

Verde interoperability with Voyager and SFX: implementation of Verde at RMIT University Library, Melbourne.

Part 1

Background

This is a case study of the project to implement Verde at RMIT University Library (Melbourne, Australia) with emphasis on the synchronization of Verde with SFX, interoperability with Voyager and SFX, and the role of a modern ERM (electronic resource management) system within general library technical operations.

The presentation describes the gain in effectiveness from converting a diverse paper-based information maze into a well-ordered computer-based system and, in particular, the use of streamlined workflows for the acquisition and renewal of databases, and the management of associated licences.

This paper is written from the viewpoint of the practical implementation of library systems such as SFX, MetaLib or Voyager and does not dwell on any overtly technical or IT issues. It concentrates on the business aspects of implementing complex software into workflows and technical processes operating within an academic library.

About Verde

Verde is Ex Libris's solution for an electronic resource management system (ERM) is based on the work of the DLF ERMI (Digital Library Federation Electronic Resource Management Initiative). The basic data structure follows that of the DLF's 2004 "[Electronic Resource Management Report](#)". The present version 2.0 of Verde includes automated workflows which allow a library to allocate and track the tasks involved in acquisitions, licensing, and recommendation/renewal.

The backbone of Verde is the SFX Knowledge Base (KB) which supplies the bibliographic resources and availability data to the Verde KB and is synchronised with it. The Verde system provides automated methods for entering new eproduct records, licences and trials, which then create and track associated records such as interface, package and ejournal records.

RMIT University as a multi-level educational institution

[RMIT University](#) is one of Australia's original and well-established educational institutions, catering for study and research within the two sectors of higher education and VET (Vocational Education and Training). It is an innovative, outward-looking university of technology centred in the southern city of Melbourne. RMIT has a well-earned international reputation for excellence in work-relevant education and high quality research, while simultaneously engaging with the needs of industry and community.

The university has more than 63,000 students studying at campuses in Melbourne, regional Victoria, in Vietnam, online, by distance education, and at partner institutions throughout the world. This makes it one of the largest in Australia. The university has programs of study in twenty-five schools across three academic portfolios.

RMIT University Library

[RMIT University Library](#) has a staff of 170, organised into two divisions (Services and Resources) with five metropolitan campus libraries. For those interested in statistics, here are some reflecting the volume of traffic in 2007:

- 2 153 465 physical visits, an increase of 8%

- 5.66 million visits to our website (up 10% on 2006)
- 1.17 million searches in Search It (MetaLib) (up 24% on 2006)
- 610 538 Find It (SFX) requests (up 30% on 2006)
- 1672 e-reference queries (up 81% on 2006)

History of eresource acquisition

After a 2000 strategic redirection of the Library collection from predominantly print-based to one based on electronic resources (made possible with significant additional funding from the University), the number of electronic resources expanded to 54 databases with 9318 active portfolios (5329 titles catalogued) from numerous different vendors in 12 months. This also entailed a significant redirection in the structure and work of our technical services section.

This has led to the situation in mid 2008 where we now have 43,140 catalogued electronic titles (including 7430 ebooks), 829 active MetaLib resources, and 205 SFX targets with 72,696 active portfolios (in both SFX and Verde). On the acquisitions side we have about 30 vendors for electronic databases covering the gamut of agents, societies to consortiums such as [CAUL](#) (Council of Australian University Librarians).

Need for ERM solution

This explosive increase in the number of eresources and consequent involvement with vendors, cataloguing, recommendation and renewal led to a complex situation requiring an ERM solution. Over the years various different sources of license and bibliographic information sprang up but we constantly had trouble answering questions about permissible document delivery or licence conditions such as the difficult “can we convert materials to MS Word for students with a print disability”. Added to this was the constant difficulty in keeping track of information from many diverse sources and ensuring that the appropriate person had access to it at the appropriate time. Examples of these are the gap in time from when databases are bought following their recommendation or the arrival of MARC records until the record appears on the catalogue. We also had no single source from which we could measure the entire coverage of our by now significantly extensive eresource collection. Inevitable gaps in this information flow created numerous inefficiencies despite our best efforts.

