Preparing for a different kind of disaster: The departure of the electronic resources librarian

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Floods, fires, medical emergencies and other perilous situations, although rare, do occur, and most libraries have plans in place to manage them. Employee turnover, on the other hand, happens regularly, yet many libraries are unprepared for the subsequent loss of knowledge, data and information. This may be an especially serious problem when an electronic resources librarian leaves, because these librarians possess not only institutional history, but also procedural and technical information that helps keep a library's electronic resources up and running.

Libraries that have planned ahead often have tools to capture this kind of information. Some of these tools and their potential uses include:

- Electronic Resource Management Systems (ERMS) for license information, administrative logins, etc.
- Wikis for narrative resource histories and workflows
- LibGuides or BaseCamp™ for managing projects and sharing files and e-mail threads

These tools can prevent information loss when an e-resources librarian departs. However, if your library does not have a tool or plan in place, even using a simple checklist before this person's last day can reduce information loss and wasted time, and improve productivity, resource accessibility and continuity.

Sample checklist for an outgoing electronic resources librarian:

- Is password-protected information shared, posted or updated?
  - Change contact information to replacement's information
  - Give multiple people access to password-protected systems (if possible)
  - Record login and URL for administrative platform/module
  - Record statistics login and URL (if separate)
- Record logins for social media accounts
  - Wiki
  - Facebook
  - LibGuides
  - Blog

- Are there any continuing projects?
- Have workflows for the following situations been shared or posted?
  - Gathering statistics
  - Adding and removing resources from various library systems
  - Troubleshooting
  - Updating holdings
  - Sending e-resource updates, sharing news with colleagues, patrons, etc.
  - Renewals
  - Other

- Are all computer files and paper documents in a shared location?
- Has the basic history of e-resources been documented?
  - Price history
  - Important e-mails
  - Renewal dates
  - Fund codes and account numbers
  - Special deals with vendors
  - Troubleshooting history
  - Other

- Is there a transition plan for vendors?
  - Vendors informed of librarian's departure
  - Vendors given replacement's contact information
  - Vendors informed of special deals with the library