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Something Else to Think About -- Building Better Mousetraps

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Something Else to Think About —

Building Better Mousetraps

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What does this title awake in your mind? Do you think about mice catching devices, or can you go a little “out of the box” to think about general procedures, organizational schemes, and things that will make your life in the library environment easier? Sometimes I fill my lunch times with thoughts of changes in procedures that will simplify our lives, or concerns about poorly functioning routines, or a collection that isn’t working well for our patrons. Where are the ideas? Where is the knowledge? Where is the energy to complete the projects? All of these answers come from our minds and all the little files that stay closed until we have a need for that specific information. Sometimes the key is hard to find and other times it appears at the end of a rainbow in a jar full of solutions and compromises. Do you dare dip into that jar to remove a key and insert in your files? What will you be unleashing? It isn’t a Pandora’s Box, but it is always interesting. Care to dip a little in the churlish waters with me?

Preservation! Just a word, or do you have some ideas? We had to deal with this on a personal level as mold was found on the second and third floors. Instead of panicking, we shared and compared information we knew, acquired information we didn’t have and eventually, the presentation to the university resulted in the hiring of an experienced team to eradicate the mold, the re-evaluation of the air handling systems, and plans to change the whole environment, hopefully guaranteeing suppression of the mold forever.

Another preservation problem! Microfilm on acetate producing a vinegar smell calls for action. We are not only testing the film and will be sending it to be re-duped, but we are establishing information on our item records that will give the preservation information for each reel. In subsequent years, we can run access reports based on type of film (acetate, polyester, etc.), year of production, or acidity scores (0-3). Never been done?

I don’t know if it has, but it is new here! Throwing down a book in anger doesn’t get us space on the shelves in periodicals, but it relieves some stress. Scanning the shelves, we found that all of our issues were residing in four inch wide boxes, and many had only a few issues (far from filling the box). I had one of our engineering students design a conversion from the four inch into two inch wide boxes. He replaced over 200 of the four inch boxes and gained us space in the stacks so that we could continue to shelve new materials. We did the same thing in our compact storage section, but replacing some 300 boxes. Wow, we really have some room now! The shifting will go easier.

How is the humidity level in your collections? Our microfilm arches are not far from the front doors, which could lower the shelf life of the film. We bought a bucket of anti-moisture packets (300) and have placed two in each shelving unit, reducing the levels and increasing the shelf life. Wow! Thirty-eight cents per packet times two is much cheaper than replacing the microfilm from early deterioration.

Having trouble finding a time for your group to meet during the work day? Our Serials Collection Development Team now meets online in email, a user friendly board, and through routed packets of decisions for new serials. It works, cuts down the meeting times and the impossible scheduling in a small library. We have been able to make more decisions in a year than the former groups have done in two years.

There are always possibilities! Dream a little. Scheme a little. Think a little. Anything can come to light or be solved! What is your problem? Is it something to think about?