The process as it existed

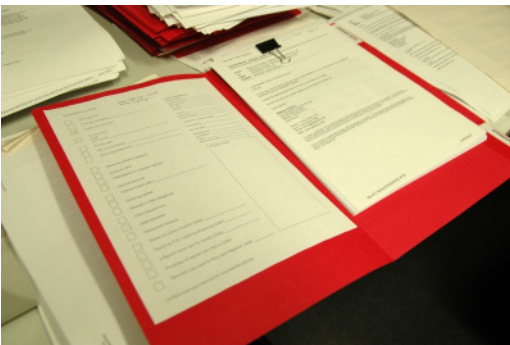
The licence tracking and processing system as it works now involves three different paper-based files (correspondence, licences, invoices) and multiple files of email correspondence, lists of access and renewal information, as well as the data included in SFX and MetaLib. These also replicate some bibliographic information in the Voyager catalogue. A couple of years ago, we started an Excel spreadsheet (dubbed “Megalist”) to include a lot of the access and admin information but the maintenance of this was too time-consuming and impractical to keep up with. (It was also used as a repository for historical data from the database previous to MetaLib). Needless to say not one of these provides a comprehensive list of all the databases we have access to, either subscribed or free.

Photos of before

A pile of licences waiting to be processed (waiting for signed copies from vendors, waiting for scanning, waiting for MARC records, incorporation into red folders). They may also be waiting for addition to MetaLib, SFX or the catalogue.



A red folder containing a sheet (on left) for metadata about the progress of the licence (when signed, sent to vendor) and (at right) correspondence and licence. In effect, we were only able to keep track of the time taken to send signed licences to the vendor and how long it took for the copy to return.



A filing cabinet containing the red folders of database licences. These are filed alphabetically but only have one major access point, that of title of database. This led to confusion between which files contained information on a vendor, interface, and various databases sold by that vendor or held on that platform. There was also confusion caused by the varying needs of our process, whether the file catered for negotiation, acquisition, cataloguing, invoicing, renewal or accounting for specialised deals through a consortium. Having the file cabinet held in one person's office also led to access and convenience issues.



A cabinet containing folders of correspondence about various databases. These are ring binders with mainly historical correspondence including changes of name of databases, vendors and platforms.



The new process with Verde

The Find screen for Gale Cengage Computer Database showing links to the Work record, the eProduct record and the Interface record

Verde Tasks **KB Manager** KB Tools Languages Logout Help
 Welcome Richard McCart
RMIT University Library

▼ cengage computer

Managing: e-Products New Search New Work View Basket Quick Add

Find: cengage computer By: All Type: Contains e-Product Type: All Find Local Find All

Search results for (cengage computer):
 Found 1 e-Product.

Title	e-Package	e-Interface	Status	Selection	Actions
Gale Cengage Computer Database	Gale Cengage Computer Database	Galegroup	Available		New Add to Basket



The eProduct screen for Gale Cengage Computer Database showing tabs for License, Access and Admin etc. Tabs with a green bar indicate they have information added.

The screenshot displays the Verde eProduct interface for the Gale Cengage Computer Database. The top navigation bar includes 'Verde Tasks', 'KB Manager', and 'KB Tools'. The main content area is divided into several sections. On the left, a sidebar lists various actions: e-Product, Acquisition, License (highlighted), Access, Admin, Trial, Cost, Usage, Workflow, and Sync History. The main content area is titled 'Gale Cengage Computer Database' and shows the following details:

- Managing:** e-Products
- Status:** Available | **Active:** 08-Aug-2008 -
- e-Package type:** Aggregator | **Acquisitions:** In process 1 | **License:** Approved
- Type:** Regular
- License name:** Thomson Gale Agreement
- License method:** Negotiated
- *License start date:** 01-Dec-2005
- *License end date:** 31-Dec-2008
- Renewal date:** 27-Sep-2006
- *License execution date:** 27-Sep-2006
- Standard duration:** 1 years
- *Vendor advance notice:** 30 days
- *Renewal type:** Automatic
- License URI:** [Empty field]
- License URI type:** URL
- Physical license:** DM office
- *License status:** Approved
- License status note:** [Empty field]
- *Licensor:** Cengage Learning
- Original licensor:** [Empty field]
- *Licensee:** RMIT University Library
- Licensing agent:** [Empty field]
- Local licensing negotiator:** [Empty field]
- License delivery requirements:** [Empty field]
- Licensing note:** [Empty field]

At the bottom of the main content area, there are 'Submit' and 'Cancel' buttons. The footer of the page includes '© Ex Libris 2006'.

