

Consortium of Icelandic Libraries Annual Report 2023 for IGeLU National User group (INUG)

Sveinbjörg Sveinsdóttir, Managing Director, sveinbjorg@landskerfi.is

The Consortium of Icelandic Libraries (CIL) is a public limited-liability company. The company is jointly owned by the municipalities and the state of Iceland. Number of CIL staff is ten.

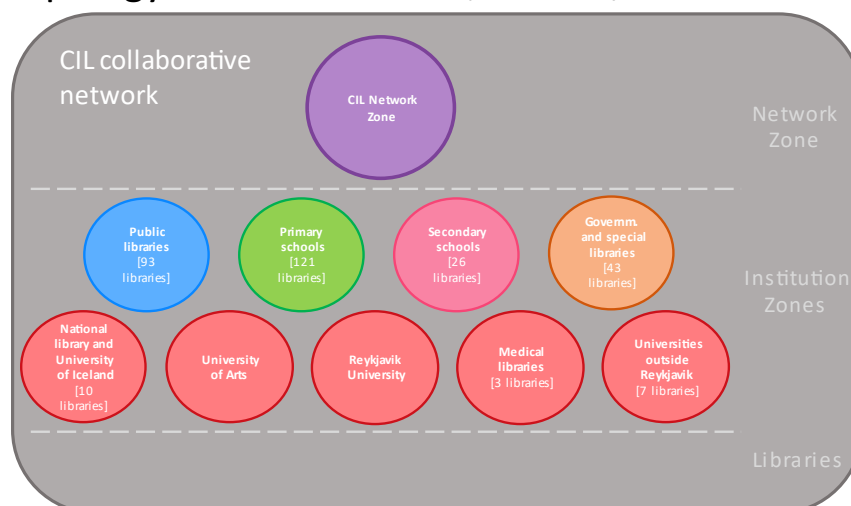
Since middle of 2022 CIL is operating Alma, branded **Gegnrir** and Primo VE, branded **Leitir** from Ex Libris. In addition to servicing libraries, CIL operates **Sarpur**, a cataloging system for museums and cultural heritage institutions in Iceland.

The Icelandic User Group for the Alma/PrimoVE libraries, Alefli has not been attending Igelu.

Gegnrir – The National Library System of Iceland

Gegnrir is a national library system for Iceland. Among the member institutions are the National and University Library of Iceland, several smaller universities, public libraries, primary- and secondary school libraries as well as research and special libraries, in total close to 300 libraries. The setup consists of a Network Zone and nine Institution Zones. Public libraries are grouped together in one IZ (ALM), primary school libraries make up another IZ (GRUNNSK), secondary school libraries share the third IZ, administrative and specialty libraries the fourth but most universities have their own IZ. The decision on the university libraries was based on a recommendation from Ex Libris with management of electronic resources in mind. In essence CIL now has ten “systems” to maintain.

Topology: 1 Network Zone, 9 Alma/Primo Institutions



The new Gegnir (Alma) has been in operation for around 14 months. As there were unsolved issues upon system Go-live the implementation project has only recently been officially closed. Despite diligent work on behalf of Ex Libris as well as CIL during this time libraries are still faced with a number of serious system issues. Most are related to performance as well as inadequate system design for usage in **primary school- and public libraries**. The result of discussions with Ex Libris management team was the establishment of a strategic workforce to look closely into the issues. The different tracks that are being explored as part of this work are:

- Performance issues: Affects many system areas but user management and fulfillment have been most seriously hit. Major complaints in ALM institution (93 public libraries) as well as GRUNNSK (121 school libraries), where fulfillment activities are very high as are patron requests. Number of items per title is high too especially at GRUNNSK and there is a severe performance hit when new loans are processed. The experienced slowness affects not only Alma staff environment but also applications using APIs and Webhooks as well as Primo VE. Concurrent API request threshold policies on institution level impact performance in a negative way. Slowness is persistent during peak services hours but also on Saturdays when public libraries are open.
- The physical „Circulation Desks“ in the public libraries are busy venues. This is where the library meets the patron and provides services. They need to be able to service the patron in a fast and reliable manner. Alma workflows are often not adequate for this, which results in an unpleasant user experience. Performance issues make the experience even worse.
- Search and Search Results: Available system settings are not suitable for public- or school libraries. Why can't Alma make suggestions if a user misspells a word? Sorting by „Rank“ should prioritize records containing physical items, preferably ranking highest the records that contain the most items/holdings.
- Quick Cataloging: Current Alma cataloguing functionality is too complex for many public- and school libraries. The Metadata Editor is difficult for staff (mostly not librarians) to use. The quick cataloguing template is too limited. A much simpler cataloguing interface is needed. Alma should not be a hinderance for making new materials available to patrons.
- Library independence: Additional library level configurations are needed i.e. patron limits and block preferences. Library independence needs to be added to roles. Concurrent API request threshold policies on institution level need to be adjusted to our use case, most importantly in ALM.

Ex Libris has been slow in recognizing the need to monitor the overall online transaction for different areas (functional as well as system areas) for CIL institutions and compare different times and days. Higher-Ed-Platform Performance and Uptime Reports for EU Instances are completely inadequate for such analysis. How can Ex Libris customers monitor system performance in multi-tenant cloud environments?

Consortium management tools in Alma leave much to be desired. An example is the tedious and overly complicated management of staff roles and privileges without any practical shortcuts.

Functionality in Alma for working with Icelandic Authorities has been found to be lacking. Alma Analytics is limited in functionalities and system resources notably when it comes to processes that need more customization.

Leitir – The National Discovery Portal for libraries and museums

Leitir, <https://leitir.is/> is a National Discovery Portal for Iceland. It provides access to the diverse collections of Icelandic libraries in Gegnir, electronic subscriptions as well as museum collections. Libraries can have their own view within Leitir i.e. amt.leitir.is, lbs.leitir.is.

Despite Ex Libris and CIL efforts in customizing Primo VE, the needs of patrons in public libraries in Iceland have not been met. It thus fails to support public libraries in their efforts to reach out to the public. The product is also not a good fit for a diverse national consortium. It's too tightly woven into the system topology, network and institutions. Users of a discovery platform should not need to know about a system topology, architecture should stay in the background.

Which plans does Clarivate, the owner of both Innovative Interfaces and Ex Libris have for a modern discovery platform? A discovery portal that would use state of the art technologies, bring links to our data, offer simple workflows, integrate well with external systems and last but not least meet patron expectations for libraries offering modern solutions like in other business areas of society. A discovery portal needs to be intuitive and easy to use.

Sarpur – The National Cataloging System for Museums

“Sarpur”, <https://sarpur.is/> is currently an Icelandic designed cultural database. It is used to catalog and record artifacts, pictures, archaeological sites, historic buildings, place names and cultural history, and is used by museums and cultural heritage institutions around Iceland. As a result of a tendering for a new cataloging system Zetcom GmbH and their system MuseumPlus has been selected as the new Sarpur and implementation will start later this year.