Overview of five current awareness platforms

Updated 2021
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Content aggregation or “current awareness” platforms are tools that restrict the flood of digital news and information now available, honing in on the content determined to matter the most.

As part of our mission in delivering Library as a Service®, LAC Group looked at five of the leading content aggregation platforms on the market:

1. **InfoNGen**—Delivers powerful intelligent search capabilities, text analytics and pre-built industry taxonomies to enhance relevance based on information needs.

2. **Manzama**—With over half of the world’s largest law firms as clients, Manzama delivers legal industry expertise while adding value through technology partnerships.

3. **Meltwater**—Meltwater continues to excel at media monitoring to enhance marketing, PR and communications efforts by tapping into the power of influencers and media data.

4. **Nexis Newsdesk**—Along with being part of the LexisNexis family, a core strength of Newsdesk is its comprehensive coverage of global news and business information.

5. **Vable**—Another vendor with deep legal roots, Vable is becoming more focused on technology, such as using IBM Watson’s Natural Language Processing algorithms.

Our intention is not to replace your evaluation process but enhance it, by helping you:

- Understand how and why these platforms are used in order to align with your goals and objectives.
- Determine the potential value that could be realized through this investment.
- Save time and effort during your own evaluation process.
Primary value proposition

Current awareness platforms offload some of the time-consuming steps in finding information, organizing it in one place, and presenting or publishing the most meaningful content to the right people.

These platforms mine and consolidate vast amounts of news and information from a variety of sources, delivering the most relevant results to an online portal or dashboard. They keep you “in the know” by helping you identify and monitor sources, spot trends and assess opportunities. While drawing from thousands of sources, they are vetted against a number of criteria to deliver only the most current and accurate information.

Problems solved

The most common drivers behind the decision to invest in these systems, which can entail tens to hundreds of thousand dollar investments annually, include the following:

- **Reliability**—Some digital information is trustworthy; some is not. The vetting and culling of sources lays a more reliable foundation for your information needs.

- **Relevance**—Even well-crafted internet searches can deliver content that is irrelevant or meaningless. While content aggregators still deliver vast volumes of information, they’ve undergone an initial screening process.

- **Reduce silos of information**—These systems consolidate multiple sources in one easy place, eliminating overlap and the need to go back-and-forth between multiple collections.

- **Time**—Content aggregators streamline the research and tracking process, empowering researchers and decision makers to do their best work, as quickly as possible.

- **Research costs**—By saving time, managing content overflow and automating some steps of the information gathering and sharing process, these platforms serve as research assistants.
NEEDS AND UTILIZATION

Content aggregation platforms are commonly used for current awareness, media monitoring, competitive intelligence research, market research and benchmarking.

InfoNgen

Offers targeted services for the following industries, including specialized content sources and preconfigured taxonomies and offering industry-specific regulatory information, trends and sentiment analysis.

- **Financial**: stock price alerts, mergers and IPOs and more.
- **Life sciences**: drug research and development, drug counterfeiting and fraud, diseases, clinical trials and more.
- **Manufacturing and technology**: discoveries, technologies, manufacturing processes and more.
- **Retail and consumer goods**: consumer research, brand and product alerts, customer feedback, fraudulent websites and counterfeit products and more.
- **Insurance**: automated claims management, fraud detection and more.
- **Law**: latest cases, new laws and regulations and more.

Manzama

With a focus on the legal industry, Manzama works well for monitoring law firms and tracking other legal news and topics, including corporate counsel movement, lateral movement and executive movement. Manzama Base is the company’s market intelligence platform, which provides the foundation for Manzama Insights: an AI-powered market analytics platform that uses algorithms to inform clients’ business strategy and development.

Insights locates only relevant content that impacts corporate health, classifying information into one of six categories:

1. Management
2. Operations
3. Financials
4. Products and services
5. Partners and competitors
6. Government

In 2019 Manzama partnered with CGLytics to deliver corporate governance intelligence allowing firms to access relationship mapping tools, uncover and establish connections with new targets.
**Meltwater**

Media monitoring, including social media, is the core strength of Meltwater, which is commonly used to gauge and improve marketing, advertising and PR efforts. Its database includes a few hundred thousand journalists, bloggers and influencers in the United States alone. It also excels at gauging positive or negative sentiment and applies AI to identify trends. Meltwater offers four product suites: PR & Communications, Marketing, Solutions for Data & Analytics and Enterprise.

