Library Management Systems Survey Results

Responses gathered February-April 2017, compiled by Gudrun Warren, Librarian, Norwich Cathedral.

Please note that comments appear as they were submitted by anonymous respondents.

The survey received 37 responses, of which 2 did not use a computerized system

14 use for library only
9 for library and archives
12 library, archives and other (variously inventory, objects, museum, instruments, works of art)

2 collections reference only, 2 hard copy and/or card catalogue, 1 collection accessible through another institution

Systems used:
ADLIB
Adlib for archives and objects x 2
ADLIB for library, archive and inventory
ADLIB for library and archive x 2
Aleph
Aleph (library and archive)
Archives Hub (2nd user currently setting up profile)
AtoM
CALM (archives) x 2
CollectionsIndex+ (Ci+) from System Simulation Ltd for Historic Books, Archives & works of art
Emu
EOS x 2
Ex Libris Voyager
Excel & blog lists for archives
Heritage - 5 users (2 specified Cirqa 1 specifed IV)
Infor Vsmart for printed matter
Innovative (Library)
Instruments: spreadsheet
Koha x 2
Liberty
Microsoft Access
Mikromarc (3)
MOBYDOC-museum
Qi
Sirsi Dynix x 3
Sirsi Dynix Workflows for library
Sirsi Dynix Enterprise for integrated library, archives and objects
sirsi symphony
Soutron for library
Voyager-library
Voyager

What functionality do you use in your system(s)? Please tick all that apply.

Acquisitions	12
Cataloguing	35
Fines	4
Import/export	16
Loans	18
Serials	15
Other	6

Cataloguing only – 2

Please comment on how important/useful you find these functionalities

Almost unanimous agreement that the system is "very important", "vital" or "essential".

Some comments on specific systems/functionalities:

Adlib
- "we do no recommend Adlib"

Emu
- "Is it the interconnectedness of the system that makes it so useful" (Print material and archives; Acquisitions, Cataloguing, Loans, Import/export, Other)

Heritage Cirqa
- "The serials module is important for checking-in serials, but really difficult to use"
- "Intuitive & user friendly as the library is run by volunteers"

Voyager
- "Acquisitions-far too complex"

Sirsi Dynix
- "Regarding workflows this is mostly adequate for our needs" (not a lending library)
- "They're not great" (Cataloguing, Serials)

Systems for which some functionalities are purchased separately (basic package then extensions):
- Adlib
- Aleph
- Axiell CALM for archives
- Eos
- Heritage
- Infor Vsmart
- Voyager

Systems for which functionalities purchased as a single package:
- Liberty
- Mikromarc
- Modes
- Qi
- Sirsi Dynix
- Soutron

Comments on the ways in which systems are particularly good at meeting specific needs:

ADLIB
- set up for museums, so has a lot of fields to add historical, condition, provenance, etc information.
- The three elements are interconnected without creating compromises in the individual requirements. Useful to connect library literature with specific objects in the inventory
- The catalogue and archive modules meet our needs cataloguing needs
- not good

Aleph
- Sharing a system is excellent for my needs, as it means I don't have to spend time on systems management
- Does everything we need it to do, though we strive to keep things as simple as possible!

Emu
- We can plan exhibition narratives that link to the catalogue, also conservation needs are recorded. Events and requests are all recorded, so there is a "single point of truth" for each item on the catalogue, with a full history of its condition, location and use

EOS
- It's very good for keeping track of loans, and I personally find it very good for cataloguing.
- All necessary functions and affordable

Excel & blog combo
- are satisfactory for the archives as they are 'free'.

Heritage
- mostly ok
- delighted, Excellent service, support & introductory training. Volunteers are able to use the system for catalogue editing with very little training as it's very intuitive, unlike the package we were using before.
- Quite easy to use. Very flexible and powerful reporting function.
- We wanted to be able to catalogue each of our collections to the appropriate standards, (AACR2\MARC21 for books; ISAD(G) for Archives; Spectrum for museum objects) but also to be able to search simultaneously across the three collections. Books, archive and objet records catalogued in the three Ci+ databases are linked to shared name authorities, e.g. personal and corporate names, which enables cross-database searching.
- We can personalise the system, but really its fast, easy to use and works well

Infor Vsmart
- Good web catalogue for VSmart, wasn't expensive, good MARC/RDA representation, works in web browsers reducing need for managing individual workstations
- Faster to deal with items than using card catalogue/double browne issue system

Innovative
- stats; security; cataloguing

Koha
- Low cost!
- Externally hosted and supported (we don't have a Systems Librarian)

- All core functionality provided

Liberty
- Managing loans, recalls, reservations, cataloguing different types of library material, able to distinguish between holdings in different branches & reporting on usage.

