Adventures in Librarianship -- Vandalism

Ned Kraft
U.S. Department of State, kraftno@state.gov

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The Conspicuous: Time for... from page 56

equivalent to BIP for Chinese-language books, but some resourceful librarians could probably put together some publishing figures. (The Bowker Annual compiles its lists of academic monographs from vendor approval plan lists.) Undoubtedly, work would need to be done in this area (thankfully, though, not by me, since my library collects little foreign-language material).

Inputs and Outputs and Outcomes — Oh My!

As important as collection analysis is, a conspicuous project is only one element of seeing how your library is doing. Especially in academia, institutional and departmental success is increasingly measured by examining and externally comparing inputs, outputs, and outcomes. Collection strength is, by-and-large, an input, which the Association of College and Research Libraries defines, vis-à-vis libraries, as “the raw materials of a library program — the money, space, collection, equipment, and staff, out of which a program can arise.” Outputs (which serve to quantify the work done, i.e. number of books circulated, number of reference questions answered) and outcomes (“the ways in which library users are changed as a result of their contact with the library’s resources and programs”) are also important, the latter arguably more so. It’s not enough to conclude, however correctly, that a library has an excellent collection. If the information it contains is not finding its way into the brains of its users, the library is failing in a vital respect.

The 5th edition of the WLN conspicuous manual made a stab in this general direction by urging “client-centered” — i.e., output — measures in addition to the other “collection-centered” — or input — measures. Client-centered quantitative techniques examine user behaviors (e.g., circulation and interlibrary loan figures), whereas the qualitative techniques gauge user and community attitudes and satisfaction, community analysis, and patron needs assessment.

Future conspicuous projects must provide data to help see how collections actually affect client populations, be they college students or the general public. User outcomes then must influence collection development. The people who do the conspicuous might not be the same people who examine user outcomes, but the two groups mustn’t compartmentalize their work. Rather, they should create a collaborative “feedback loop” in which subsequent conspicuous work examines whether the collection has been properly developed in response to these user outcomes. Your library school collection development professor was right: There’s no “I” in “conspicuous.”

Collection Analysis Is No Less Important Today Than Yesterday, and Other Banalities

Budgetary pressures, accreditation requirements, and changes in the format and technology of information all indicate the importance of knowing — and being able to show with data — how your library’s collection is shaping up. Using nothing but anecdotal evidence is cheating — you’ve got to be systematic and objective.

Although the conspicuous method has not kept up with changes in the field, there’s no reason it couldn’t. I’m hardly the most innovative sort, yet I managed to adapt the instrument to fit the needs of my library. In the absence of an authoritative update to the WLN conspicuous manual (did you hear that, OCLC?), there’s no reason others more clever than me couldn’t make their own adaptations of the method.

So, as I asked before, how’s your library’s collection?

Endnotes


2. My director recently wrote about some of the benefits of our conspicuous project: Houbek, Robert L., Jr. “Linking Students with Collections; or Getting Ready to Meet the Accreditation Train.” Against the Grain, vol. 16 no. 4, September 2004, pp. 30-34. For more information about UM-Flint’s conspicuous, visit lib.umflint.edu/conspicuous.


9. Thanks to Calvin Hsu, Yunah Sang, and Kenji Niki at the Asia Library at the University of Michigan for helping me address this point.


Adventures in Librarianship — Vandalism

by Ned Kraft (Ralph J. Bunche Library, U.S. Department of State) <kraftno@state.gov>

In our last issue, ATG reported the sudden dismissal of Herb Canted, Acquisitions Librarian for Detmoor Public. At that time, senior Detmoor officials cited the reason for dismissal as “irreconcilable differences.” However, ATG investigative reporters have it from an anonymous source that Canted was discovered to have instigated several library pranks and petty vandalisms, and had plans for future shenanigans.

Mr. Canted, a fifty-eight year old librarian, unhappy that the county had recently raised the retirement age, was found to have been involved in the intentional misplacing of several returned books. His fingerprints were found on an HX book in the Z shelves and a PN book found in the Nks. The HX had, between the title page and the fly, the cryptic message “lost forever.” Fortunately the book was desiccated in pencil, not ink.

