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"And Other Duties as Assigned:" Expanding the Boundaries of the E- resource Lifecycle to Get Things Done

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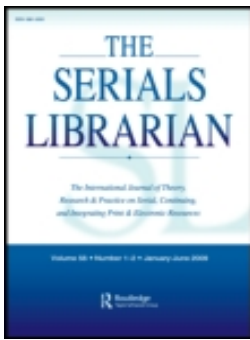
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"And Other Duties as Assigned": Expanding the Boundaries of the E- resource Lifecycle to Get Things Done

MARCELLA LESHER, STACY FOWLER, and ESTA TOVSTIADI

Presenters

This presentation focused on how elements of the electronic resource lifecycle, such as those described in the NASIG Core Competencies for Electronic Resource Librarians and the Techniques for Electronic Resource Management, apply to the management of physical library projects, including the weeding and shifting of physical collections, a digitization project, as well as other "duties as assigned" that are part of the average librarian's workload at a small library. Additionally, this presentation touched on issues related to managing print and electronic collections in law libraries.

KEYWORDS academic libraries electronic resource management law libraries

INTRODUCTION

Marcella Lesher and Stacy Fowler are librarians at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. Lesher, who works in the university's main library, oversees the lifecycle of electronic resources as well as print serials, and Fowler serves in a similar role at the university's law library. However, both presenters have additional responsibilities, termed "other duties as assigned" and are involved with projects outside of their main purview. As their duties have evolved, they have become more aware of similarities between these seemingly disparate responsibilities and their main role in managing continuing resources.

St Mary's University Blume Library serves 3,800 students in 75 programs including 2 doctoral programs, and is comprised of a collection of 120,000

e-books, 35,000 e-journals, over 200,000 print monographs, and 645 print and microform serials. It is staffed by 6.75 librarian-level full-time equivalent (FTE) and 10 paraprofessionals, two of which are part time. Additionally, it is a selective government repository and a member of the TexShare Consortium. The Sarita Kenedy East Law Library serves students at the university as well as local attorneys and members of the public. Five librarians and seven staff maintain a print and microfiche collection comprised of more than 400,000 volumes.

PERIODICALS WEEDING

The first project that the presenters discussed was a space redesign project that transformed an area comprised of mostly physical collections into a study space for students with a café. In order to handle the three rows of print periodicals housed in the space, Lesher discussed how she looked at print usage and recommended purchasing the JSTOR Arts & Sciences II and III collections in order to provide electronic access to titles that were to be weeded. The University provided funding for those packages, which provided electronic access to 109 titles that would replace 3,183 volumes in the print collection. Since the JSTOR packages replaced access for only a fraction of the library's then 1,963 print serials, Lesher needed to deselect a number of additional titles. She developed a list of titles to retain based on the following factors: usage, the university's mission (which includes an emphasis on Catholic theology and Texas history and culture), titles needed for accreditation, and titles published by small presses or the university. Additionally, she solicited feedback from subject librarians. Based on reshelving counts, Lesher's analysis revealed a large drop in print usage for many titles starting in 2000 when the library began to provide access to more online databases and journals. She ultimately retained some titles in their entirety, while others were retained only in portions.

The next step of the project was to update the library holdings and remove the physical items from the shelves. The library staff, as well as a student assistant, worked from a spreadsheet that included the title's OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC) number and indicated which titles or which volumes of a title were to be removed. Additionally, they created a workflow that allowed multiple staff to work on a title simultaneously by identifying tasks that did not have to be completed sequentially. At the end of the project, the library had 1 ½ rows of periodical shelves, down from 3 rows at the start of the project.

The redesign project also necessitated the move of the children's literature and textbook collections; these were moved to a third-floor alcove. However, shortly after moving these collections, the alcove was no longer

available., The children's literature and textbook collection was moved to the space where part of the print journal collection had been moved, requiring a second round of weeding to make additional space.

In order to facilitate this move, Lesher used a color-coded spreadsheet that categorized titles by the following: titles which were mostly available in online aggregator databases and could be weeded without replacement costs, titles that could be partially weeded without any replacement costs, and titles that could be weeded only if digital backfiles were purchased. In all, the number of print serials in the library's collection decreased from 1,963 titles and 90,783 volumes in 2011 to 509 titles and 65,800 volumes in 2015. Lesher noted that the shortened timeline for these projects was not ideal, but overall, there were few objections from students or faculty.

Although this project was focused on a print collection, the presenters drew many similarities between the management of print and electronic resources. They noted the need for ongoing evaluation of print collections for weeding purposes, the importance of working with colleagues to make weeding decisions, and the maintenance of metadata after a major weeding project.