Mikromarc
- Affordable for a small library (less than £1,000 per annum); meets MARC21 standards (is actually NORMARC, but no discernible difference); flexible - can cope with high level cataloguing of early printed books and also volunteers cataloguing additions to loan stock
- performs fairly well as a recorder of retrievable information, and with consistency monitored by authority files. This is all we need currently.

Sirsi Dynix
- They're not, but it's what the rest of my library is using.
- None really

Soutron
- We like that we can add and remove fields, and set them to publicly visible to invisible. Soutron did a good job customising the system when it was first set up.

Voyager/Mobydoc
- Cataloguing uses MARC21 and upgrades incorporate new features. Serials allow for proper check-ins. The staff interface has many features for searching and categorizing materials as we require.

In what ways do your systems struggle to meet your needs?

Adlib
- It is a low cost system, and as such doesn't do the more advanced things you might expect from higher cost systems
- Online catalogue requires customisation in consultation with Adlib. Can involve extra cost (but is consequently very flexible).
- There are reliability issues with the indexing of data and the online catalogue module is average at best
- retrieving all data entered, and lack of facilities for entering copy specific details

Aleph
- Typing in non-Roman characters is a hassle. The system generally is more complex than is needed for my library, but it's administered by the Bodleian, not by me, so it's not really my problem
- We can only schedule one change to the borrowing matrix at a time, so you have to plot them all, then set reminders so you remember to schedule the changes before they are due to take place, which is irritating.

EOS
- The only way it struggles is that it's not great for cataloguing archives or artworks - but then not that many systems can do everything! We're very happy to live with it.
- LMS only not combined library, archives &c. So archives catalogued at fonds level with finding aids for details.

Heritage
- No proper authority files
- Not great for rare book cataloguing.
- The biggest drawback is that we catalogue our modern, circulating book collection in a separate system and so can't search across our entire book collection in one go.
- We have experienced a couple of periods when Cirqa has failed.
- A bit unreliable often needs a server restart

Infor Vsmart
- Browser compatibility and stability could be better.
- Can't cope with the idea that a book may be marked as missing & not removed from the system. We have a 500 volumes of miscellaneous items bound together but individually catalogued. This system finds it difficult to link these catalogue records

Innovative
- granular info needed for unique and rare items requires high staff time commitment

Liberty
- None

Mikromarc
- it is cumbersome to use for searches, lists, and no good for offering to the public as the system is now very dated and there is no support available,
- Norwegian based, and local support has not always been great, but currently OK, no manual in English
- We cannot control how information is displayed which can be annoying. The entire system is not fully MARC compatible either, which causes problems for our export of data to other catalogues.

Qi
- That's a difficult one. I didn't choose it & wouldn't have as it doesn't suit the needs of library cataloguing, for example it's not possible to import bibliographic records, it's not possible to display provenance and binding information (apparently that's just a niche interest according to my museum colleague!) Also, it's not possible to sort information by date of publication - quite an inconvenience to our researchers. It doesn't display results in a bibliographic format either and readers wishing to find out more about provenance of a book, can't find this information on the OPAC but have to contact a member of staff.

Sirsi Dynix
- There isn't any way to tweak it so that fields important for Spec Coll (such as provenance) show up in the OPAC without clicking through to an extra layer
- Rare book cataloguing
- In many ways. Interface is old-fashioned and clunky. The system is very difficult to understand and manage. It is not user friendly.

Soutron
- We can't make information about the borrowability (ie reference only etc) easily visible to users. The catalogue has a tendency to be buggy and un-intuitive to use (both for staff functions and for end users). The system isn't MARC-based, so there are inter-operability issues with any external records sharing (such as exports to Copac) or downloading records from other sources.