The MetaLib entry for the Cengage Gale Computer Database (note the change of name).

MAIN MENU | SFX ADMIN | USER INFO | STATISTICS | METAINDEX | CATEGORIES ADMIN | PORTAL ADMIN | END SESSION

FIND RESOURCE | RESOURCE LIST

rmit (RMIT)

Resource Name: Computer Database (Gale) - RMIT

*Mandatory fields

Subscription
Presentation: Primary
Presentation: Secondary
Presentation: Library

Full Name	* Computer Database (Gale)
Display Name	* Computer Database (Gale)
Institution	* RMIT University
Secondary Affiliation	<input type="text"/> List of user groups
IP Filter	<input type="text"/> List of IP filters
Configuration Code	GALE_CDB
Free By Subscription	Subscription
Link to Native Interface URL	<input type="text" value="http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/rmit"/>
Proxy Server Flag	<input type="radio"/> No need for proxy server <input checked="" type="radio"/> Use proxy server
Hostname:Port	<input type="text" value="z3950.iacenter.com:210"/>
Database Code	<input type="text" value="CDB"/>
Authentication	<input type="text"/>
Link to Records in Native Interface	<input type="text"/>
Number of Sessions	<input type="text"/>
Cataloger's Note	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 30px;"></div>
Verde Indicator	<input type="checkbox"/>
Verde Access Type	<input type="text"/>
Version	<input type="text"/>
Region	<input type="text"/>
Entry Date (YYYYMMDD)	<input type="text"/>
Last Update (YYYYMMDD)	<input type="text"/>

The OPAC display

RMIT University Library Catalogue

[Library home](#) | [Databases](#) | [e-Journals A-Z](#) | [Citation Linker](#) | [Library Subject Guides](#) | [Other library catalogues](#)

[New Search](#) · [Headings List](#) · [Results List](#) · [Renew my loans](#) · [Place a HOLD](#) · [My Account](#) · [My saved searches](#) · [My Bookshelf](#) · [Search History](#) · [Help](#)

Your search: Keywords = gale computer database
 Search results: Displaying 3 of 5 entries

<< >>

Brief view | Full view | MARC view

Title:	Computer database [electronic resource].
Publisher:	[Farmington Hills, Mich.] : Gale Group,
Description:	Text (periodical citations, abstracts and full text articles) Updated weekly Coverage is most recent four years of data. 1994-
Online access:	Available on Computer Database
Location:	Access electronically
Call Number:	Computer Database
Number of Items:	1
Status:	Available
Holdings:	See database for full-text coverage

Find it

<< >>

Print / Save / Email

Select Download format: Full Record | Format for Print/Save | Save My Search

Enter your email address: Email

Save: To My Bookshelf

Access

You can have guest access to our version of MetaLib (branded as Search It) at:

http://searchit.lib.rmit.edu.au:8331/V?func=find-db-1&force_login=y

and access to our Voyager catalogue through the Library website <http://www.rmit.edu.au/library>

Part 2

Background of project in Australian context

[Curtin](#) has Verde with Aleph; [Unilinc](#) has 2 libraries in consortium; and RMIT is the first in Australia with a Voyager/Verde combination.

Other software used by RMIT University

At present the Library has many other Ex Libris components: SFX version 3, MetaLib version 3 (with version 4 available Oct.-Dec. 2008), Voyager 6.2 (with version 7 in Dec./Jan. 2008/2009), Analyzer 1.0 in Jan. 2007, Marc It from Apr. 2008, and DigiTool testing from June 2008.

The first production instances of these were: SFX in June 2004, MetaLib in Feb. 2005, Voyager in Jan. 2007, Verde in August 2008, and DigiTool in 2008.

The Library has also purchased Media Scheduling but has not yet used it. In addition we use the SIP2 protocol to interface with twelve 3M self check units and have three interfaces to University-wide financial and student systems (SAP and PeopleSoft).

