

MIT Update re: Vera and eresource management
January 2002
For Tim Jewell/ALA Midwinter

Please note: For an overview of the fields in Vera, please see our Web Manager Nicole Hennig's article at:
<http://www.hennigweb.com/publications/vera.html>

Since Vera was officially launched in January of 2000, we have made the following changes:

- Added a few fields, to accommodate recently identified needs [see below]
- Made small changes to the search interface, such as adding a keyword search;
- Developed a read-only web interface to the database for staff,
- Added a link from the initial search screen to a list of titles, purchased from Serials Solutions, that are not in Vera because they are from large, fluctuating aggregated packages that we have not been able to track at the title level, and
- Begun to work with automatic imports and updates of data on a more routine basis, improving efficiency

The staff interface is just being launched, but we have high hopes that this new access for staff will give them more information than they've had before about our digital resources, including access details, number of simultaneous users, etc.

Key issues we face now are:

- Evaluating whether or to what extent Vera will be replaced by Ex-Libris' Metalib and SFX, which we are implementing on a pilot basis this spring
- Completing the hand off of remaining operational elements for Vera to staff other than the Web Manager
- Continuing to explore how Vera relates to our online catalog – an ongoing debate/discussion that now includes experimenting with building hybrid records by extracting data from Vera to populate some MARC record fields

The fields we have found it necessary to add since launching Vera are:

- "Quirks" – a free-text field used to list unusual or tricky aspects of a resource that are important for reference librarians, users, and staff resolving access problems with digital resources. Examples include titles at a site that do not offer fulltext, although this is not apparent, or information about publication dates purchased that affect access.
- ISSN – initially we avoided a field for ISSN because we were trying not to duplicate data in the OPAC, and we did not foresee a reasonable way of managing this data in Vera. Now, however, we find that for updates and

for work with SFX, the ISSN is a key field to have inside Vera, and we are working on importing ISSN data from vendors and our OPAC to populate this field. We have actually created three different ISSN fields until we know more about how we will use this data. They include: print ISSN, electronic ISSN, and OPAC ISSN [when we've loaded the ISSN from our OPAC record, which could be taken from a record for the print that has the online added to it, or from a record describing the online version only.]

- A "mark set" field – This allows us to manipulate groups of records as needed by annotating them based on common conditions.
- An additional URL field – our fifth including all the stages of calculating a proxied URL – to allow us to store other relevant URLs that we may want to know about in the future (either those with alternative syntax, or old superceded urls, etc.)

We have not had time or the specific administrative need to populate and use the following fields that were included in the Vera design:

- Date contract filed
- Date contract scanned

We still believe this data is important to store and maintain, but limits on staff time have prevented us from doing so. In addition, we have recently decided to stop scanning licenses for the time being, again due to limits on staff time.

Prepared by Ellen Finnie Duranceau, Jan. 11, 2002