



ERM Ideas & Innovations

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To cite this article: Lenore England, Randy Lowe & Erica Owusu (2017) ERM Ideas & Innovations, Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship, 29:3, 171-179, DOI: [10.1080/1941126X.2017.1340726](https://doi.org/10.1080/1941126X.2017.1340726)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1941126X.2017.1340726>



Published online: 13 Sep 2017.



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ERM Ideas & Innovations

Lenore England

From the Column Editor, Lenore England

The ERM Ideas and Innovations column for this issue is coauthored by me, Assistant Director for Electronic Resources Management at the University of Maryland University College Library; Randy Lowe, Collection Development, Acquisitions & Serials Librarian at the Lewis J. Ort Library, Frostburg State University; and Erica Owusu, Acquisitions and Licensing Coordinator USMAI Library Consortium. We discuss updates to the September and December ERM Ideas and Innovations columns, specifically how the University System of Maryland and Affiliated Institutions (USMAI) ERM consortial governance framework, developed with an incubator approach, is progressing. As we established an incubator approach, we learned a great deal about how to effectively actualize our framework ideas, or elements, into actionable strategies. We actualized by establishing effective business process management workflows, an essential part of making our framework innovations work. I also learned a great deal about innovation and change management, which turned out to be the most significant ERM work in my long career as an e-resources librarian. I am very fortunate to work with Randy and Erica. Together we are succeeding with our framework and greatly improving ERM in the USMAI, over time.

Incubator for the USMAI Consortial Governance ERM Framework—Updates to the September 2016 ERM Ideas and Innovations Column

Randy Lowe and Erica Owusu

ABSTRACT

University System of Maryland & Affiliated Institutions (USMAI) e-resources librarians and staff, the authors of this column, developed a consortial governance framework, through an incubator process, to essentially increase shared consortial e-resources collection development and reap the beneficial results of a more refined, honed effort in the process. At the time the authors established the framework in 2015, USMAI was not a recognized legal entity, had no procurement or signatory central authority, no dedicated staff, and no budget specifically for e-resources. The authors discuss how the framework has actualized and changed circumstances since 2015 and how the incubator approach has worked, and offer perspectives on the future of the framework, which is essential to ongoing strategic planning.

KEYWORDS

University System of Maryland & Affiliated Institutions; USMAI, electronic resources management; e-resources; ERM; consortial governance; consortial ERM; incubator; innovation

Holistic and flexible nature of USMAI consortial governance ERM framework—How is it working?

As the University System of Maryland & Affiliated Institutions (USMAI) Resources Acquisitions and Licensing Subgroup (RALS) co-chairs, Ms. Lenore England and Mr. Randy Lowe, we established the new USMAI consortial governance framework in 2015. The USMAI Acquisitions & Licensing Coordinator, Ms. Erica Owusu, joined USMAI in October 2016 and her work with us is essential to the continued operationalization of the framework elements. We developed, established, and are continuously evolving the framework through an incubator approach to “bubble up” ideas to improve over time. Lenore and Randy published two previous *Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship* ERM Ideas & Innovations columns about the framework in September 2016 (England & Lowe, 2016) and with Charles Thomas in December 2016 (England, Lowe, & Thomas, 2016a), “Evolution of a New Framework of Shared Governance for

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Consortial Electronic Resources Management at the University System of Maryland & Affiliated Institutions, Part One and Part Two,” respectively. Charles, Lenore, and Randy also presented the incubator approach to the framework development at the Charleston Conference in November 2016 (England, Lowe, & Thomas, 2016b).

The publication and presentation of our ideas was especially important for a number of reasons. We wanted to fully document the work that was done, which in turn helped us to solidify our ideas. We then wanted to meet with other library consortia to discuss our ideas as applicable to their work and initiate both cooperation and sharing of our ideas and theirs. We think that as we cooperatively develop new ideas with library consortia, that will help us to adapt and make our framework more robust and increasingly adaptable over time. As we published and presented, we began to clearly sense that we also needed to develop new business processes and workflows that the ERM library staff could readily put to work. We are currently establishing business process management frameworks within our main overarching framework—the extension frameworks of operations are clearly the crux of putting the main framework to work. We need to establish additional process framework because the main framework elements cannot work without operational processes that make sense for the USMAI ERM library staff.