NEWSPAPER DIGITIZATION

The second project that the presenters discussed was a microfilm digitization project, which was also necessitated by a demand on space currently occupied by the library's storage room. The collection in this room included a number of newspapers from as early as 1924, including multiple titles and duplicate copies. Although the library did not fund a budget for digitization, the presenters applied for and received a grant through the Rescuing Texas History Project in order to digitize copies of the *Rattler*, the university's student newspaper.

This project, the presenters noted, also included similar elements to the e-resource lifecycle. For example, the presenters had to obtain permissions from campus in order to make the digitized resource accessible, which is analogous to licensing. Creating the required physical inventory called on skills needed to successfully classify and organize metadata for e-resources. Additionally, their ongoing evaluation of user feedback from the project helped them learn about what other print resources would be valued in a digital format, such as copies of the university yearbook.

COLLECTION SHIFTING AND WEEDING

The projects Fowler discussed focused on shifting and weeding of nearly 42,000 monographs. Although there was enough space to house all of the volumes, titles in sets were shelved in a way that could not easily accommodate newly

published materials. Conversely, sets that had been cancelled were shelved with ample space for growth. Fowler created a floorplan in Excel showing the ideal shelf locations for all monographs, and after gaining administrative support for the shifting, planned to implement the changes. The shift occurred during the week after fall finals and was completed in only three and a half days.

After this project was completed, the law library began planning for the construction of a Commons space that would move the library toward becoming "the center of student life for the law school," a goal that the Library staff had articulated during a yearly planning retreat. However, this new space would also reduce the availability of print shelving by nearly half and displace around 30,000 volumes. Ultimately this necessitated weeding 11,575 volumes.

The e-resource lifecycle provided Fowler with a framework throughout this project. First, the presenter noted that she needed to provide continuing access to the print materials by retaining physical copies or obtaining electronic copies. Second, she discussed training plans to ensure patrons were taught how to access online materials that were previously in print format. Finally, she discussed how ongoing evaluation informed project decisions. In the case of print serials, she saw increasing usage of electronic serials and much lower levels of use for print serials. This data, she explained, will help her make weeding and cancellation decisions in the future as well as inform decisions to move print subscriptions online.

This data helped Fowler manage the print serials affected by this project, but the print monographs presented a different set of issues. She noted that the field of law remains very print-oriented, therefore moving monographs online might not provide the best user experience. In order to better understand how law libraries handled electronic collections, Fowler and a colleague conducted a survey of academic, law firm, and county/court law libraries.

SURVEY OF LAW LIBRARIES

The study was designed as an exploratory sampling into cataloging practices and ways to reveal resources to library patrons. Information was gathered using a structured interview. The interview consisted of general questions about the type of law library and whether it shared catalogs or other electronic resource tools with any other libraries. This was followed by a section of questions about how various listed types of electronic materials were made discoverable. Finally, interviewees were given the opportunity to speak about specific successes and challenges they had had with electronic resources. Survey participants were sought out through law librarian listservs and regional chapters of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). In all, thirty-four libraries were interviewed.

The survey found that on average, both academic and county/court law libraries continue to spend the bulk of their budgets on print materials, while law firm libraries spent the majority on electronic materials. These spending trends, Fowler explained, were often the result of the unique challenges faced by these libraries as well as the specialized needs of their users. For example, academic law libraries are often under budget constraints and unable to make long-term financial commitments to electronic content. Further, they are often required to provide access to patrons that are unaffiliated with the school, which means that databases that are restricted to faculty and students won't serve the needs of all users. Law firm libraries, on the other hand, are under less budget pressure and often need to provide access to materials for their partners at the immediate point of need. Electronic collections best meet the needs when materials are needed in the courtroom or other urgent situations.

Regarding e-books, the survey found that in general, e-books are not widely adopted in law libraries. This is because the content available is often not the most up-to-date or relevant to United States law, which is the focus of most U.S law libraries. Additionally, licensing restrictions placed on the number of concurrent users of law e-books make them less feasible alternatives to print.

CONCLUSION

The presenters summarized by discussing additional elements of the core competencies that are relevant to these projects and other aspects of their jobs such as the importance of keeping up with technology and conducting assessments, as well as personal qualities such as flexibility, open-mindedness, and a tolerance for complexity and ambiguity. Overall, the shift to electronic resources and the parallels between print and electronic competencies has positively impacted their work in all aspects of librarianship.

CONTRIBUTOR NOTES

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