

Harmonization Pilots Final Report

Submitted to SILS Working Group 11/15/19

Harmonization will involve aligning practices, procedures, policies and workflows where appropriate to best take advantage of the operational and service opportunities afforded through a SILS. The harmonization pilot process was created to test out possible harmonization processes: gathering experts, selecting topics, discussing potential areas of alignment, and coming to some agreement on next steps.

Two pilot teams were created: one with an access services focus and one with a cataloging and metadata focus. Each team was instructed to limit their scope to a “bite-size” topic, more as a proof of concept than a large project, with the idea that with only 6 months to work a smaller scope would be best. Each team met monthly starting in June 2019 and concluded their work in October 2019.

Access Services Summary

The Access Services Loan Period Harmonization Pilot team was established in June 2019 and met monthly through October 2019. Membership consisted mainly of UC Library Heads of Access Services. The pilot team was charged with investigating the possible alignment of loan periods across the 10 campuses and the two RLFs, with a focused scope on “students + monographs + general/main collection.” This focus was chosen because it was initially anticipated to be relatively uncontroversial and manageable in a short period of time.

While the team did outline the benefits and challenges of aligning certain loan period and create an inventory of local practices for comparison, the team was ultimately unable to achieve consensus on a single loan period for the focus area. The group agreed to keep meeting informally to compile local practices in preparation for future harmonization and migration efforts.

In addition to multiple observations, the team drafted 10 recommendations that could improve future harmonization work. Significant observations and recommendations have been collated below. The Access Services pilot final report is appended to this report below.

Cataloging & Metadata Summary

The Cataloging & Metadata Harmonization Pilot team was established in June 2019 and met monthly through October 2019. The membership was made up of library staff members at each of the 10 UC Libraries and Shared Cataloging Program (SCP) who were familiar with the cataloging practices around local fields. The pilot team was charged with investigating aligning local MARC bibliographic fields, with a focus on 9XX fields.

The team completed an inventory of local practices and through analysis came up with several areas of further focus: data used for discovery / for the patron view and data used for creating reports. In the face of so much data, it was useful to focus on areas of “impact” to patrons and staff. The pilot team came to consensus around several concrete action items for alignment, which will be passed to the ILS Data Cleanup team for next steps.

In addition to multiple observations, the team drafted 6 recommendations that could improve future harmonization work. Significant observations and recommendations have been collated below. The Cataloging and Metadata pilot final report is appended to this report below.

Significant Observations and Recommendations

1. There are significant limitations to approaching harmonization from the current reality: 10 different campuses with 10 historical ways of doing things. What if instead the UC Libraries approached harmonization from the position of being able to build a new UC Library, spread across multiple geographic locations, from scratch? In order to achieve the desired transformations and efficiencies of a SILS, **future harmonization efforts should rely less on recreating current practices than on imagining better ways of doing things, and adapting current practices to come closer to that vision.** It seems that patrons are already expecting this: as technology makes tasks easier across the board, users will want rules and processes that match the ease of access and discoverability that is allowed technologically.
2. Therefore, **a shared operational vision for the SILS would provide a backbone for harmonization work, and facilitate buy-in from UC Libraries stakeholders at all levels.** Without a shared driver for change, there is little incentive to reconsider current local workflows and policies. Such a statement might explain or reinforce that the UC collection should be considered a single collection dispersed across the campuses, and that the entire collection, regardless of home/storage location, is intended to serve all UC users, regardless of *their* location. It would clarify that all campus users, across each UC location, are ultimately, and in fact, *UC* users. Such a statement would support the group's thinking about how to make the UC collection available in a streamlined fashion to all UC users, rather than allowing each campus to think first or exclusively about its own users locally.
3. The functional areas making up the SILS are highly interconnected and interdependent; a change in one may necessitate changes in other areas. In order to facilitate the desired changes in any given area, **it will be crucial to have a clear understanding and explanation for the expected benefits of alignment or localization, to engage stakeholders as allies and facilitate buy-in at all levels.** This explanation should be shared in discussions with local campus/library stakeholders and will help offset compromises that might be needed at the local level.
4. In order to envision shared solutions and actions, **harmonization team membership should be composed of advocates for change in their broad functional area, who are able to focus on benefits to the whole system.** The work of harmonizing is the work of governance - making recommendations and decisions about the path forward for the SILS service. **Membership should be selected based on a skillset that is less about specific expertise in a functional area than in being able to envision, communicate, and facilitate a shared future.** Members should be expert enough to work appropriately in their topic; willing and able to reach out to stakeholders and bring in either information or the people themselves as consultants; and able to understand the larger consortial vision and make compromises towards a shared goal.
5. **SILS harmonization team members and others working locally to enact change should be empowered and supported by campus leadership.** While harmonization team members will be doing the direct work of research and recommendation, they should not be a lone voice on campus. Campus leadership should be engaged and supportive of efforts to compromise and collaborate, paving the way for harmonization team members to engage their colleagues. The shared governance model for SILS in phase 4 puts heavy emphasis on communication efforts, and the flow of communication between SILS teams and from SILS

teams to local campus stakeholders. This model should function as a strong support for the harmonization change advocates.