What helps bind the framework and build it over time is the holistic and flexible approach we are making through our ERM leadership work. ERM is constantly evolving, and without this approach, our framework would be obsolete within a few years. Keeping the overarching approach in mind will move the framework forward, even as leadership and library staff change. As ERM leaders, we wanted to assess the present and future with three critical questions that will continue to guide us. What is a good *investment* for our work? The time and effort to maintain the holistic and flexible approach to the framework. What is *significant* ERM work for us? To enable more effective and efficient ERM for the USMAI through innovation. What will be the *lasting impact* of our ERM leadership? To enable the framework to change over time and allow others to make continued improvements to the innovation of the framework elements.

We established the framework to essentially increase shared consortial ERM collection development and reap the beneficial results of a more refined, honed effort in the process. At the time we started in 2015, the USMAI was not a recognized legal entity and had no procurement or signatory central authority, no dedicated staff, and no budget specifically for e-resources (England, Lowe, & Thomas, 2016b). Randy then developed a new consortial governance framework to address the entire ERM lifecycle in the USMAI, to make improvements, offer solutions, develop new policies and procedures, and incorporate assessment (England, Lowe, & Thomas, 2016b). The three of us and our USMAI colleagues have put the framework elements into action, as Randy discusses in the next section.

Reflections on how the framework is holding up

An important part of the development process, we wanted to reflect on the idea of a framework and how it is currently working. Our reflection and study on the framework will keep it relevant to our ERM work. Once set in motion and the work planned out into processes and workflows, as well as actualized, we found that we need to still control our ERM operations through periodic reviews. This review process is in and of itself cyclical in nature, because we consistently review the framework. We are not starting where we began. Instead, we are approaching our review from our experience as workers and leaders for the framework, to help it grow and potentially spin off in a different direction. The end process is also the beginning of other processes.

Randy and Erica discuss their stewardship of the framework in the following sections. Randy reflects on how the framework has actualized and how the incubator approach has worked. Erica, as the USMAI principle administrator for ERM, lends her perspectives on the current state and future of the framework, which is so essential to her strategic planning for ERM in the USMAI.

Encompassing nature of the framework

Through it all, the holistic and flexible nature of the framework has enabled the ERM library staff in the USMAI to use their expertise to get the work done. Specifically, RALS members can establish policies and future initiatives, while representing their own member institutions (England, Lowe, & Thomas, 2016b).

Their “reach in” to formulate the RALS leading action on ERM policies and procedure allows them to “build out” these policies and procedures for the USMAI, as well as to provide them with the means to “reach out” to their administration at their home institutions, again in a cyclical fashion.

How does this all occur? The “reach in” happens when they are involved in projects for RALS and work with other RALS members to understand how to formulate policies and procedures for the USMAI ERM. As they are doing and completing the work over time, and it does take time in some cases, they develop paths to “build out” structures and workflow that will benefit USMAI ERM librarians. As they do this work, they gain more experience that will help them to “reach out” to better inform their libraries’ administration. The discussion that ensues with administration also supports the “reach out.”

Flexibility built into the framework

We found that the expansion of knowledge provided by RALS members and Erica’s leadership allows for the framework processes to grow and develop over time, and it allows for the provision of future leadership. There is no right or wrong way to develop the framework processes because it is best that the work to build these processes is tailored for the librarians’ approaches to this work, which will change over time as new librarians and new leadership take over.

As the framework is put into actionable procedures and processes, these in turn must provide, even determine, the changes in the framework, again a cyclical approach. Changes to processes happen because of the dynamic nature of ERM, and we found that we must be aware of changes, at times that happen quickly, some more gradually over time. The framework has to be very flexible, and those guiding the implementation of the framework must keep this flexibility in mind.

Implementation of the framework: How are we doing?

Implementation of the USMAI’s ERM framework has been moving through two simultaneous approaches. These are (1) operationalization within the USMAI, which is inherently an internal organizational focus as discussed here and by Lenore in the previous section; and (2) conducting an interconsortial dialogue with an objective of sharing best practices and advocating for an improved managerial environment for e-resources for libraries, which Lenore discusses in the following section on our planned “long tail” objectives.