Setup of project

The project is in three major parts: the first part (April 2007-April 2008) setup of hardware and software; the second (May-June 2008) Ex Libris managed stage included initial training, testing and set up of the production system; the third part (June-December 2008) involves the loading of RMIT University specific data such as licences, acquisition data, and admin/access data. This third part will transform from the start of 2009 into the functioning system used for trials, license tracking and recommendation/renewal.

RMIT University Library originally signed with Endeavour Information Systems in June 2006, having initially purchased the major modules of Voyager, Analyzer, Media Scheduling, Curator and Meridian. Soon after we commenced the implementation of Voyager and Analyzer which resulted in going live with Voyager by the beginning of 2007. However, with the subsequent takeover of Endeavour by Ex Libris, the Library agreed to implement Verde and DigiTool from Ex Libris.

The hardware that had been acquired was based on our requirements for the Endeavour products. As we had a separate upgrade project for our pre-existing SFX/MetaLib hardware, the requirements for SFX, MetaLib and Verde were reassessed on the understanding that the development of these three products would be closely integrated in future releases.

The proposal for the implementation of Verde was accepted by our Library Executive in March 2007. Verde is seen as a strategic product which impacts on the display and retrieval of eresources in Voyager, staff access to information about eresources including licences, and the processing and description of eresources by our technical services section.

For Ex Libris the project manager was Jo-Anne Rivers. For the Library the Business Sponsor was the Library Director Craig Anderson and the project manager for stage one and two was Stephen Gillespie. For stage three the project manager is Richard McCart.

Project members are Adrian Waters (IT), Domenic Iannello (Datasets), Peter Tan (Vendor services), Barbara Burstall (Resources), Eliza Kasprovicz (Eresources), Ann Crawford

(Eresources) and Therese Keys (Eresources). Susan McCusker (Eresources) and Michele Hunt (Eresources) joined the project at Stage Three.

Timeline of project

Meeting to discuss project late March 2007. Began in April 2007. May 2007 discussing hardware requirements. Ordered new hardware in July 2007. Jo-Anne Rivers was appointed Ex Libris project manager in August 2007 after reassignment of the previous project manager. There was a significant announcement from Ex Libris in September 2007 notifying users of the revised Verde roadmap and the concentration on fixing Version 2.0 rather than development of a new version.

Kickoff meeting April 2008

Initially Kickoff meeting 1 day; Install system 17 days; Application training 16 days; Test load 18 days; Production load 12 days; Project evaluation 1 day.

Request for installation requested May 2008, finalised June 2008 with projected handover to Support in September 2008. Training 2 days in July 2008.

Hardware for Verde

The timeline for the hardware:

April 2007 hardware reassessed for Verde, SFX and MetaLib

July 2007 hardware ordered

Late 2007 hardware arrived and initial SUN install

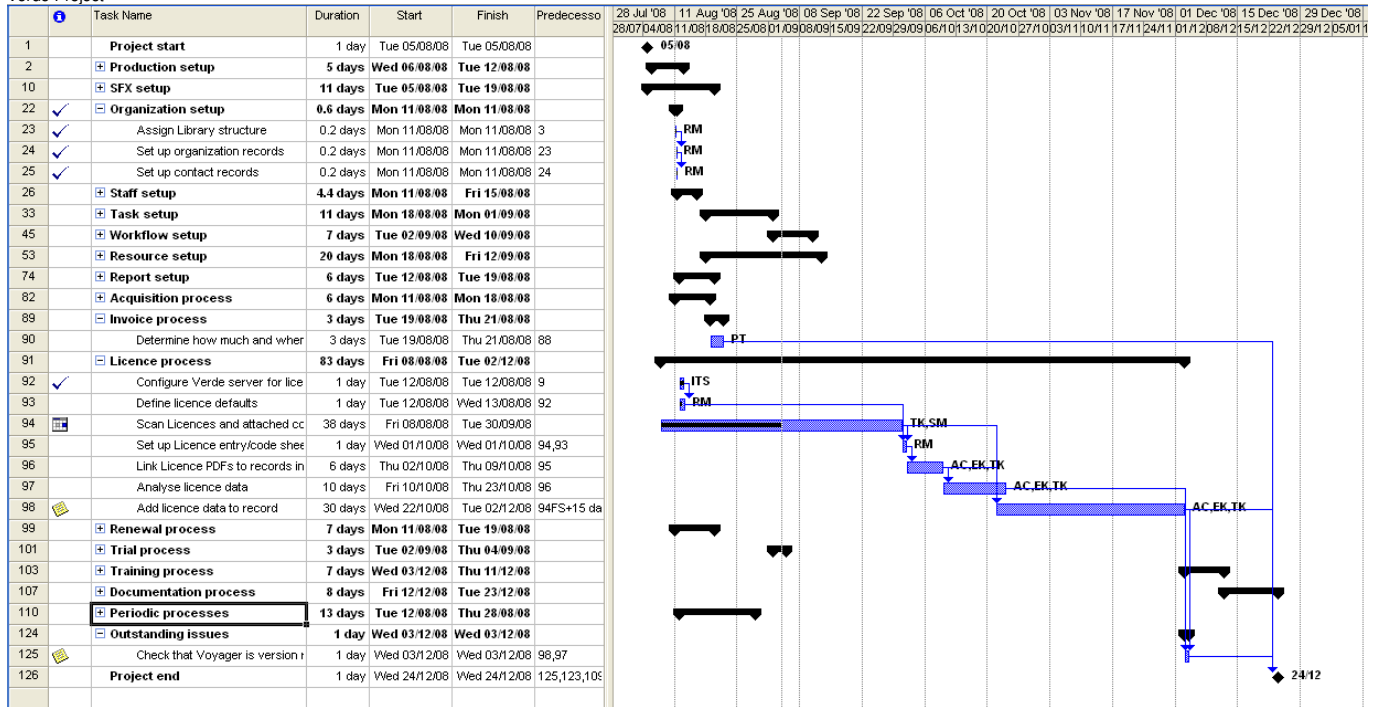
April to May 2008 hardware build completed and readied for software install by Ex Libris

The server is a Sun Fire V890 with 8 CPUs and 28GB RAM (probably greater than Verde itself needs, due to the fact that Metalib and SFX will also run on this server.). It is running Solaris 10 and Oracle 9.2 (for Verde; it looks like they've put Oracle 10 on for Metalib 4.)

Backup is managed centrally by Infrastructure Services (a section of the University's centralised Information Technology Services) and involves a disk-based backup system on a separate server that takes a snapshot of our server's file system. A tape-based solution then backs up the snapshot.

Project plans

Verde Project



**Part 3
Timing of project**

From production to general staff usage and display of info in SFX: June 2008 to December 2008. Background to project, customization, implementation, testing (prior to production), 10 staff set up with logins, one administrator. Production Since August 18th. Testing (post production) Analysis of Verde tasks

Training

Initial training for 8 staff was provided by Ex Libris as well as system administrator training for 2 staff (2 hour session using webinar). There was further in-house training for 2 staff which will be followed by training for staff involved in the selection process later in the year. Around the end of the year we plan to have general staff training for view access.

Workflows and reports in Verde

Initially there are about 135 licences to analyse and input into Verde as well as associated admin and access information. This takes about 4 staff working 1-2 days per week. Verde workflows will begin to be used from late 2008/early 2009 and will be useful for new databases that are recommended from this date. Most of the full benefits of Verde will become apparent from the beginning of 2009 when recommendations, trials, licence management and cataloguing are all handled through work tracked and allocated automatically by email to the appropriate staff member. Our process of recommendation involves a committee to oversee this and each member will be asked to provide feedback they gather on each resource from the trial period. This committee is also involved in the renewal of purchased resources and this process will also be handled via a workflow in Verde. After the resource has been purchased the licence process will be handled by an automated workflow as well.

The state of various resources and processes can be checked through the use of reports provided by Verde, either for an admin user or for staff with view access only. Emails are automatically sent to staff with a login in Verde and other emails can be sent to staff even though they have no login in Verde. Typically this would be used in the recommendation/renewal process.

Synchronization with SFX KB

Each monthly update of the SFX KB is synchronised with an identical update of the Verde KB, with manual updates of data in Verde pushed to SFX which in turn keeps track of changes made to it. This process will be made easier when the two admin interfaces are joined into one sometime in 2009.