- A top tip: make sure you understand how contingent different modules are. If we'd set up the acquisitions module, the journals check-in module would work much better. We found this out too late.

Voyager
- It is designed for large academic libraries, not small societies.
- Circulation not integrated sufficiently with cataloguing - need two modules to identify an item's borrower.
- Not good at all [not sure which system this refers to]
- It's not particularly good at any of them. (Voyager)
- Some aspects such as The OPAC requires IT input to customise so are less easy to change without specialist library systems staff.

Roughly what proportion of your budget goes on annual maintenance fees for your system(s)?

1%
- Soutron
- Voyager

2%
- Infor Vsmart
- Koha

5%
- Heritage

7%
- Aleph

10%
- Voyager

20%
- Heritage x 2
- Aleph

30%
- Voyager/Mobydoc

"EOS costs in the region £3500 per year"

Systems migrations

We're planning to migrate but need guidance on a new system (Mikromarc)
'Migrating' from cards! Had also ca. 300 records on an Excel sheet to migrate.

Systems migration undertaken within last 5 years – why?
Infor Vsmart
- "Previous system was withdrawn by vendor, current system offered by same vendor accepted. Migration was well handled."
- Support for our previous package was ending.

Innovative (library) and Calm (Archives)

- "upgrade to newer system to better meet library needs more generally"

Koha, AtoM

- "Costs of the existing LMS; Concerns over development not reflecting our Library's requirements"

Sirsi Symphony

- "we're in the midst of one now. our system looks quite dated and we've had it for 15yrs; there are a few things we'd like to be able to do but can't with our current system; we have quite an expensive system such that the cost of an upgrade is not much more and could save us on annual maintenence"

Heritage

- We migrated our modern book collection from STAR by Cuadra to Heritage by IS Oxford because STAR wasn't well supported in the UK.

Aleph

- Decision taken at University level.

EMU

- To have all book and archival records in one system

Soutron

- We wanted a system suitable for managing loans. We also wanted to be able to check-in journals, to have a public OPAC, and to be able to export records to Copac

Issues and tips for migration

- Allow about three times as much time as you think for migration.
- Do as much data cleaning as possible!
- Back up!
- Plan hard and early, above all be absolutely clear what is vendor's job, what is yours, and how much it will cost.
- We carried out our migration in approximately 3 months. I wouldn't necessarily recommend that but overall it went quite well
- Be minutely clear about what you want - we stated that we wanted the current loan status of items kept (on loan/not on loan) to keep borrower records accurate. We didn't state that we wanted loan TYPES kept (loanable/non-loanable) & so when they upgraded they made everything loanable.
- Expecting to have a huge amount of work to do with regards to serial controls as most systems don't migrate these or do so only partially
- I think it depends on three things: the quality of your existing electronic records and the ability of your new library database provider to map your existing data correctly into their system and good project management. (i.e. agreed deadline dates, and leaving enough time for both your library staff and the vendor to test and fix the migration issues that always arise).
- The University's Library tech support dept decided to migrate to a simpler system and then make adjustments to improve functionality, which led to a difficult first 18 months when Colleges found they couldn't do everything that was in their normal workflow. But we have reached a stage where I think the current LMS is much more user-friendly than its predecessor.
- Tidy holdings as much as you can pre-migration.
- A top tip: make sure you understand how contingent different modules are. If we'd set up the acquisitions module, the journals check-in module would work much better. We found this out too late.
- Allow time for repeatable test migrations of samples of data.

Support

Adlib
- It's ALOT better than it used to be! I think they didn't used to have much of a client base in the UK, so they didn't pay us much attention. As they've expanded their business they are putting more effort into customer relations.
- Generally good at specific trouble-shooting. Adlib hosts our database which removed potential problems for our IT staff.
- Not happy. This is what really lets the system down. The help desk is improving, but there are still issues with communication and problem solving
- not happy at all. Any assistance is costly.

Aleph
- Content

Archives Hub
- Archives Hub offer excellent support and a free service

Emu
- Very. Our Systems team are also developers and can troubleshoot and also make suggestions for improvements.