Actualizing the framework

After finalizing a collection development strategy and selection criteria for e-resources shared by all member libraries of the USMAI in March 2015, we proceeded to create a foundation upon which strategic planning and improvement of consortial practices could be developed and operationalized. Seven initiatives for strategic improvement, referred to as our ERM “portfolio,” were identified as the initial focus of our framework activities (England & Lowe, 2016). Actualization of these initiatives has proceeded in earnest since the summer of 2015, with priority placed on employing human resources, inventorying existing documentation and policies, and beginning to develop improved procedures and workflows. As a result, some initiatives have been more fully implemented than others through early 2017, but each of the following has received at least some level of attention:

1. **Employ dedicated ERM staff for the consortium**—A Consortium Acquisitions & Licensing Coordinator was hired in October 2016, marking the first time since 2009 that the USMAI had an individual dedicated full time to oversee managerial processes related its e-resources collection(s). While the consortium’s first shared E-Resources Librarian held a faculty appointment at a USMAI member institution, this new position was intentionally created with more flexibility in mind. The Coordinator was hired as a contractor by Collaborative Solutions Maryland, a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation formed by the University System of Maryland (USM) to encourage and promote IT resource sharing for its members. Creating the position in this fashion, at least initially, allows the USMAI to realign or adjust responsibilities as the ERM framework is implemented and other administrative priorities emerge.

2. **Review the Role of Consortial Procurement Agent**—The USMAI has had a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place with LYRASIS since 2009 to coordinate group-licensed e-resources procurement. We sought to update the role of this agent in supporting the USMAI as a result of creating the Consortium Acquisitions & Licensing Coordinator position. While the revised roles included continuation of licensing and invoicing assistance, we also sought to incorporate additional services such as hosting an electronic resources management system and collecting and storing usage statistics. In June 2016, a Request for Proposals (RFP) for “Library E-Resources Licensing and Subscription Management Services” was issued by one of our member institutions on behalf of the Maryland Education Enterprise Consortium (MEEC) to seek an agent to provide these services not only to the USMAI but to other interested K–16+ institutions in the state. Only two responses were received for the RFP, both from start-up organizations, perhaps indicating a disconnect between the current ERM needs of libraries and library consortia and the services and resources allocated to meeting them from more established agents. The USMAI decided not to initiate a new agent contract at the end of the RFP process. As the current MOU with LYRASIS expires in December 2017, we will continue to evaluate the role of a procurement agent within our evolving ERM framework.
3. **Licensing; Inventory and terms**—A RALS working group conducted a comprehensive inventory of the e-resources licenses in effect for both USMAI shared e-resources as well as for the hundreds of opt-in group-licensed subscriptions across the consortium. Because the responsibility of maintaining these licenses was unfulfilled for several years due to lack of staffing, this enormous task began in 2014 and was completed in December 2016. In addition, a second working group documented both state-required and consortially preferred licensing terms to be used in future negotiations with vendors and publishers. This report was completed in July 2016 and is being reviewed the USMAI Council of Library Directors (CLD).
4. **E-Resource workflow practices**—RALS members and ERM librarians throughout the USMAI are now collaborating with the Consortium Acquisitions & Licensing Coordinator to establish and disseminate procedures, timelines, and workflows for recommending and evaluating the e-resources shared by all USMAI libraries. This work includes creating methods to more effectively assess our current shared e-resources. A RALS Consortial Ebook Workgroup is also working with the USMAI Metadata Subgroup to finalize workflows that address quality issues pertaining to catalog records for shared collections.
5. **Training and professional development**—RALS created a Training Workgroup in 2016 after administering a survey to ERM practitioners across the consortium to better understand their needs in this area. As making online ERM training materials available for new staff members and locating documented consortial procedures were the most frequently cited needs, the workgroup is currently focusing on building a web-based portal to organize existing training resources. It is also identifying new topics for future development. This group also plans to organize occasional face-to-face training sessions for ERM practitioners.
6. **Open access**—RALS made a formal recommendation to USMAI administrators to consider creation of a strategic direction that provides a framework and focus for open access initiatives, a challenging task given the current fluid environment in scholarly communication and academic publishing. The USMAI Executive Director led an effort to draft a USM “Statement Supporting Open Access Dissemination of Scholarship,” which was endorsed by both the USM Council of University System Faculty and USM Academic Affairs Advisory Council in early 2017, and since has been referred to USM constituent institution presidents for their consideration.
7. **Evaluation and assessment**—A Short-Term Task Group on Data Collection and Analysis was formed in April 2016 to conduct a limited-scope investigation of the assessment activities of comparable consortia, to inventory operational data collected by USMAI member libraries and at the consortial level, and to make recommendations for creating basic structures that would provide support for the broad operationalization of assessment and reporting in all USMAI functional areas, including e-resources. The task group completed its report in December 2016, which the USMAI CLD is currently reviewing. In the meantime, RALS and the Consortium Acquisitions

