Interview

Managing Transition and Change: An Interview with Kailey Brisbin about the Migration to Omni

[Interview has been edited for length and clarity]

Introduction

Kailey Brisbin is an Electronic Resources and Metadata (ERM) Librarian with the Collections & Content (C&C) team at the University of Guelph. In her role, Brisbin develops and implements e-resource and metadata strategies and processes to ensure users can discover and access library resources across multiple systems.

In December 2019, as a part of the Collaborative Futures initiative, 14 Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) members migrated to a shared academic search tool called Omni, which uses a cloud-based library service platform called Alma. In this environment, participating libraries have consolidated multiple resource management systems onto one platform that manages electronic, digital, and print resources at local and consortial levels. Brisbin is the local training lead for Alma at Guelph, and she has played a key role in preparing multiple teams for the migration.

What roles have you taken on to help Guelph transition to Omni?

I consider myself very lucky to be involved in the project at Guelph in two ways: the first being the Guelph local training lead, and the second being in my role as ERM Librarian. In both those roles, I was required to get up to speed on Alma quickly. I coordinated local training efforts at Guelph, and I also communicated back out with the training leads

at other Omni libraries to share training materials, to share ideas, and then also just provide support for each other. Things like workflows, policies, understanding how the system can help us in the long term—we don't know those things yet, and we won't know for a little while, so those roles for me really just began.

Which tasks were most rewarding or most challenging during this migration?

I think the most rewarding task had been working with my colleagues from across the library. Like I said, ERM work and my role as an ERM Librarian, it's a collaborative role, but it often lives on the C&C team. In this role as training lead, I got to work with people in Access Services, I got to work with people at our other affiliates, like Guelph-Humber. I worked with people at the Annex [an off-site storage facility]. So just getting to know them better, working with them on the training, and helping them learn the new system was the most rewarding piece for me.

Challenging for me, I would just say, [was] the change, honestly. I had read about change management prior to this, and I was really interested in that piece of it. But for me, it has been hard to change and forget about, you know, leaving some of my expertise with the [old] system behind, and still having confidence that I'll be able to grow new expertise in the new system. That part for me has been challenging, and I did not anticipate that.

How does this project compare to other major projects you've taken on at Guelph or with other institutions?

Honestly, I'm pretty early career, so this is my first major project. So, when I first started, I always knew this would become a part of my job—I did not know how big it would be.

And I also didn't anticipate being the training lead either. In preparation for it, I did take a project management course, and it definitely gave me some cornerstones on how to approach things, but it was a lot of learning on the job.

How will your day-to-day work change with the new system?

I would say, at a high level, we really don't know what the day-to-day work will look like. I can say that I will still work with e-resources and metadata to ensure users can easily discover and access library resources. The expertise that might underpin that, like knowledge of MARC records, electronic resource knowledge, collection knowledge—all of that stuff—it stays the same, right? So, you're still bringing all of that in, it's just the tool that's different.

What do you imagine Omni/Alma to look like in one year's time or three years' time?

I really think the collaboration and communication among the Omni libraries so far has been great, and I envision that continuing and our relationships with our new partners strengthening.

In three years' time? I have no clue! No, I really think that, like I said with the year one goals, I only see that being stronger in year three: really starting to polish out those workflows and thinking more and more about the different ways we can collaborate with the system.

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