Linking with Voyager

Linking with Voyager to display acquisition data will not be available to RMIT until our install of Voyager 7.01 scheduled for the end of our academic year Dec.-Jan. 2008/2009 (though staff views may be available Oct./Nov. 2008).

Part 4

Ongoing help and documentation

In addition to release notes and information from the Verde-I email group, there is an extensive range of training materials and documentation on the Ex Libris documentation portal at:

<http://docs.exlibrisgroup.com/docportal/logon.php>

These seem to me to be more extensive and helpful than previous software's resources (at least at the time of their implementation eg. MetaLib and SFX).

It has been very useful to be able to access the "[USMAI licence interpretation best practice](#)" from the University System of Maryland and Affiliated Institutions (USMAI) and the section on Verde documentation and training in the "[SFX - Verde wiki](#)" from California State University. Be careful when printing out any manuals or documentation, it's better to use the up-to-date online documentation or save it to a local drive. For example, the increase in the size of the user's guide:

2007 300 pages

March 2008 400 pages

July 2008 500 pages

Achievements and further progress

"My approach to any implementation is train library staff in the product, to get them using the product to establish a comfortable rapport (if you can do that with a piece of software!), and to be confident to tackle more-complex roles after the implementation is finished. RMIT have a fantastic team, with a lot of enthusiasm, and I hope that by having an up-beat training and clear directions during the testing and learning, they are now ready to use the product in production, working through all the different levels of Verde to better utilize their energies." Jo-Anne Rivers
Ex Libris project manager

Over half the database licences and accompanying correspondence have been scanned. These files will be added to the appropriate resource in Verde. We have developed a sheet to assist in deciphering licences and staff will work progressively through the scanned documents to add information such as ILL terms, concurrent users etc. At the same time we will be adding access and admin information such as login/passwords and URLs. This is all part of the massive amount of data we need to add to the basic SFX data in Verde in order to gain the benefits of Verde's full functionality.

While information flowing from the loading of licence data will be an immediate plus for Verde, the full benefits will begin to be achieved from the beginning of 2009. This will include complete management of the database recommendation process through Verde, incorporation of the Verde and SFX admin modules into the one interface (along with the provision of one combined KB), and two-way information flow between Voyager and Verde. This will allow full acquisition treatment of databases through Verde including renewal and subscription tracking.

ERMs have come a long way since the demos from 2 to 3 years ago. Verde will help us a lot to solve many of our current problems in eresource management and it will make our work much easier.

Risks/Lessons learned from project

The following points have been learned from the project so far:

- 1) Need well-resourced, trained IT group for set up of hardware. The project within the Library was delayed due to the long process of installation and configuration of the hardware. This delayed the commencement of the software installation by Ex Libris.
- 2) Need more time for testing and learning
- 3) Need more time to work through the renewal process
- 4) “That, given a pro-active, fully-resourced project team, a Verde implementation can be relatively pain-free. I believe this was how you also found the project – there were no major issues, and everything worked well, pretty much first time. I know things can go wrong when the team is not fully resourced, the product is not scoped properly and the project is not managed.” Jo-Anne Rivers Ex Libris project manager
- 5) The training session should be spread over 2-3 days rather than one day. Some staff found the time insufficient to absorb all the information delivered and to be able to ask the right questions afterwards.
- 6) One staff member would have preferred a few sessions with a break between them in order to “play with the software” and then come up with appropriate questions as needed. It would have been good for the trainer to present the proper way for doing all the tasks.
- 7) Populating an ERM is both time-consuming and crucial so if there are tools or services to help the process make every effort to use them.
- 8) The project teaches staff much more about the licensing process which before had mainly been managed by one person. Verde makes database information and process information available to more staff.
- 9) It would have been advantageous to see Verde up and running in another University environment

The author

Richard McCart is the Eresources/Serials Team Leader in the Library Resources & Access unit of RMIT University Library, managing a team of ten staff. The team’s duties include responsibility for the operation of MetaLib, SFX, Verde, the acquisition/cataloguing of eresources including ebooks, and the acquisition/cataloguing of print serials for RMIT University Library.