While raiding Herb Canted’s apartment, investigators found hundreds of surreptitiously-taken photographs of book spines, along with step-by-step outlines for future atrocities. One, labeled “Lay the Devils low,” called for using the library’s circulation records to send fake announcement that Jackie Collins would be reading the salacious bits of her recent novel during Saturday morning’s Children’s Hour. The announcement suggested saving one’s spot by calling the mayor’s office. When contacted, the mayor responded to the averted threat by saying that his office would certainly have caught the hoax because they were all avid Jackie Collins readers.

Another of Mr. Canted’s plans was to reset

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<http://www.against-the-grain.com>
the default circulation period to thirty minutes, effectively generating overdue notices as patrons were driving away.

Library officials were most relieved to have prevented Cented’s plan to infect the library’s Webpac with what he called the “Herb Virus.” Monographs published before 1971 would show the note “Shelved in the Director’s office,” while serial check-in records would all say “hasn’t been received in a long, long time. What’s up with that?”

Mr. Cented referred all questions to his lawyer who would neither confirm nor deny the existence of the “prank plans.” He did say, however, that his client suffered from a dissociative disorder common among acquisitions librarians.

“Mr. Cented, after years of professional exposure to electronic resource vendors, has a difficult time telling right from wrong and has a somewhat twisted sense of the cost-to-value ratio of his actions.”

Electronic Resource Management Systems, Part II: Offerings from Serial Vendors and Serial Data Vendors

by Ellen Finnie Duranceau (Digital Resources Acquisitions Librarian, MIT Libraries) <efinnie@mit.edu>

Introduction

In the September 2004 issue, I reported on the Electronic Resource Management (ERM) offerings of the major ILS vendors, and promised to follow with a second article covering the ERM tools offered by other kinds of companies, primarily serial vendors or serial data vendors. This is the promised part two. Together, the articles attempt to provide an overview of the ERM market, describing what products and services are currently available to libraries seeking systems and tools to help them manage electronic resources.

Libraries who want support for the full life cycle of electronic resource management from selection through purchase, access, license management, and renewal or cancellation, have had the option of building their own systems, as many (such as Boston College and Harvard University, just in the last year) continue to do. Other libraries have purchased the Innovative Interfaces ERM system which has been on the market for more than a year, or have signed on to be beta testers of one of the new ILS-provided offerings, such as ExLibris’ Verde, which is expected to be available for sale in the summer of 2005.1 Still other libraries are working with data and support services offered by their serial vendors or other companies, such as Serialsolutions (recently acquired by Proquest) beginning this segment of the market that is focused on here.

For the purposes of this overview, ERM is defined as it is by the Digital Library Federation’s Electronic Resource Management Initiative (DLF ERM): “tools for managing the license agreements, related administrative information, and internal processes associated with collections of licensed electronic resources,” including ability to present terms of use at the point of access to an e-resource.2 In order to keep the scope defined and manageable, this article does not attempt to explicitly address link resolver, metasearch, or standard subscription management for ejournals (such as initial registration and activation) unless such a service is clustered with, and relevant to, other ERM services offered.

The table below collates major aspects of the various ERM offerings, and was created based on responses to a common set of questions sent to each company.3 The companies include those who tend to be identified as serial vendors (Harrassowitz, Swets); those who tend to be identified as electronic/serial data vendors or providers of ejournal management systems (Serialsolutions); and those who are a hybrid of the two or whose partnerships make them a hybrid of the two (EBSCO, which acts as a serial vendor but also has divisions that offer many electronic publishing and aggregation services, and TDNet, which offers a range of ejournal support and access services but has a partner company that is a serial vendor). The questions submitted to the companies were for the most part the same as those used in the September 2004 article on ILS vendor offerings. Some common themes emerge from the responses:

- All of the companies included here sell both software and data. (This distinction did not turn out to be as significant as for the ILS providers’ ERM systems.)
- All of the companies offer hosted web-based services, and those who are out of the planning stages offer an integrated knowledgebase as the place to maintain data.
- All of the companies have made an effort to follow and use the DLF ERM guidelines, although the guidelines’ detailed coverage of license metadata does not appear to be as fully applied in these offerings as in the ILS-provider based systems.
- All of the companies have a means of integrating print and electronic holdings information for staff use (except Swets, whose plans are still in development); however, there is wide variation with respect to what can be displayed to the public end-user.

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