2024 ANZREG Chair's Report to INUG

Introduction

The Australian and New Zealand Regional Ex Libris Group (ANZREG) is a recognised regional user group for the International Group of Ex Libris Users (IGeLU). The group, led by a member community Committee, strives to promote communication, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among users of Ex Libris products across Australia and New Zealand. ANZREG provides feedback regionally and internationally to IGeLU and Ex Libris. Membership is free to Australian and New Zealand libraries for sites using any Ex Libris products. ANZREG has 83 institutional members across Australia and New Zealand, and 402 subscribers to the ANZREG-L mailing list (hosted by the State Library of Queensland).

Committee

ANZREG has maintained a stable committee membership in 2024, continuing with 9 members from Australian and New Zealand institutions. The Committee continues to distribute responsibilities and workloads across a number of shared roles, lowering the burden of volunteer duties across the Committee. The only change in membership is that Yelena Kopilov now represents CQUniversity after an interstate move.

The current ANZREG Committee:

- Chair: Ella Rohde-Condon, La Trobe University
- Deputy Chair/Chair Elect: Lorraine Ackroyd, Curtin University
- Financial Officer: Patricia Farnan, University of Notre Dame
- Product Development Advocate: Yelena Kopilov, CQUniversity
- Secretary: Brenda Norton, Victoria University of Wellington
- Co-Web Manager: Deborah Fitchett, Lincoln University
- Co-Web Manager: Sean Boden, University of South Australia
- Programme Coordinator / Communications Officer: Alison Jordan, University of Newcastle
- General Member: Caroline Serrano, University of Sydney

Many members of our ANZ community are also very active in the IGeLU community internationally, as members and Coordinators of Working Groups and Communities of Practice. We recognise all our active and engaged regional representatives on our ANZREG website: https://anzreg.igelu.org/working-groups/.

Activities

As a user group that crosses international lines and experiences ongoing hardships with tightened budgets, we have continued to avoid face to face programming this year, instead hosting the popular ANZREG annual conference completely online. This conference showcases customer adoption of Ex Libris products and provides members of our community with the opportunity for knowledge sharing and dedicated time to consider both common and novel technical requirements and options. The 2024 conference was extended from last year and ran for 3 days, held over 4 hours each day to best accommodate time zones from New Zealand across to Western Australia. There were 19 presentations ranging from Ex Libris product updates to in-depth coding demonstration sessions, with an average of 105 attendees across all sessions. The Committee is very pleased with how this year's conference came together and was received by the community. All non-embargoed presentations can be found on the ANZREG YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyArH1UX3Sl5aeCyCVczxw.

At last year's IGeLU conference, the committee became aware of the possibility of a user-group level support account. Over the past year, the chair and deputy chair have been working with the Director of Customer Care at Ex Libris to set up the ANZREG support account. Setup is now finalised, and we look forward to the opportunities this group account will provide us to raise awareness to issues at a regional level.

In 2023, the committee began a review of our governing by-laws after our previous election process resulted in a number of frequently asked questions. After thorough review, a new set of by-laws have been drafted, covering many of these frequently asked questions within. The main changes proposed are specifically stating committee terms are at minimum 2 years, and highlighting that there is a limit of 2 members per registered institution on the committee. The proposed changes were advertised on the ANZREG website and communicated to members during July 2024, with plans to conduct a vote during September 2024. As there are a number of member terms coming to an end in the first half of 2025, it is planned to have the new by-laws in place by the end of the year to facilitate future transitions.

Advocacy

The ANZREG Committee enjoys quarterly meetings with Ex Libris representatives, notably Alan Oliver, Director Community Engagement, and Carolyn Richings, Product Sales Manager, Software; other Ex Libris representatives attend as topics arise. Agenda items are distributed beforehand, for response preparation. These meetings are a continuing exchange of information and a valued avenue for highlighting and resolving issues arising from the ANZREG member community. The Committee shares a summary of topics raised on the ANZREG website, for enhanced visibility of our advocacy work with Ex Libris on behalf of our community: https://anzreg.igelu.org/about-this-site/advocacy/.

Items discussed within the last year include:

- Ongoing issues with Ex Libris support, even in the wake of Project Flash. The wider ANZREG Community is unhappy with case handling and slow response times due to little/no dedicated Alma support in Australia or New Zealand.
- Expectation of equity of support, documentation, communication, and Roadmap development for all Primo customers, for both deployment models of Primo (using Back Office) or Primo VE
- The Leganto New UI deadline and whether libraries with concerns can extend the January 2025 deadline.
- Ongoing support from Ex Libris of the ANZREG Conference including sponsorship and multiple presentation spots.

Highlighted Issues

The ANZREG Committee would like to take this opportunity to highlight with our international colleagues in the IGeLU community and with Ex Libris the following issues and concerns:

Artificial Intelligence

- Ex Libris, along with many other tech companies, are jumping on the Artificial Intelligence bandwagon and seem to be announcing AI integration in every product.
- We as a community are concerned about the rapid introduction of this relatively untested technology and have many security concerns around this.

- The committee and wider ANZREG community would like assurance that these options will be introduced on an "opt-in" basis and not required or forced upon customers.

NERS Voting

- The ANZREG community has raised concerns around the NERS process and how it functions.
- In particular, it seems like we must waste NERS votes on items that are clearly bugs and not enhancement requests.
- Another flaw in the NERS system is the inability for niche requests to receive the required votes, as those who don't speak a specific language are not going to vote for a request to improve support in that language.
- The Rialto NERS process this year left off a number of requests that were submitted well before the deadline. At time of writing, there has still been no valid explanation as to why these requests were left off.

Accessibility

- There was an Ideas Exchange idea in 2019 for adding a Dark Mode/Theme option in Alma. In November 2020, Itai indicated in a comment on the idea that this was added to the roadmap.
- The August 2024 release included the ability for individual users to change the colour scheme of Alma themselves. This was originally marketed as an accessibility feature but that messaging was later rolled back.
- 4 years on from being added to the roadmap, Dark Mode is still not an option. Numerous users have commented on the Ideas Exchange idea in the preceding years, but have received no response from Ex Libris.
- Providing equitable access to all users is a vital part of any software or tech product. Changing the colour of the banner at the top of the screen is not the same as having a true Dark Mode to ease eye strain and aid those with vision impairments.

Other

- Post Project Flash, a lengthening of the 2 week automatic ticket closure period was discussed. It was also discussed at IGeLU 2023 but so far nothing seems to have been done about this.
- Community Zone updates are still incredibly slow, even after a publisher has told us they have sent the data to Ex Libris. It is also common to be bounced between publisher and Ex Libris as no one wants to take responsibility for delays in CZ data being added or updated.

The ANZREG Committee welcomes responses from Ex Libris to the above highlighted issues on behalf of our member institutions, which would improve the collective experience of Library staff and our patrons.

Ella Rohde-Condon - Chair
Submitted on behalf of the ANZREG Committee
August 2024