The company currently claims 500 million influencer profiles in 60,000 categories and monitors “the most media types in the industry” allowing customers to “search over 1 trillion documents to find information relevant to them, no matter where it is posted.”

**Nexis Newsdesk**

Being part of the LexisNexis family is a key advantage as it allows Newsdesk to leverage advanced technologies, such as the company’s SmartIndexing Technology™ for rule-based automation and a superior content set through its vast network of licensed content partnerships. This combination of robust content and sophisticated technology has positioned Newsdesk as a best-in-class media monitoring and analytics solution. It is utilized by PR and marketing professionals, information departments, researchers, data scientists, and universities amongst others. Users can access content in 90+ languages and among six language interface options include English, German, French, Spanish, Dutch and Portuguese.

**Vable**

Vable empowers knowledge and information teams to take control of all aspects of information aggregation, curation and delivery. It bills itself as the only current awareness aggregation platform designed with information professionals, knowledge and subject specialists in mind. As a SaaS solution, the infrastructure enables on-demand access to the platform through an online portal—allowing end-users to work from anywhere.

The founder has a legal background and this can be seen with easy linking to some of the legal databases. While Vable’s clients are largely legal, other industries are represented; from financial and government to education and health. Any organization can use the platform to gather and analyze information about industries, the broader business and regulatory environment, as well as monitor competitors.

The company offers three products which can be mixed and matched according to client needs: InfoPro, Inbox, and
MyVable. Vable Inbox gives you the power to not only automate forwarding of emails to end-users, but extract the email’s content to use in a variety of ways. MyVable is an easy to use, end-user focused solution which delivers content through dashboards, newsletters and targeted alerts, with social sharing functionality.

**CONTENT AND FEATURES**

Let’s start with the most important aspects of content aggregation / current awareness platforms: their content sources, filtering and search capabilities, analytics and how to report and distribute findings.

They share positioning and the value proposition of enabling their customers to cut through the noise, yet their content offerings are so voluminous it still requires effort to sift and sort through it all. As one of our early researchers summarized this dilemma: “...they cover a staggering amount of content, and in my experience there can be a lot of junk to wade through.”

To help in this regard, look for tools that allow you to hone in on the sources you find most useful and reliable. Creating your own preferred source lists takes time but also saves time in the long run.

Social media is of increasing interest, which these platforms support to varying degrees. With its main purpose as media monitoring and intelligence, Meltwater integrates content and monitors influencers from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit and YouTube. Nexis Newsdesk, Manzama and Vable also incorporate various social media networks—Twitter in particular—in different ways.

Source management is another benefit for which they all offer different capabilities. For example, Manzama has a source management feature to group sources and content and filter out unwanted sources. Nexis Newsdesk offers a similar feature as explained by one researcher:

“I like to see what sources my search found so that I can supplement if necessary. After performing a search, you could limit to a particular source that had results, but you don’t see all the sources that had no results.”
CONTENT SOURCES

InfoNGen

- 200,000+ public sources—websites, newswires, professional journals, regulatory sources, and other publishers with over 35 pre-built industry-specific taxonomies. Number of taxonomies increased to 60+, with a total of 500,000+ tags. Main areas of expansion are healthcare, manufacturing, retails and CPG.
- 43 content languages covered and automated translation included.
- Expanded support for integrating enterprise content from CRM systems, Confluence, Service Now, etc.

Manzama

- Over 75,000 scanned sources, over 500,000 daily articles and 450 pre-built filters.
- Clusters similar or different versions of articles that cover the same underlying event, with automatic grouping of near-identical stories.
- Article summarization tools promise to reduce total reading material by up to 90%.

Meltwater

- Claims “the largest inventory of social media and online content in the business”.
- 300,000 news sources, 30 million blogs, 25,000 podcasts, continuous stream of Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and YouTube posts from 205 countries in 87 languages.
- Influencers and journalists including beat, name, publication, coverage and location.