& Licensing Coordinator are seeking methods to more effectively collect expenditure and usage data to establish more formalized assessment of the USMAI's e-resources.

Identification of new framework elements

Additional challenges and needs have presented themselves as we have worked to address our initial set of ERM framework initiatives. Three prominent examples follow:

1. **Build a Consortial ERM Document Library**—As existing e-resource workflow practices are reviewed and revised, and new procedures are established, we must ensure that they are readily available to ERM practitioners throughout the consortium. Besides contributing to the effectiveness of consortial ERM workflows, having this documentation readily available via a website or ERM system will also serve two additional purposes: (1) to function as a reference for member libraries to utilize or adapt to improve their local practices, “building out” structures and workflow that best meet their needs; and (2) to serve as a means for documenting USMAI best practices that may be shared with other consortia.
2. **Establish Procurement Authority**—The USMAI does not have procurement or central signatory authority as mentioned above, relying upon the procurement offices of its member institutions or USM administrative offices for this function. This greatly slows down vendor negotiation, licensing, and invoicing processes, which constrains the consortium's ability to pursue intentional shared collection development activities. It also significantly hinders the Consortium Acquisitions & Licensing Coordinator's ability to carry out certain job responsibilities. Options to address this issue are being pursued by the USMAI Executive Director.
3. **Mentor ERM Practitioners**—We have discovered a need to mentor our colleagues beyond offering practical training and professional development in ERM. Agreeing to pursue intentional shared e-resource collection development in a consortium with a diverse institutional membership—all with unique sets of needs—can be a challenge. Making sure that our colleagues have a full understanding of the benefits of being a member of the consortium, plus the value that it demonstrates to our collective constituencies, the USM institution presidents, Chancellor, Board of Regents, and state legislature is the responsibility of those of us in ERM leadership positions.

ERM as an incubator: Generating new ideas

The development and implementation of the USMAI ERM framework can be viewed as an incubator approach from the perspective of business management theory. Our advocacy for change and subsequent fostering of improvement in ERM through the development of our framework is an example of incubation. Our seven initiatives, or framework elements, plus the ideas that have been generated since that time were developed at the “ground level” by ERM practitioners rather than assigned by administrative directive. They have sometimes resulted in disruptive innovation that challenges firmly established consortial practices. Indeed, we have even found that some “[d]isruptive innovations are uncertain, unpopular, and difficult” (Wunker, 2017). For example, the limited responses we received to our consortial procurement agent RFP served as a tough early lesson, but it may lead to positive developments at a later date. We have also learned that a focused approach within a disruptive or uncertain environment can result in great changes.

Maintaining the incubator—allowing ideas to “bubble up”

We described the USMAI's deployment of a form of shared governance through its subgroup structure in our September 2016 and December 2016 ERM Ideas and Innovations columns (England & Lowe, 2016, and England, Lowe, & Thomas, 2016a). The RALS subgroup has been able to make significant contributions in the formulation of strategic priorities for ERM as a result. RALS organizational structure supports a holistic approach to problem solving where the subgroup serves as an ERM incubator within which ideas “bubble up” to become actionable, strategic initiatives.

In addition to the three new framework elements described in the section above, the need to implement an ERM system locally, after learning that this would not be supported by a consortial procurement

agent, serves as an excellent example. As Erica expressed and RALS members realized, asking an Acquisitions & Licensing Coordinator to meet a dynamic and complex set of responsibilities without access to an adequate set of managerial tools is a tall order. As a result, USMAI ERM practitioners assisted Erica as she began an effort in late 2016 to evaluate systems for possible procurement. We also realize that procuring a system alone will not solve all of our ERM procedural issues. Incorporation of ERMS technology across our member institutions will require extensive training and support for ERM practitioners. The RALS working group that is developing ERM workflows and timelines has already begun to outline processes and procedures that are system agnostic to give us a head start in this area. Therefore, as ideas and issues “bubble up,” we are able to quickly organize ourselves to address those that merit our immediate attention.

