Unit – The Norwegian Directorate for ICT and
Joint Services in Higher Education and Research

Norwegian National User Group Annual report 2018 – Unit

Unit is a new public administrative agency consisting of BIBSYS, CERES and parts of UNINETT that provides common systems and services for education and research throughout Norway. Unit delivers Primo and Alma to the BIBSYS Consortium and Leganto to the Reading list consortium.

The national groups for Alma, Primo and Leganto is administrated by Unit. Unit is a consortia member of IGELU.

The BIBSYS Consortium / Alma

The BIBSYS Consortium consists of around 80 institutions from the higher education and research sector in Norway, including all universities, university colleges, the National Library of Norway, and research and health institutes. All the institutions in the BIBSYS consortium use Alma and Primo.

After almost 3 years with Alma and Primo we experience that the consortium members have become used with the strengths and weaknesses of Alma/Primo. The systems have become a natural part of the day to day life in the institutions. One of the goals with purchasing a new Library Services platform was to get a modern and more efficient library platform. Alma is indeed a more modern system than our previous system; however, we have not gained the improved efficiency we had hoped for yet. This is partly due to Alma in some cases having a complex workflow e.g. Resource Sharing, and that the institutions don't use Alma in the most efficient way.

The BIBSYS Consortium members do not submit support cases and enhancement requests directly to Ex Libris. Unit is the primary contact point to the consortium with a support system that handles most of the inquiries. The inquiries that Unit can't solve is submitted to Ex Libris support. Once a case with e.g. priority High is sent to Ex Libris we often experience that we must enhance it to the monthly customer care meetings in order for Ex Libris to prioritize the case. This escalation may work, but if it is a complex and time-consuming case we experience that the case is put aside and forgotten. Unit often needs to escalate the case once more to get priority on the case again.

The average time it takes for a case (normal, high) to be solved is still too long: >15 days for high priority, and >33 days for normal (the numbers are based on reports from Ex Libris Support and we are somewhat uncertain of all of the criteria for including/excluding cases in the statistics). The general impression is though that the average solution-time (cases in development excluded) are higher than the numbers from Ex Libris indicates.

Several support cases from Unit are sent to development. The cases get an estimated delivery time, but we sometimes experience that this estimate is changed, and sometimes without informing us about this change.

One advantage with Alma is that it is in constant development and new features/services are released every month. Unfortunately, we often experience that when a new awaited feature or service is released, it does not live up to our expectations. The release is often limited and it will

not work properly. Our experience is that it takes time for Ex Libris to add the necessary functionality in order for the feature/service to work properly.

For some specific use-cases there has been dedicated meetings between Ex Libris experts and Unit personnel to discuss possible solutions. We see that such meetings have a good effect in understanding the problems/solutions and the delivered functionality gets higher quality.

Primo

From the beginning of 2018 Unit started to move institutions from the classic interface to the new user interface of Primo. At the end of June about 20-25 of the institutions have switched to the new UI. The transition is by the time of writing voluntary. As the largest institutions have made the transition the lions share of the sessions is moved to the new UI.

There has been issues with performance with the new UI and that prevented the transition for a period, but after the August and November release 2017 we saw improvements that resulted in response-times that was (barely) acceptable. The search response time has improved during the year, but there are still issues with the response time in other parts of the system, especially with the full-item-display and in the communication with Alma to retrieve request forms and RTA.

The core functionality of Primo is about Discovery and Delivery. To get the correct results and to retrieve updated information about access to the documents are the most important for the end user. We see examples that bugs and errors in this functionality takes a long time to get fixed. Examples are holding files that includes deleted portfolios, links that breaks the link-resolver, errors in the RTA and links that are not displayed in the link-resolver. There is a concern that new functionality is prioritized instead of fixing errors in the core functionality. For example, errors reported in April may get a release in October (based on our experience this would be a quick one, but still too late).

We also see that scheduled fixes are postponed to later releases and/or does not fix the problem entirely/properly.

There is also a concern that functionality that was promised for Primo, later has been limited to Primo VE only. The concern about this is the beginning of two different flavours of Primo. We are also concerned about the possible lock-in of Alma/Primo customers with Primo VE as it would be difficult to change either of the systems with other solutions.

The Reading list Consortium

The Reading list consortium consists of 12 members and was established in 2017. Most of the institutions were implemented during 2017/2018 and will go live full-scale autumn 2018. The remaining institutions are planned finished implemented and go live autumn 2019. 3 of the members joined in 2018.

The core functionality in Leganto works as expected, but the system is still relatively new, and there is a potential of improvement in making the system more user friendly and flexible.

The area that needs most attention is the import and export functionality of Leganto. The quality of data imported to Leganto should be improved and there are several issues with the quality of

the data exported from Leganto both in content and structure. These are the main pain points for the reading list consortia.

We also see the same challenges with lock-in between Alma and Leganto as with Primo VE.

We experience that suggestions and enhancement request are considered, but there has been an increase in cases that get sent to NERS that in our opinion should have been fixed as a bug and not enhancement request.