Nexis Newsdesk

- Comprehensive curated content collection from broadcast, print and online sources to social media, blogs, podcasts, video/images, and industry forums.
- About 2.2 million news articles daily, spanning over 90 languages and 235 countries and territories, with near real-time coverage.
- Over 4,000 TV and radio stations around the world for 24/7 new coverage with access to transcript text.
- 7,000 unique subjects and industries filters using its LexisNexis® SmartIndexing™ Technology.

Vable

- Due to the crowdsourcing efforts of hundreds of information professionals, Vable maintains an extensive library of handpicked public and paywalled websites, feeds and 3rd party email alerts.
- Extensive permission settings mean that clients can securely import and upload content private to their organization resulting in comprehensive and bespoke alerts and newsletters.
FILTERING AND SEARCHING

Current awareness platforms deliver an astounding volume of information, yet they also include features to help you filter, analyze and report on findings, such as boolean operators, the ability to create and save search strings and dashboards for easy, visual snapshots. Following are a few capabilities noted.

**InfoNgen**

Allows pre-defined search filters that can be automatically applied to new searches. Exclude non-relevant results via reclassified topics. Full flexibility in using taxonomies, sources, text, relevancy, and deduplication in building searches. Create personalized searches to cover specific subjects of interest.

**Manzama**

Offers hundreds of pre-built searches and filters, and allows you to set up alerts according to highly specific criteria, which can then be cross-applied to build alerts for even more granular searches.

**Meltwater**

Enter keywords or phrases to create a list, using keyword boxes to store the words you want to include or exclude. Directly add Boolean language to create a search, and once created, it can be customized or updated. Assign Labels to searches for categorization and organization. Use Combined Searches to aggregate searches and filter sets.

**Nexis Newsdesk**

Incorporates robust search capabilities with numerous pre- and post- search filters (including 7,000 unique subject and industry pre-built filters using LexisNexis® SmartIndexing™ technology) to hone in on results. New Simple Search functionality makes it quicker and easier to extract value from searches. Choose between Boolean and Simple Search functionality.

**Vable**

Combination of NLP and human intervention populates multiple search filters across industries, subject, company, language, and geography. Build precise Topics with searches to suit you. Use a simple keyword search, single source, or combine a collection of complex boolean searches. Save time with “clone Topic” functionality for rapid newsletter construction.
ANALYTICS

InfoNgen
Gives interactive charting to identify trends and build reports. Deduplication or similar document clustering assist in managing content flow. Sentiment Analysis covers 25 aspects including Earnings, Outlook, and Share Price. Dashboards shows subject areas, relevant to various groups of users within the organization.

Manzama
Includes options to view news, filings, Twitter mentions and charts and trends. An AI-powered market analytics platform assigns unique score to positive and negative developments affecting industries and companies; identifies risks and opportunities. “Corporate health scorecard” identifies companies as potential targets and Story Timeline spots trends and anomalies that have progressed and changed over time to help identify risks and opportunities.

Meltwater
Offers multiple dashboards with the ability to show widgets on each one for information like content streams, sentiment, trends, locations, media coverage and reach. Real-time insights are delivered through Signals which alerts customers to breaking news and trends relevant to their business. Enhancements to Explore product allows users to filter by author lists and compare searches. Audience Insights module provides in-depth audience segmentation and analysis.

Nexis Newsdesk
Offers rich interactive charting capabilities, allowing you to change the kind of chart you see depending on the information you are seeking. For example, you could compare three companies over time by viewing news on a timeline. Sentiment scores help identify whether an article is positive, negative or neutral.

Vable
Provides a deduplication feature to ensure information integrity. The improved Vable Admin function provides user, content and alert analytics to ensure full ROI on all aggregated subscription content. Identify the most popular content, how users interact and whether you are getting your money’s worth for expensive subscriptions.

Mobile support for Android and Apple iOS devices are available for:

- InfoNGen
- Nexis Newsdesk
- Manzama (not on Google Play or App Store, but available through the company)
- Meltwater
REPORTING AND DISTRIBUTION

Content aggregation platforms offer visual dashboards for viewing within the system itself. For example, Meltwater allows you to view and monitor conversations across multiple social media networks in a single dashboard.