Incorporation of open access into ERM

The incorporation of open access and other scholarly communication components into ERM operations is another area in which we have initiated some proactive consideration. While open access publishing generates a lot of discussion, its role as well as that of open educational resources are not yet mainstreamed into library collection development or ERM practices. It will be important that we ensure that decision making and workflow practices for subscribed e-resources and open access resources are not separated into silos within our consortial organization. Much of our early approaches to investigating these issues will likely center upon budgeting, selection or deselection of e-resources, and how to best continue to acquire fee-based content while also supporting the researchers in our institutions who either choose or are required to publish their work in open access journals, books, or other platforms.

Application of the framework: In action and practice

As we discussed, the importance of the business process applications to the framework are essential. The applications will keep the framework “alive,” and the work evolves the framework over time. Until now, we built the framework as a team of three and, while not in isolation by any means, the work of developing processes with RALS and other USMAI librarians has meant that we need to ensure that the librarians understand the framework in terms of how they will manage consortial ERM duties at their home institutions.

Business process management to get the work done

Business process management theories provide the means to approach how to establish workflow and how to revise current ones. This can mean a long process to reveal how to manage new or revised processes, as well as document current ones. We found that the work to make improvement means that we need to do a lot of background research and review to more effectively get the work done at present. In fact, we found that it is sometimes essential to delve deeply so that we are better informed about how to create new processes and workflows. One cannot always happen without the other.

Once this background work is done, this work is the foundation for a more succinct approach to current business workflow documentation. In a sense, the final documentation does not necessarily show hard work required to create actionable strategies. The simpler end results, however, will be more effective for USMAI librarians. As we develop more concise workflows, ERM library staff can readily post and explain at their institutions. They will know what needs to be done, in common with other ERM librarians in the USMAI. The workflows can also be seen as a series of connected checklists, which help distill complex workflows into effective processes. Checklists are most effective when they are simple and keep everyone on track.

When all is said and done, even these business processes workflows are flexible. RALS members will review over time, based on environmental changes and feedback from USMAI librarians. And the cyclical nature of business processes is as important as framework review.

Frameworks within the consortial governance framework

We discussed frameworks within the main consortial governance framework. It is worth repeating for business process management of ERM workflows as well. As we develop the business processes,

the work to get it all done turns into frameworks as well, as a means of how to maintain the work processes. For instance, we are enabling all of the ERM training materials, as Randy describes above, into a framework of an organized central site or more than one site. We are also working on how to best document ERM procedures, workflows, and timelines, as Randy describes above, in a central website. What we are doing is taking very complex processes and stating them in terms that can be readily understood by ERM librarians to enable more effective coordination and communication. That will help us to create future ERM business process management frameworks that are again very beneficial.

Future perspectives from the USMAI acquisitions & licensing coordinator

Managing the ERM consortial governance framework now

The USMAI Acquisitions & Licensing Coordinator position was created to provide the capacity to coordinate and manage ERM activities across the entire consortium as well as facilitate communications among various stakeholders and partners including e-resource librarians, system vendors/providers, external contractors, other consortia partners, and departments and councils throughout member libraries. As mentioned, the USMAI currently has no signatory authority and legalized procurement capabilities, as these transactions are handled via the largest library in the consortium as a de-facto business partner and via an external consortial partner. Not handling these consortial activities more locally limits the full potential of my performing the desired cost and operational efficiency measures for which my position was created.

At the moment, procuring an ERM system to track and manage consortial resources, gathering member library information, researching products and services members are interested in, building relationships with vendors and service providers, and developing documentation, communication procedures, and workflows are some of the necessary foundational work in which I am involved. Having the support and input of the existing information resources advisory group (including RALS) lends itself to a beneficial, participatory, and flexible resource for the consortium. There is only so much the USMAI consortium can leverage, however, if important operational changes, namely, business and financial processes and signatory authority for license negotiations, are not realized.

