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I should warn you that I’m still processing the information from the interviews as I’m still in the midst of the data gathering stage. However, at this point I’ve learned that some of the procedures currently in place at JMU serve our population effectively, while other processes have room for improvement. I have found that collection work is varied based on a number of factors including: size of collection, size of school, number of selectors, number of staff, mission of the library, and mission of the school. It has been very interesting to see how collections are defined at each institution and which department is responsible for overseeing collection work. Though the process of collection management varies from school to school, a constant theme exhibited at each institution is open communication, particularly in regards to budgetary decision making processes. Additionally I have found that training of selectors, either those new to the subject area or new to the profession, are wildly different from school to school. At some institutions there is a lot of hand-holding of new selectors while other collection managers are given free reign and encouraged to “learn as you go.” I look forward to delving further into the transcripts to tease out other trends from the interviews.

ATG: You are planning to develop a workshop series to train collection management librarians. Can you tell us more? And will you be talking about this at the upcoming 2009 Charleston Conference in November?

MM: I intend to create a multi-week workshop series for JMU liaisons to orient them to the basic principles of collection management. I plan to cover topics of weeding, subject policies, the role of the collection development committee, the approval plan, gifts, new resources, and future trends in collections. The intent is that liaisons could choose which sessions they would like to attend and brush up on those particular skills. As for the Charleston Conference, I’m working on a proposal to present the findings from my summer research.

ATG: Tell us about the JMU Library and specifically about Collection Management. How many employees are in your area? What is your materials budget?

MM: Collection Management is a relatively new department at JMU. It was created in April 2008. The Collection Management Department at JMU is responsible for year-end library statistics, liaison statistical requests (circulation, cost/use, accreditation reports, and weeding statistics), journal and database statistics management, trials for electronic resources, replacements for lost or damaged materials, gift books, configuration of the approval plan, and updating/maintaining a database of information about our subscription resources. We also troubleshoot off-campus access issues to our subscription resources. Collection Management also gathers other data to support liaisons and the collection development committee in the collection development endeavors of the library. Within the Collection Management Department there is one librarian, one full-time staff, and two part-time staff.

ATG: You/your library has recently implemented a cluster concept. Can you give us more details?

MM: In order to explain the cluster concept we implemented at JMU it may be useful to define the scope of our collections committee. The Collection Development Committee (CDC) at JMU plans, organizes, and monitors activities related to collection development, evaluation and maintenance for all types of information resources. The committee is committed to a global view of collections and develops policies and guidelines for collection development, including collection maintenance, analysis, and assessment of the collections. The CDC has the primary responsibility for managing continuing expenditure commitments (e.g., periodicals, licensed electronic resources) and makes decisions on major purchases and licenses in response to recommendations from librarians, university faculty, and the library Collection Management Department. The Collection Management Librarian serves as the permanent chair. The Associate Dean for Technical Services is a voting ex-officio member of the committee. In addition, one liaison from each standing cluster (Arts and Humanities; Science, Technology, and Business; and Health and Behavioral Sciences) will serve renewable three-year terms. Members selected from a cluster are expected to rotate. The clustered approach was implemented during Summer 2008 in an attempt to make the decision-making process of the CDC more transparent. The committee is currently evaluating the clustered approach to determine its effectiveness, both in terms of purpose and membership.

ATG: What is the difference between collection development and collection management? There are predictions of all user-driven purchasing and the end of collection development as we know it. Do you have any comments/predictions?

MM: In my mind Collection Development is a subset of Collection Management. Management of a collection involves weeding, addressing changes in the curriculum, responding to user needs, and handling preservation issues as well as collection development. While user-driven purchasing does have its advantages, it is unclear that users would generate enough requests to fully expend a materials budget. I would predict that collections of the future will be a mixture of both user-driven purchasing and librarian selected materials. This approach would blend the expertise of researchers in the discipline with the experience of collection managers, who provide holistic views of collections. I think the more important challenge facing those developing collections is that of promoting and marketing the materials the library owns and leases.

ATG: Tell us about yourself. Where are you from originally? What do you plan to do? Read? Anything you want to tell us?

MM: I’m originally from the Soybean Capital of the U.S. (Decatur, IL) and after heading to Ohio for a B.A in Chemistry from the College of Wooster, I bounced back and forth between Illinois and Ohio before heading to...