6. Finally, harmonization will take a significant amount of resources to do successfully. Not only in assigning local staff to SILS committees and teams, but in research, stakeholder outreach, and implementation. **It will be important for campus leaders to acknowledge the impact of this harmonization work and authorize the appropriate time to be successful.** Staff on these committees and on the campus generally will need to be granted the time to allow for this work to take place.

In addition to the observations and recommendations, the two pilot teams plus SILS H drafted a set of Harmonization Principles which can be used to direct future harmonization work.

Overall, the pilots can be considered a great success, in that the SILS H subgroup and the SILS Working Group (WG) learned valuable insights from the process, documented below as observations and recommendations. These observations and recommendations will be forwarded to the appropriate Phase 3.5 and Phase 4 groups (including Shared Governance Task Force, and Phase 4 harmonization teams) for next steps as needed.

Membership Rosters

Access Services

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Appendices

Appendix A: Harmonization Principles (below)

See Also:

[SILS Access Services Harmonization Pilot Report \(October 2019\)](#)

[SILS Cataloging & Metadata Harmonization Pilot Report \(October 2019\)](#)

Appendix A: Harmonization Principles

Last revised 9/24/19; Principles approved by WG 10/18/19

Introduction & Definitions

The mission of the Systemwide ILS (SILS) project is to transform library services and operations through innovation and collaboration. Harmonization is the process where the UC Libraries come together to align practices, procedures, policies and workflows where appropriate to best take advantage of the operational and service opportunities afforded through a SILS.

There are different options for harmonization:

- *Alignment / standardization* is practices, procedures, policies, and workflows being the same at multiple UC Libraries institutions.
- *Localization* is practices, procedures, policies and workflows being unique to individual UC institutions.

The principles below should guide the work of harmonization, helping to answer questions like “why should we standardize or localize?” and “what is the cost/benefit?”:

- 1) Should we align these practices? Why? Why not?
- 2) For the ones that should be aligned, how do we propose to do so? Why?

These principles and guidelines are based on the [SILS Principles](#). Harmonization is at the heart of the SILS principles and certain principles speak directly to the harmonization effort (see below.) These principles are abstract affirmations; harmonization is where we operationalize and act on the principles.

SILS principle 1: The UC Library Collection is an integrated, shareable, user-centric collection that supports and enhances the mission of the University of California and whose strength is derived from the diverse nature of the individual campus library collections.

SILS principle 8: We emphasize shared practices and policies that are appropriate and effective for the system. Rather than be bound by long-standing individual practices, we seek to collaborate to find new solutions that create success at a system level. We recognize that this project calls on us to be empathetic and flexible in finding common ground. All project participants will strive to balance local interests with systemwide goals.

Harmonization Principles

When deciding whether and how to harmonize, we will create outcomes that allow us to:

- 1. Prioritize the end user experience.**
 - a. End users should not have to become experts in the way staff are.
 - b. If someone has to experience complexity, can it be staff instead of patrons? Leverage staff expertise to allow patrons a shorter path.

- c. We will reduce or eliminate barriers for patrons to discover, access, and effectively use our research collections
 - i. Simplify and streamline user knowledge of and access to the UC Library Collection.
 - ii. Communicate with words, and in ways, that users understand.
- 2. Simplify.**
 - a. Complexity is costly - proliferation of code, of special technical needs, of breakage points all require more staffing resources to maintain.
 - b. Complexity can result in communication or training errors when reference staff are working with patrons.
 - 3. Keep evolving: we will not be bound to long-standing practices and systems that are no longer useful.**
 - a. Build the freedom to experiment into our processes, and create a culture of comfort with reiteration.
 - b. We will create a cycle of assessment to determine “usefulness.”
 - c. Remember: future changes do not retroactively malign past decisions.
 - d. Changes we make now are still beneficial even if changes are made again in the future. Future changes will be helped by incremental changes.
 - 4. Strongly support unique needs.**
 - a. Recognize that the UC Libraries are different for good reasons and specialize in different things.
 - b. Localization will be supported in a way that is still interoperable.
 - c. Allow campuses to support user-oriented needs locally.
 - d. Help campuses define and prioritize the local needs in relation to system needs.
 - e. Shining a light on the unique collections can be accomplished through standardization or localization.
 - 5. Enable data-driven decision making.**
 - a. Our data needs to be compatible / interoperable in order to make sense.
 - b. We need to be measuring / capturing the same things.
 - c. Understand and share definitions of what we are measuring in order to improve measurement.
 - d. Understand what is impactful, why, and how we calculate that (as a system and locally).
 - 6. Unify the experience for users of our general collections.**
 - a. If we have coherence, we can talk to each other across campuses with greater ease, support each other in a greater way, and find future common solutions with greater ease.
 - b. Integrate our collections. The depth of our UC Library collection is built upon the strength of our individual collections.
 - 7. Share the load.**
 - a. Don’t reinvent the wheel; don’t over-expend energy.
 - b. Reduce unnecessary / problematic work.
 - c. Stop doing some things altogether.
 - d. Identify where there is value in doing it once for the consortium.
 - e. Free up resources to spend on unique challenges and opportunities.