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## **HOW 'NECESSITY' HAS CHANGED THE WAY ACQUISITIONS IS DONE AT ONE ACADEMIC LIBRARY**

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The University of Toronto Library System has been as vulnerable to the current financial realities as any other academic library system. As a publicly funded institution, U of T relies on the vagaries and largesse of governments currently in office while at the same time working to meet significant increases in the demand for higher education.

The University of Toronto is the largest research university in Canada. Consistently ranked as one of the top schools in Canada, it is also recognized as one of the top 5 schools in North America. Approximately 70,000 students attend U of T, distributed over three separate campuses. The three campuses are the St. George Campus in downtown Toronto (the main campus with the majority of students), the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus, in the east, with 10,500 students and the University of Toronto Mississauga Campus, in the city of Mississauga, with over 11,000 students. There are approximately 32 libraries at the University of Toronto ranging from large arts and social science and science libraries to religiously affiliated libraries to small departmental libraries. In total, the U of T library system holds over 14 million volumes of materials.

The University of Toronto Mississauga sits approximately 20 miles from the downtown campus in the city of Mississauga. The student body of approximately 11,000 students is culturally diverse and a significant portion of the student population commutes from the surrounding area of Mississauga and the Greater Toronto Area. Mississauga is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest city in Canada with over 1 million residents.

While attending UTM, students study in all subject areas, from Anthropology to Zoology. There are, however, some specialized programs unique to UTM. For example, Forensic Science and Culture, Communication and Information Technology are two programs which are not offered elsewhere at the University of Toronto. Starting in 2011, there will be a new Academy of Medicine at the Mississauga Campus.

The relationships within the University of Toronto Library System are complex and vary based on the type of library. The relationship between the University of Toronto Library System (UTL) and the University of Toronto Mississauga Library (UTML) is such that UTML has a chief librarian who reports to the head (Principal) of UTM, not to the chief librarian at the centre (UTL). The chief librarian at UTML has a dotted line relationship with her counterpart at UTL.

The UTM Library is a state of the art facility – new in 2006. It currently holds approximately 380,000 volumes. It is a hugely popular facility and during busy times the student count can be well over 8,000 exits in a day.

All campuses benefit from an impressive electronic collection purchased, in most cases, by the central library system on the St. George Campus. These purchases are supported by a yearly transfer of funds from UTM to the Centre. As well, UTML takes part in consortial purchases throughout the year with other UTL libraries, usually for one time only acquisitions. The UTM Library has its own separate budgets – both for staff

and acquisitions - and decisions on how this money is spent rests with personnel at UTML.

It is important to note that the acquisition budget at the University of Toronto has traditionally been a protected budget. Though the acquisitions budget's yearly increases have not kept up with inflation, this protected budget has provided the University and its parts the ability to develop excellent library collections. However, because the budget is protected it has meant that when there are financial shortfalls in the staffing or operating budgets, or when cuts have to be made, the acquisitions budget cannot be used to meet these shortfalls. It has meant that any shortages or budget cuts are made through staffing and operating budgets. This has had an impact on decisions and subsequent activities at the University of Toronto Mississauga Library. Though the Library has maintained a fairly stable/static number of acquisitions, mostly specifically in monographs, staffing has decreased to either meet budget reductions or to redeploy staff positions or salaries to other areas of the Library.

The Collection Services Department at UTML is divided into sections: Acquisitions, Cataloguing, Serials/Binding and Resource Sharing. This department is also responsible for the mail room and mail distribution throughout the Library/Academic Centre. In 2006, there was 8 staff in this department; 1 librarian and 7 technicians. There are now 5 technicians, reporting to a Director of Operations, a non-librarian. There is no longer a librarian in the Department. During this time of change, the acquisitions budget continued to grow by approximately 4-5% each year.

A Self Study was done of the Collection Services Department in the spring of 2008 to assess work load and activities. There had been some staff loss by this time (positions not being filled) and there was a feeling that the activities taking place within the Collection Services Department could not be sustained without some significant changes. It was recognized that, in most cases, staff would not be replaced or if so at a different level (usually lower) or re-deployed to another department, so there was a real need for an analysis.

Some questions asked:

- 1) What are the essential services of the unit?
- 2) Are there processes or functions that can be more efficiently delivered?
- 3) Are there any processes or functions that can be discontinued or provided another way?

As part of the initial phase of the self-study, a review of the literature was done. The literature in the area of bibliographic/collection services reflected a common theme. The traditional bibliographic control practices of the past were seen as too time consuming, too labour intensive, too costly and even of questionable value.