As for distributing information either internally or externally, the five platforms share many common publishing features like newsletters, both pre-designed and customizable, and alerts that can be sent via email. RSS and custom feeds can be posted to intranets, websites, knowledge-sharing systems like SharePoint and social media platforms. Create PDFs or export content to other systems like CRM and word processing applications. Custom APIs are available for more sophisticated needs. Other platform highlights are below:

InfoNGen
Aggregates subscriptions into a consolidated alert delivered daily or weekly to reduce email overload and improve readability. Custom newsletter curation workflow with auto-draft generation is available to save publisher’s time. End-user dashboards display key events and updates for each subject.

Manzama
Curates articles for newsletters or reports, adding external content like images to cover the same topic, industry, competitor or a combination. This streamlines the distribution of both internal and third-party content to clients, prospects and employees.

Meltwater
Setups real-time feeds to an intranet or other website, or to share on social media. Email a dashboard or individual items within a dashboard and create presentation-ready reports for stakeholders.

Nexis Newsdesk
Offers a range of customizable reports and easily integrates with your organization’s portals, intranets and applications such as CRM systems. Charts may be embedded within your own web pages, reports, and email newsletters.

Vable
Delivers automatic or curated content via email, real-time RSS feed or dashboard interface, with extensive reporting and analytics tools to monitor all usage. MyVable dashboard allows all end-users from within—and if agreed, outside—the organization to access shared Topics and Newsletters, and manage their own alerts and dashboard.
EVALUATION CONSIDERATIONS

Test-drive the platform

- InfoNgen makes a 30-day free trial available.
- Manzama and Meltwater provide demos; a free trial would require a special request.
- LexisNexis offers a 7-day free trial.
- Vable provides a free trial of approximately 2-4 weeks, depending on client success criteria.

Support and training

A variety of onboarding, training and support services are available, including self-service information on their websites, email and phone support, online help desk for submitting support tickets, training classes and dedicated client teams. You also may want to inquire about the vendor’s consulting services to customize your experience for specific needs.

- **InfoNgen** support is available via an online portal as well as phone, email and web conference. Standard support includes onboarding training, assistance with complex queries, customizations, new client-specific sources and taxonomies. Unlimited training and support is available for system power users.
- **Manzama’s Client Success team** will help get users set up and onboarded. The company’s “JumpStart” service facilitates enterprise implementation and deployment. It also offers helpful webinars like “How to Successfully Roll Out Manzama at Your Firm”.
- **Meltwater** has an extensive online help center with how-to’s in 12 languages covering things like account setup, creating dashboards and troubleshooting.
- **LexisNexis** offers a Newsdesk User Site with the latest guides, tutorials, webinars, case studies, and how-to videos. An extensive onboarding program and in-product chat support is available along with 24/7 telephone support.
- **Vable’s Client Success team** offers full support from trial to onboarding. This includes team or one-on-one admin training, how-to videos, and advanced search tutorials, as well as other webinars on request. Phone, email and web support via webchat and a searchable library of knowledge articles and FAQs is also available.

In general, the more you spend with any vendor, the more support and handholding you can expect to receive. Support options and costs will vary and should be confirmed prior to making a purchase decision.
Platform costs

The only cost information we can offer is that you can expect to spend upwards of tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year on licensing. Many variables will determine the final license and contract terms, such as the number of users, the number of administrators, content requirements, selected options and so forth.

Vable’s pricing depends on which solution is required, and the size of the team/organization. Similarly, InfoNgen offers flexible pricing from specific user licenses to enterprise-wide licenses.

In the case of Nexis Newsdesk, other information products and services you receive from the company could have an impact on pricing with bundling and volume opportunities. Nexis Newsdesk offers four pricing tiers—Individual, Small Team, Department, and Organization, catering to most organizations needs.

During your evaluation, you should be able to obtain general pricing information. Otherwise, expect prompt, detailed quotes based on your specified requirements, and be aware of the proclivity of all vendors to promote their “fully loaded” versions, which may include more than you need or want.

Other considerations

Whatever platform you evaluate, make sure you understand all its features and capabilities in order to leverage the system and optimize your results. Because each role and department brings different experience, needs and expectations, make sure your evaluation process includes a representative user sampling for input and feedback during the process.

Consider your information-sharing goals and requirements. All these platforms offer extensive options for creating reports, newsletters and alerts for sharing information. By “aggregating” access to a limited number of information experts and user groups, you can save time and money across the organization.