EOS
- Very happy - they are incredibly supportive and will always respond within a few hours to any queries we have.

Eos sirsi dynix
- It's scanty and not responsive to the Library's needs for quick solutions to such issues as OPAC computer fallen off the network.

Heritage
- When I've needed support they've offered great service.
- Our internal IT Dept is good at supporting the hardware on which the systems run and are backed-up.
- They are knowledgeable, but sometimes you have to chase them up.
- Heritage provide a good paid for support

Infor Vsmart
- We haven't tested these to destruction as our wants are relatively few. Support is decent and responsive, but some issues don't get solved.
- A lot of things we raise seem to get the response "that's your end, you'll need to speak to your tech guy" & when he looks into it it's their end. Also, we've got a few niggles that have been outstanding for some time - possibly because we are a relatively small organisation compared to some they deal with, & so give them less money....

Koha
- We are pretty happy. Koha is on open source LMS and so much the support comes from the community. We also pay PTFS Europe for dedicated support and hosting and that works very well

Liberty

- Very good.

Mikromarc
- Support has been uneven, but recently it has been working well. There is one English representative and support calls can be logged online if he is unavailable
- Support is minimal and has not been able to deliver on certain requests we have made.

Sirsi dynix
- No. Not friendly or helpful. Answers often difficult to understand and poorly written.

Sirsi symphony
- quick responses but our helpdesk aren't able to assist with more complex issues. there are sometimes additional charges for what seem like straightforward support requests.

Soutron
- We get a quick response to queries, but it seems that solutions to problems aren't always fully tested before being communicated to us, so it can be frustrating to think something is solved and then find that it still doesn't work when you try to use it. Some functionality that is key for us isn't at the top of the supplier's development schedule.

Voyager
- Not happy- system support is based in US; lack of UK based support, lack of UK based user support group.
- Little wrong with the support.
- We do not often have to get help, however they are generally quite responsive. in the past the only issues have been differences in time zones as the company based outside the UK, most support comes from the US, I'm not sure this is an issue any longer

How successful are the communications between you, your IT support, the system provider?

Adlib
- As well as can be expected, the IT team isn't specific to the Library, they run all the museum systems, so we aren't always their priority
- No major difficulties
- poor
- Not happy. This is what really lets the system down. The help desk is improving, but there are still issues with communication and problem solving
-

Aleph
- Fruitful

Emu
- Very

EOS
- Communications from our LMS is excellent, but there have been miscommunications from our end sometimes.

Eos sirsi dynix
- Successful at first contact about issues but follow-up from IT could be better.

Ex Libris Voyager
- Usually very good.

Heritage
- Can get a bit circular trying to establish whether the issue is with the system or the network
- They've been fine, I've only rarely need to put them in touch with each other to sort things out e.g. upgrades, moving to offsite hosting, and communication worked well.
- It works OK. Often the library staff have to act as intermediates.
- Usually very good
- Adequate

Infor Vsmart
- Communications are generally good.
- Generally speaking excellent.

Innovative/Calm
- fairly, but some fixes take longer than others to be addressed

Koha/AtoM
- Overall pretty good

Liberty
- Our IT support can be problematic but with recent changes this may improve

Mikromarc
- One issue us that the Cathedral IT support don't understand this sort of programme and don't like having to do anything with it, so we usually end up having to sort out problems ourselves.
- Vary.

Sirsi dynix
- Good as far as I know.
- Okay.

Sirsi symphony
- fine

Soutron
- They have worked well with our in-house IT team to solve a particularly difficult issue we had: they worked directly with IT for several weeks until the issue was resolved.

Voyager/Mobydoc
- Quite successful but it is a very hard work to coordinate them all.

Voyager
- Generally not too bad although we have to be very specific and clear to explain certain requirements or issues to our IT staff who do not have knowledge of library standards and formats.

IT Support
- External – 9
- Internal – 14
- Internal and external – 8
- Other – 1

Systems with active users groups:
Adlib, Aleph, EOS, Emu, Ex Libris Voyager, Heritage, Koha/AtoM, Qi, Soutron, Sirsi Dynix, Sirsi Symphony

Additional Comments:
"Avoid Qi!! Choose a proper library management system that serves the needs of your users."