### **Highlights of the Self Study**

To deal with the reality of the situation, the bottom line was that more work in the Department needed to be automated, as much as and as soon as, possible. Work flow analysis of all positions was done and it was found that some work needed to be eliminated or at the very least streamlined.

Recommendations were made to the Chief Librarian; some were implemented, some were not and in some cases the implementations were either done more rapidly or to a higher degree than was originally recommended.

## **Changes to Collection Services**

### **Acquisitions:**

The Department staff is responsible for purchasing all formats of library materials and to support the acquisitions budget expenditure of over 1 million dollars. This budget is for the purchase of monographs and print serials with minimal electronic purchasing (which continues to be done, for the most part, by the centre).

At present, only one technician is available to handle all acquisitions, including the purchasing of all monograph items, processing (affixing spine labels and stamping), preparing invoices for payment, etc. (though there is some assistance from student workers). On average 8-9,000 items are sent to cataloguing each year. Through the self-study analysis, it became apparent that the acquisitions technician could not handle every order sent through and still do other work as required.

The Library pushed forward – aggressively - on approval plans for all subjects, aiming for up to 70% of individual subject budgets being earmarked for approval plan books. This process started in 2007-08 with seven collection librarians (now six) developing profiles for all of their subject areas. Most plans are with Coutts but the Library currently also uses three foreign language vendors for approval plans in French, Italian and German.

Many other significant changes were made in acquisitions. Almost all firm ordering is now done directly by the librarians, not the acquisitions technician. Most of the firm, non-approval, orders are placed through Coutts, mostly through electronic slips, and the orders are sent directly to Coutts without being reviewed or 'ratified' by the acquisitions technician. Because up to 90% of monographs that the Library buys come from Coutts, this saves a great deal of time for the technician as it is no longer necessary to touch each order individually before the orders are sent to Coutts.

Previous to this change, purchase orders for each item were produced in the ILS (Sirsi) system by the acquisitions technician; a time consuming activity. Once the Library moved to the new model, no POs were produced in the process of direct ordering. This eliminates work for the acquisitions technician since no PO numbers are produced at the time of ordering, the technician does not need to 'receive' the item in Sirsi once the actual item arrives in the Library.

An investigation took place to look at a software package that could save time for the acquisition technician and benefit the library by automatically producing a PO number to download into Sirsi. However, upon further investigation, once the ratifier activity was eliminated, the software seemed to only present more work for our cataloguing technician. Upon recognizing that its implementation would not ultimately save the Department time, the software was not acquired.

Another activity of the acquisitions technician was the payment of all invoices directly from the accounting system. After the self study analysis, all invoices are now only coded by the acquisitions technician and passed to the administration office of the Library for actual posting to the accounting system.

Another big change for the Department occurred when the budget reporting, previously a responsibility of the acquisitions technician, was eliminated from the position's responsibilities. Fund management and reporting is now being done by the individual Librarians. Utilizing reports from Sirsi and Coutts, along with their own spreadsheets (which they create themselves), the Librarians keep track of their own budgets. Sirsi can no longer support this type of fund management reporting since the Library no longer orders most items through Sirsi but rather directly from the vendor.

Other changes:

- ❖ Work continues with Coutts to reduce the number of invoices and to reduce the number of boxes coming in the door since all mail is the responsibility of this position and Department.
- ❖ Many standing orders have been cancelled as part of a significant serials cancellation project. This has impacted on the work of the acquisitions technician since most of the standing orders come through the monograph budget.
- ❖ All items from Coutts now come 'process' ready and this has helped eased the burden on Collection Services staff since one of the positions lost was a processing technician. 'Process ready' means that the items come stamped with the library stamp and tattle taped. Some items continue to require this work, items not ordered through Coutts, but the amount of processing work in the library has decreased significantly.

### **Resource Sharing:**

At the UTM Library, Resource Sharing (interlibrary loan) is seen as a type of acquisition and is therefore part of the Collection Services Department. Though the section was not part of the self study – it had been reviewed the year before the self-study - information from Resource Sharing was used to streamline the work of acquisitions and to ultimately ease the work of the Resource Sharing staff.

University of Toronto Mississauga students are heavy users of RS to borrow items from libraries on the St. George Campus; it is one of the Library's most popular services. Needless to say, this causes a great deal of work for staff in Resource Sharing. Previous to the self-study, each month a report was produced by Resource Sharing staff and given to each Librarian to review. The report included all items borrowed through RS from other libraries at the University of Toronto. The Librarians would then decide whether to purchase a copy for UTM (based on criteria which included the number of times the item was borrowed through RS). It was felt that if the items were being regularly requested from the main campus, that maybe those titles should be held in the UTM library. It was hoped that this would ease some of the stress on RS staff.