For additional information on each of these platforms, see the two appendices at the end of this document: Appendix A for features and strengths overview; Appendix B for vendor information.
CAVEATS

While these platforms offer many options for automation and information-sharing, you should maintain realistic expectations and remain watchful of potential downsides.

Content-sharing restrictions and limitations

Copyright protection and licensing restrictions still apply and, while these platforms mitigate some of this risk, you could still violate copyrights by sharing something you do not have the right to share.

Automation is only one step

In an era of diminishing staff and greater “do it yourself” reliance, tools and technologies that automate time-consuming work have become a necessity. Content aggregators add value by limiting some of the content that comes through at the top of the funnel and by allowing users to filter and view content based on relevant criteria. Yet human time, skill, perspective and intervention are still a necessity.

LIMITS TO AUTOMATION:

• Content may be ‘pre-sifted’ but that doesn’t mean all the irrelevant content will be eliminated. If the platforms make the sieve too fine, some valuable information may not get through. You can continue to expect some duplicate and irrelevant results. Newsdesk has a “Remove the Noise” filter which allows you to choose which types of content are included or excluded from your results.
• If using the platform to access premium subscription content, login credentials for that source may still be required. Multiple log-ins are cumbersome—recognizing this, provider Vable announced a partnership in 2018 with Onelog, a software development company specializing in username and password management. As for users who don’t have personal access to something they want that’s locked behind a paywall, a centralized library or information department can intervene.
• Licensing and copyrights still apply to usage of any 3rd party content. In this matter, concerns have been expressed in a variety of courts about content aggregators of all kinds, including the plethora of mainstream options that are openly available on the internet.
• Just because alerts, newsletters and reports can be automated doesn’t mean the result will be satisfactory. One of our reviewers conveys some advice via her personal experience with automated newsletters: “I personally had to do too much editing after the fact, so I was never able to send them automatically to my recipients without prior review.”
HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

Sparing organizations the data dumps of automated platforms, LAC Group relies on human knowledge to generate insightful content in a digestible format. Our analyst-led approach is designed to provide customizable solutions and action-driven insights to meet clients’ growth goals and extend knowledge of their clients and industries.

ANALYSTS’ BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

Given our vast talent pool and flexible solutions, LAC can deliver content to cover various industries. Our analysts serve corporations and firms in the U.S., U.K, and Canada. Each analyst is part of an industry team and has various academic and educational backgrounds such as journalism, libraries, J.Ds, and PhDs. The content aggregated and produced can be delivered in French and English.

SOURCES

In consultation with clients, our analysts identify the preferred sources of content generation. Content is typically drawn from thousands of sources, including national and international media, industry publications, corporate websites and press releases, analyst reports, government records, blogs and social media platforms, and additional forms of open-source data.

DELIVERY AND PLATFORM

Content is delivered via email in a newsletter format. The frequency in which a newsletter is shared is determined by the client. Newsletters are archived in LAC’s client-branded proprietary platform. Our analysts tag the content with the appropriate categories (competitors, geography, sector, size, etc.) and are available for advanced searches and exportation. Clients are trained on the platform’s usage during the onboarding process.

ANALYSTS-CENTRED APPROACH

Clients are assigned a dedicated analyst that acts as an extension of their team. An LAC client engagement manager also works with clients to consult and enhance deliverables and client relationships.

Working in partnership with your team, we integrate seamlessly into your operating environment and organizational culture.
LAC Group works with law firms, corporations, government agencies and other organizations to leverage and optimize all their knowledge and information resources, from systems to strategy to staff.

Gain the intelligence and information management services you need through Library as a Service®. Leading law firms, corporations and media companies rely on us for:

- Research & intelligence (market & competitive intelligence, remote research and more)
- Library roadmapping
- Knowledge management
- Collection management (cataloging, metadata and more)
- Digital asset management
- Spend management

Contact us
LAC-Group.com

THE FINE PRINT

- We do not endorse any specific vendor solution.
- This report does not cover all the features and capabilities available within the five options.
- A feature may be available within a platform that is not specifically mentioned.
- Features and vendor circumstances may change and alter the information presented.
## APPENDIX A / CONTENT PLATFORMS COMPARISON CHART

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<th>FEATURES</th>
<th>InfoNgen™</th>
<th>Nexis Newsdesk™</th>
<th>Manzama(Base)™</th>
<th>Meltwater™</th>
<th>Vable™</th>
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*Capabilities such as advanced analytics, machine learning and natural language processing.

