of the things in our scans, e.g. edition information. Worth looking into this question more analytically in the future!

Did you have an urge to get your hands on control sover what the tools is doing - write your own prompts?

In some ways, yes, because the AI is a little bit more successfully responsive with pieces of data at a time and, as Skyler said, for this experiment "I wished I could have a conversation with the AI." For example, to ask where it's getting the information from -- okay, now take it from here instead. Etc.

What was the sample size for your experiment? And did you do manual cataloging and AI cataloging on the same materials?

Our sample size wasn't huge -- 100 books for the fall, and 38 for the spring. We did the manual cataloging and the AI cataloging on the same exact set of books, so we were duplicatively cataloging all our books with both tools to accurately compare.

Was working on the AI output as satisfying as cataloging on your own?

No, it was not. It was more of a "fixing" than building from the ground up. Catalogers, broadly speaking, love to learn, and doing the cataloging is how we learn both about our discipline and the subject matter we're working on. However, one of our presenters did mention that we don't catalog for our satisfaction, as much as we love it, we should be cataloging to best serve access and discovery, and that means supporting workflows that work for us.

How do you reconcile the benefit of AI helping staff with workloards with the previous point that catalogers get most of their expertise from experience? I agree AI is a tool that needs oversight, but how to support both?

Trial and error. Having the catalogers in the driver's seat, doing the cataloging, and then experimenting its productivity on things like pattern-finding, data-analysis, etc. It might be better for me for figuring out how to approach my backlog, rather than get it off my desk for me. Also make sure your cataloger is knowledgeable already in what you are asking it to do -- if you need it to help you transcribe a 505, make sure your cataloger knows how to construct the 505 themself first.