After the self-study analysis, it was decided that a report would be produced of all items ordered more than two times from another campus, and this report would be sent directly to the vendor, Coutts. The Librarians would receive the report for information only. Coutts would automatically order these items and ship them to the Library. Approximately \$50,000 of the monograph budget was earmarked to support this activity.

### **Cataloguing:**

The Library had two cataloguing technicians, one monograph and one serial cataloguer. Currently, there is only one cataloguing technician and the additional responsibility of supervising the acquisitions and serials technicians has now become part of this position's duties. This has resulted in the cataloguer spending less time cataloguing. Last year the Department processed over 10,000 items. The cataloguing done at UTM is predominantly what is locally called copy cataloguing; attaching local information to a bibliographic record already in the database. This record is usually already in the database, MARC records from vendors downloaded by central campus staff. UTM cataloguing activities consist of editing the record and updating it with local item information.

Items come from Coutts 'process ready' but still have to be copy catalogued. Though there has been a push for shelf ready items, an investigation has shown that in most cases - 85-90% - there is already a bibliographic record in the database and therefore only an item record (local holdings) needs to be created. The vendor cannot do this for the Library. Therefore, at this point, shelf ready monographs would not save UTM much staff time.

#### **Other Changes:**

- ❖ Minimal standards of cataloguing have been agreed upon and incorporated into the work of the cataloguing technician which eliminates the need to perform more in-depth work on catalogue records.
- ❖ The Library investigated whether Coutts could bar code and create the spine label for the books. Coutts could not produce spine labels because they do not produce catalogue records for the Library and therefore do not produce a call number for the item. Also, the analysis revealed that having Coutts attach the bar code costs more than having the technician do it 'in house'.

### **Serials:**

Serials saw some of the biggest and most controversial changes.

The Serials section was the area most impacted by staffing changes. The section, at one time, had a senior technician and two junior technicians – one who did only serials work and one that helped with both serials and monograph processing. Additionally, this section always had student help. Currently, there is only one technician and some student help.

The most significant change made by the Library was to eliminate serials check in for all titles, except for approximately 75 titles (out of almost 1500 titles). This list of 75 titles was developed based on the criteria of high use, expense and electronic availability.

Initially, the Library also decided to do minimal claiming – only on the 75 titles which were going to continue to be checked in. This however, was changed to include all titles for which the Library had current subscriptions. Claiming would occur when the issue could not be found on the public shelving when it was being gathered for binding or when someone wanted the issue and the Library should have received it by that time. It was also decided that binding would be done with incomplete volumes, if necessary.

Another change which eased the work of the serials technician was that was use of generic labeling on current journal issues. This label would simply indicate Library ownership information. Previous to this, each journal had a specific title label which was affixed to individual issues and volume/issue information had to be handwritten on it. This title specific label also included the call number for the back issues of the journal. The Library holds its current journals in alpha order in one section of the library, with the back issues in another part of the library in call number order. These labels provided the student with volume and issue information and gave the call number to the student for back issues.

Upon investigation, it seemed that the volume and issue information was easily found on the issue itself and therefore, it was not necessary to hand write this information on a label. To provide the student with the call number for ease of finding the back issues, the current issue shelf label now includes both the title and the call number.

This change was significant since the technician spent a great deal of time producing, filing, pulling and affixing specific labels to journals. Now the generic labeling of serials can be done by a student.

Of course, like most libraries, the UTM Library continues to cut serials on a regular basis and this is driven, in part, by the need to ease the workload of the serials staff.

### **Binding:**

The Library continues to bind all journal titles. Repairs/binding of monographs has increased because of the age of the collection but this is still being done as well. A repairs policy was developed to ease the burden on the serials/ binding technician. As previously mentioned, the library will bind incomplete volumes if issues have not been received.

### **Concerns/challenges**

There were concerns about some of the changes made in the Collection Services Department. As one can imagine, the changes, though necessary, caused anxiety amongst the staff. They were concerned that they could be 'automated out of a job', that the quality of work could be eroded and that there was a general lack of support for the work being done in Collection Services.

### **Acquisitions:**

- Centralizing the invoice management did make sense but not having control in the department created the feeling that there was not a lot of control over invoicing and that the investigation of problems would be more labour intensive.