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APPENDIX B / VENDOR OVERVIEW

INFONGEN
Founded in 2004, InfoNgen has been part of EPAM Systems since 2010. EPAM is a global software and digital platform engineering company headquartered in Pennsylvania, developing technology for managing structured and unstructured data. EPAM was ranked #12 in FORBES’ “25 Fastest Growing Public Tech Companies” in 2017.

Notable changes and announcements:
• InfoNgen rolls out InfoNgen 8.0 with integrated subscription dashboard functionality.
• The InfoNgen app is made available on IOS and Android devices.
• InfoNgen (EPAM) is selected in Gartner Magic Quadrant for Insight Engines. In a quote, “Reference customers reported the highest level of satisfaction in this Magic Quadrant for both their overall experience with the vendor and the value for money that the product provides.”

MANZAMA
Manzama is a privately held company founded in 2010 and headquartered in Bend, Oregon. The company’s content intelligence platform was designed specifically for legal professionals. CEO Peter Ozolin served as Chief Knowledge Officer for law firm Paul Hastings and was involved in other technology startups for the legal industry.

Notable changes and announcements:
• Manzama and Foundation Software Group partnered up to allow real-time integration of Manzama data into the Foundation Firm Intelligence platform. The integration enables law firms to add key information from the Manzama Intelligence Platform to client profiles in Foundation.
• Manzama Insights expands geographic coverage and filtering capabilities with five regions: Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and Middle East. The geographical filters allow users to instantly view global news within their desired regions. US, United Kingdom and Australia are existing regions on the platform.

MELTWATER
Meltwater was founded as a media intelligence and monitoring company in Oslo, Norway in 2001 by Jorn Lyseggen. Meltwater is now headquartered in San Francisco, with offices across six continents and over 30,000 clients around the world. The company also operates a nonprofit technology school for nurturing and training future entrepreneurs.

Notable changes and announcements:
• In November 2020 Meltwater announced the appointment of John Box as its new CEO. Box replaces Niklas de Besche who transitioned to the role of COO.
• Meltwater launched a new corporate website in May 2020 to showcase their updated products and solutions.
NEXIS NEWSDESK

LexisNexis is part of RELX Group, with over 10,000 employees worldwide and customers in more than 175 countries. The company acquired Newsdesk from Moreover Technologies in October 2014. Newsdesk is now a LexisNexis Legal & Professional product offering for media monitoring and analytics.

**Notable changes and announcements:**
- In 2020 Newsdesk released Simple Search, a new enhancement which allows users to more quickly and efficiently capture the precise results they seek.
- Nexis Newsdesk has been awarded 4 consecutive SIIA CODiE awards for technology excellence from 2017-2020, including against Cision and Meltwater.

VABLE

Vable was founded in 2004 as Linex Systems, when former lawyer, Matthew Dickinson, spotted a gap in the legal market concerning the management of news and information for lawyers. What began with curating news alerts into a weekly newsletter has evolved into a multinational content automation platform used by clients across Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and Asia. Dickinson continues to serve as CEO from the company’s headquarters in London, with US offices in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Notable changes and announcements:**
- MyVable was introduced in 2020 as a user-friendly dashboard solution. This also has the potential for alternative revenue generation, for instance, law firm information teams could deliver a managed current awareness service to in-house legal departments or any other clients.
- Vable’s clients requested the ability to share relevant and interesting articles with colleagues by email and on social media. MyVable enables this with one click, and it is a “must have” feature for both information and business development teams.
- The Vable Administrator platform has a fresh new look with expanded functionality and UX improvements. The new interface allows easier management of the platform and expands the functionality with even greater speed in the future.
- Having a 360 degree visibility of who, how, what and when is key to making the right decisions. Vable’s new reporting module gives clients just that, allowing them to zero in on the information and statistics they need.
- This year the development team has ensured that Vable integrates with Research Monitor, Okta, HighQ, Azure, and SharePoint. Vable is working with a number of publishers on behalf of clients to get APIs feeding directly into the platform.