Norwegian National User Group Annual report 2023 - Sikt

Sikt is a public administrative body under the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research that provides common systems and services for education and research throughout Norway. Sikt delivers Primo and Alma to the BIBSYS Consortium and Leganto to the Reading list consortium.

The national groups for Alma, Primo and Leganto are administrated by Sikt. Sikt is a consortium member of IGELU.

The BIBSYS Consortium / Alma

Background

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. 26 of these institutions also use Leganto.

Alma

The BIBSYS consortium has been live with Alma since the end of 2015. In general, the system largely covers the consortium's current needs. On occasion we see some slowness in the Alma UI, and there are also some performance issues on the API's.

We have entered the final phase for our current contract with Ex Libris for Alma and Primo. The board of the consortium has named a steering committee for the project of acquiring a new or retaining the current LSP solution. Sikt has started a process to look at future needs and requirements for library services after the end of the current contract. The goal is to deliver good and cost-effective library services through the systems and support services we provide, so that the libraries within the consortium can offer their users high quality services and access to the resources they need for study and research.

NERS and support

In general, we are satisfied with the support provided by Ex Libris. The response time seems to be a little bit faster than before, but the resolution times seems to take longer. High priority cases are usually reported when a bug or issue impacts the consortium in a consequential way. These cases should not require escalation through monthly meetings with support, yet this is still sometimes needed.

We experience those cases are held longer in Tier 1 before escalated to Tier 2/Development.

Sikt uses the NERS-system to push for enhancement requests and see this as a good way to let the Norwegian user community influence the development and direction for the products. We do however see examples of NERS being used as a fallback solution for bugs that will not be handled.

We also see that in the ballots there are requests that target the same issue/functionality are not combined/deduplicated. There are also request where the requested outcome already are supported in the systems. Such request (duplications and already supported) "steals" votes from other requests. We recognize that it can be difficult to identify these and that NERS is based on voluntary work, but we hope that as many of these cases as possible can be removed from future ballot.

Ideas Exchange offers an alternative route to request enhancement where we sometimes see a faster turnaround than what is possible in the annual NERS process. We would like to see more transparency regarding the process of selecting ideas for development. We also question the will to support ideas involving third party software.

The move to quarterly releases for Alma has resulted in more complete and tested functionality in the releases. However, we believe we can see that some new functionality is released premature, maybe as a result of lower frequency to the releases. We still encourage Ex Libris to use this new cadence to include the user community/working groups in the design of the functionality. As a minimum we ask for a better description of what a solution will involve, rather than just stating that an issue will be solved in a future release. When issues occur following a release, we expect a fix earlier then the upcoming release in a three months' time.

There have been meetings and other dialogue between Sikt and Ex Libris product management where certain enhancements and solutions have been discussed. Our experience is that these meetings lead to a better shared understanding and proposed solutions and a better result. Even so, we still miss ways to report the general experience with the products as a whole. E.g., topics such as GDPR, information security and the general performance.

Primo

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.

The BIBSYS-consortium still use Primo BO and not Primo VE. We are concerned that required functionality for us to switch to Primo VE is still lacking. The concern is that most functionality related to consortial management / configuration is underdeveloped or not present at all. We need a simple way to configure and maintain all of the institutions allowing for a central configuration with the possibility for local adjustments. We should not have to go into every instance to perform a change in configuration, code-table etc.

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We expect that there has been some development in this area in the previous year and hopefully the situation is better than we expect. We welcome all initiatives to interact with the community on this topic.

There is a concern that JavaScript customizations for Primo are still done using the AngularJS framework which has long passed its end of life. Switching to Angular (or another up-to-date framework) must be made a priority. Using a framework that is no longer supported represents a potential risk, even though Ex Libris has committed to patch any security issues. We expect a committed timeframe for when a new solution will be made available.

GDPR must be part of the design process and all new functionalities must be in accordance with GDPR. A recent example where this was not the case was how the user search history was handled in Primo. Not being able to set the default to "no" was not GDPR compatible and caused us to delay the introduction of this new feature.

Accessibility and conformance with the the WCAG 2.1 AA requirements are mandated in Norwegian law for all public facing services. Primo conforms with the requirements in general, but we experience that when we report issues related to accessibility it takes long time to get this fixed. We also experience that the documentation in the knowledge center is not up to date, it took long time to publish the lates VPAT and there is a promise that "we will soon provide a list of issues that defines our Accessibility Roadmap for 2023". We believe that accessibility must get a higher priority within the development and maintenance of the products.

The Reading list Consortium

The Reading list consortium consists of 26 members and has been live with Leganto since 2017.

Leganto has proven to be a success within the institution and has resulted in a more efficient handling of reading lists by the staff and a better user experience for the students.

We look forward to build experience with the look and feel of the new graphical interface.

Technical

We recommend Ex Libris to safeguard solutions based on protocols, and that they, from the very beginning, are valid according to protocol. As an example; NCIP-P2P has had many cases of invalid XML. NCIP-P2P will mostly be fixed in November 2023, hopefully fixed completely soon after, but it should have been valid and in compliance with the protocol from the start.

Topics for the INUG-meeting

- Response time support
- Up to date framework for Primo
- Performance of Alma and the API's
- Accessibility
- Valid use of protocols