Projected changes for the ERM consortial governance framework

The focus for projecting changes to the ERM consortial governance framework relies less on structural changes and more on operational changes. The current ERM governance structure for USMAI—representative council of library directors to approve purchases and initiatives, a dedicated consortial director to handle the day-to-day management activities, and advisory groups that support the ERM work and processes of appointed internal and external agents—is a solid and participative structural framework within which to operate. It is not to say that improvements could not be made, but the existing framework is representative of the desired culture of involvement and decision making from all members. As the internal steward for consortial ERM activities, I anticipate having more direct control over the day-to-day processes and transactions ERM work requires as well as having a continued reliance upon consortial advisory groups and the USMAI leadership. This will enable an environment in which the USMAI and its leadership will have a stronger role in negotiating agreements, influencing consortial business operations, participate in more timely procurements, as well as create and expand shared consortial resource benefits.

Management changes for the ERM consortial governance framework in the future

Envisioning management changes for the USMAI ERM governance includes transforming the consortium's operational structure so that centralization of procurement and reporting activities, transparency and better communication strategies, and better training and documentation can occur. The USMAI previously experienced centralized ERM services with a dedicated consortial electronic resource librarian operating out of the largest academic library in the consortium, but consortial ERM processes and procedures related to license negotiation and procurement were kept private or less visible due to the

nature of the work and tools available then. After outsourcing most of these processes to a consortial partner, there was even less control over fee structure as well as licensing and negotiation—among other identified challenges.

Other than reinstating a dedicated consortial ERM employee, projected solutions to more productive and efficient library resource management include making the USMAI a more independent consortium able to handle procurement directly, enable signatory authority, acquire appropriate tools, and expand group, subgroup, and opt-in acquisition options. The Executive Director and I are exploring partnership avenues to accomplish these business activities for the consortium. In addition to making the consortium a more independent, legalized entity, enacting an electronic-based solution for ERM subscription, purchase, and usage statistics management will help to organize and document consortial activities related to e-resources as well as give member libraries better access to product information, pricing, license information, and management of their resource investments.

With these eventual changes and improved processes, the USMAI consortium will be strengthened and primed to become a more efficient, more effective, and an even more useful entity to serve the member libraries and their respective communities.

Long tail discussion of reach out to library consortium

It occurred to Randy, as we developed our incubator approach to consortial ERM governance, that what the USMAI is doing is neither unique nor done in isolation. We wanted to let other library consortium know about our ideas developed with our ERM incubator. More importantly, we wanted to open up discussion about these ideas and hear about their ideas. The sharing of ideas is beneficial indeed, and we think it will lead us to proactively seek out how we want ERM to work in all libraries.

As our ideas are established now and developed for the future, we will see a long tail for our framework that will be as active in the future as it was in the beginning of the long tail. We see this extended long tail period as a means to reach out to other library consortium and an opportunity to develop more frameworks with other consortiums.

A natural conclusion or a beginning?

We see our ERM framework not as a natural conclusion of our incubator work done in isolation. We see it as a beginning of a discussion with other library consortiums. This spin off will expand our ideas, as we learn more about how others manage ERM for consortiums. Perhaps it is not a means to an end to say, “We do it this way and it works,” but rather for us to ask, “How can we make it better?” As we discuss in the beginning of our column, what is the *best way to invest*, what is the *greatest significance*, and how will we make a *lasting impact*, all for the development and expansion of ERM? We think we can best answer these questions working alongside other library consortiums.

Getting to know other library consortiums

Rather than a presentation, we decided to set up meetings with other library consortium representatives at library conferences and other library-related events. We saw these meetings as more effective for one-on-one conversions, which are critical to get the ideas flowing. These are small steps to “build out” good relationships for the future. These meetings are also “get to know one another” type meetings and to ask for feedback on what we are doing in the USMAI and find out what they are doing. The first meetings would be brief, for an hour or so. We started to plan out the meetings for the ALA Annual Conference in June 2017, at the time this column was written in May.

Ideas to initiate interest in our framework

We will work on other ideas to initiate interest in our ERM framework, as a starting placeholders for coordinated activities. We do not want to state that our framework is *the* means to an end, the only one, but rather a *starting point* for future discussion of a broader framework for ERM internationally.

Sometimes, ideas happen from other ideas, and establishing what is effectively an incubator for ERM in library consortiums can only lead to even better thinking for all involved.

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