- Approval profile development was fast tracked which initially resulted in uneven success. Some were hugely successful, some noticeably unsuccessful. Some did not work at all. There has been and will continue to be time spent by the librarians refining the profiles. The goal of 70% of funds spent on approval purchasing has still not been achieved but there has been noticeable improvement. There also continues to be work with the librarians to ensure 'buy in' for the project.
- Lack of control over firm ordering was another issue. Most of the work done in ordering is done through Coutts so duplication is minimal but it does occur. Checking to see ensure that the most recent edition is being purchased, whether the library already has it, etc. was previously done by the acquisitions technician at the ratification stage and this minimized the ordering of incorrect materials. This potentially time consuming work, now done at the initial stage of direct ordering has now been downloaded to the Librarians.
- Lack of staff and changes in the Department resulted in a huge backlog of books – something unique to UTM. With only one cataloguing technician and the re-allocation of work to the position, fewer items are being catalogued. One of the concerns about a backlog is that since most of the books now are coming through approval or direct ordering, there is nothing in the catalogue to show whether the item has been ordered or its status (i.e., received, in cataloguing). Because there is no ratification of the order, a record is not created in the ILS at the time of ordering. Both librarians and faculty do not know if an item has been ordered and re-requests for items already ordered are being received by the librarians. The librarian must then investigate to see if the book has been ordered, if it has been delivered and then search through the backlog to find it. It is usually then sent to cataloguing as a rush cataloguing request. There have been instances when the faculty has voiced concerns to the librarians about something lacking in the collection, when in fact, the library owns it but it has not yet been catalogued.
- Librarians do their own firm ordering and are strongly encouraged to do all ordering through the one vendor. They spend more time then before with each title during the order process (i.e., to see if the library already owns the item) and now perform activities that previous to the changes were handled by the acquisitions technician. Concerns were raised about the downloading of work onto librarians.
- Items come into the library 'process ready' which is a significant time saver for the Library staff. Approval plan books also arrive 'process ready' and therefore cannot be returned if inappropriate. The Library does not have the ability to reject these books. This has been a problem as some of the approval plans are less successful than others.

### **Cataloguing:**

- The backlog, for UTM standards, is huge. There are approximately 6,000 items (and growing) in the backlog of monographs. There are no records in the database for these titles, therefore, unless the staff member goes into the vendor database to check and see when the book was ordered there is no 'received



date' information. It is then more difficult to pull the book if needed, especially if the book is timely or required for course reserves.

- There is a push to simply link the items to bibliographic records already in the database without doing any copy cataloguing (e.g., authority control or editing of MARC fields). This has raised concerns since the MARC records received from vendors by other libraries at UofT and which are batch downloaded can be incomplete or incorrect.

### **Serials:**

- There is minimal control of the individual issues of most of the print serial collection. One must assume that the issues have been received but cannot be totally confident that this is the case. When faculty or students ask which volume is the latest received, the library is unable to supply this information.
- Claiming is a problem because it is often too late to claim if it is done only when the item is bound. The library is seeing an increase in the number of incomplete volumes. Claiming becomes costly when done too late as the individual issues often have to be purchased again.
- There is some concern regarding fiscal accountability and responsibility.

### **Librarians:**

Many of the changes made have raised concerns amongst the collection librarians. Approval plans were implemented very quickly and resulted in a lot of work for the librarians over a short period of time. With the introduction of direct ordering by the librarians, more collection work has been downloaded onto busy librarians. Also, the management of funds and the reporting of fund information has been problematic for the librarians and has resulted in more individual work for them.

### **Next steps**

The implementation of significant changes in the Collection Services Department was done to ease some of the burden on a smaller complement of technicians and to eliminate or streamline and make more efficient many of the activities within the Department. As with most change, there were 'hiccups' along the way but as work continues in the Department, many of the changes have had positive impact on the work being done. There is, however, more work to be done.

1) Cooperative collections at U of T are something that the collection development librarians at the three campuses are hoping to work toward. This would see one approval plan for all of the three main libraries with books going shelf ready to all libraries and one MARC record with locations attached going to the main library for download. This would significantly cut into the work of the cataloguing technician.

2) It is important to investigate the workload of the Collection Librarians. As streamlining of work flow in Collection Services occurred, some responsibilities were downloaded onto an already busy librarian group. Improvements in approval plans and other investigations (improving fund reporting) should help in this area.

3) Since the lack of serials check in and claiming continues to be a concern and with the belief that more and more issues are not being received, an analysis of these activities needs to be done to investigate whether the suspension of serials check in has resulted in an increase in the non receipt of issues and what actions, if any, can be taken to ease the problem.

4) The lone cataloguing technician is soon to retire and there is much uncertainty as to whether this position will be replaced.

Activities in Collection Services will continue to required ongoing evaluation and assessment to ensure that activities that remain in the Department are done effectively and efficiency and that as change occurs, as it invariably does, the staff remaining in the Department are able perform the tasks required of them.