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LEARNING TO LOVE GIFTS: HOW ONE LIBRARY HAS INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN PROCESSING, AND REALIZED THE BENEFITS OF GIFT MATERIALS

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INTRODUCTION

The University of Central Florida Libraries began a review of gift operations in 2007. The purpose of the review was to evaluate the process by which donated materials were reviewed and processed while also focusing on the final disposition of the materials. At that time nearly all aspects of gift processing were handled by one full time position, with the exception being that collection development librarians made final decisions about the acceptance of gifts. The assumption at the time was that the amount of work related to gift operations did not justify a full time position. Questions also began to arise about the merits of having all the duties within one position given the way in which materials were directed throughout the process. During the review other changes were taking place in Acquisitions & Collection Services, the department that handles acquisitions, serials, collection development, electronic resources, binding and gifts. These changes were taking place based on the findings of a complete workflow analysis of these various functional areas with an eye toward efficiency and better use of physical space. The following areas related to gift processing were reviewed:

- Gift Acceptance Policy
- Gift Acknowledgment
- Preservation
- Staffing
- Workflow
- Review
- Disposition
- Book sale

In addition to changes in policies, procedures, and staffing, a new direction was also taken as it relates to the sale of unwanted gift materials. A major highlight of that change being an increase in the amount of money received from the sale of unwanted gift materials through collaboration with an outside vendor. Changes to the workflow after the analysis resulted in increased revenue while not requiring additional staffing or physical space. The purpose of this presentation is to provide an overview of the findings of the gift operations review and to discuss the pros and cons of the entire gift process at the University of Central Florida.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

The University of Central Florida has a student enrollment of 53,537 and 1950 faculty members making it the largest university in Florida and the third largest university in the United States behind Ohio State University and Arizona State University. It has a Carnegie Classification of Research University (high research activity) and has undergone almost unbelievable growth since its first classes began in 1968. While the university has grown to such a large size the library, while continuing to grow, has not been able to keep pace with the ever growing student body. The library does have nearly 2 million volumes and approximately 45 librarian positions. The materials budget

has been impacted by budget cuts. During the 2008/2009 fiscal year the library expended a total of \$5,355, 011 on new library materials down from \$5,914,637 in fiscal year 2006/2007.

GENERAL POLICY ON GIFTS

UCF has a very clear policy related to the acceptance of gift materials. The library has a form that donors complete at the time the materials are donated. The form indicates that materials will be reviewed and may be added to the collection if they are in good condition, are not duplicates and meet the collection development policy. Generally, books, CDs and DVDs are accepted and reviewed. The library tries very hard not to accept periodicals and materials in formats that we do not support in the library such as LPs or audio cassettes. Some donors insist on leaving the materials or the materials are dropped off without awareness by staff members as to what the boxes contain. These materials are either placed in a book sale or are discarded.

The library makes a point to get contact information unless the donor refuses. This step is very important because it gives the library the right to dispose of the materials and it also allows for the gift acknowledgement letter to be processed. This is seen as a great way to reach out to potential donors. The letters are signed by the Director of Libraries.

While the library does not actively pursue donations, staff members will follow up with individuals who inquire about the library accepting donations. In some rare cases the library will arrange for pickup of materials based on the importance the materials may have for the collection. This can be problematic, because even after a discussion with the donor(s) as to the contents and quality of the material often upon first review the collection is not as relevant as was anticipated. Such trips are costly and result in a large amount of materials to sort through and hold until final disposition.

It is important to have the donor sign away rights to the materials and to have a clear policy so that there are no surprises as to what happens with the donation. It is also important to let potential donors and library staff members in public service areas know about how materials can be dropped off. The UCF Libraries will accept donations at the Circulation Desk and the loading dock if arrangements are made ahead of time. Donations are also accepted at the branch and regional campus libraries and those libraries have their own policies regarding drop offs.

One important change to gift review resulted in new policies about what materials are acceptable. In the past, materials were placed on shelves for review by librarians without regard for such factors as age, condition, or quality. This resulted in large numbers of materials awaiting review that were not going to be added to the collection. The new policy allows for an initial review by staff members trained to provide a quick analysis. Materials that are highlighted, marked, damaged or that display signs of insect infestation or mold are immediately set aside. These materials are either sold or discarded depending on type and condition.

STAFFING

Upon completion of the workflow analysis it was decided that gift operations would no longer have a dedicated position. Instead the duties were reassigned to two full time staff members. The duties related to gifts operations represent only a portion of their duties. One position is located in the Binding and Gifts unit on the ground floor and this position is responsible for initial review, searching for duplication, working with librarians when necessary, processing and book sale preparation. The other position is located on the fifth floor in close proximity to the Head of Acquisitions & Collection Services as well as Library Administration. This position is responsible for the collection of statistics related to gift operations, coordination with donors and processing of gift acknowledgement letters. It was important for this position to assume these duties because statistics for other areas were

already with this position as well as responsibility for answering the main phone line for the department.

The changes that were made around gift operations resulted in a space savings as well. Previously an entire office on the ground floor was occupied by gifts with much of the space being wasted with large backlogs of gift books and empty space. The changes resulted in new space to move binding operations as well as approval receiving to that area allowing the department to take advantage of the close proximity to the loading dock. The library also gained new space in the area left vacant by the binding unit.

Making gift operations work does require the assistance of other units within the library. Circulation staff members have to be trained on the acceptance policy and have to try their best to obtain a signed donor form. They also have to keep donor forms together with the donated materials so that proper acknowledgement can be made. Regional and branch campus libraries also play a key role as donors will often drop materials off at these locations. The materials may be suitable for those locations or not. Regardless of the suitability of the gifts to those locations all materials are processed at the main library so there has to be good coordination between the various locations.

The workflow analysis of gift operations highlighted several staffing issues that need to be addressed. Staff members must be trained to handle the issues that will arise within the various areas of receipt, review, processing, and final disposition. Also, the training must be appropriate to the importance of the specific task. For instance, the initial review of gift materials will result in the subsequent elimination of many gift materials. This decision making authority requires a high level of training and knowledge as does the final decision to add materials to the collection. At UCF, decisions to discard materials or place them in the book sale are made by staff members for the most part. Some books are set aside for review by the Head of Acquisitions & Collection Services. In some cases, subject librarians are asked to provide review. Decisions to add books to the collection are made by librarians.

At UCF the semi-annual book sale is an important public outreach tool. Therefore, setting aside unwanted materials for the sale is very much an accepted part of the gift operations. One staff member is in charge of setting the dates, promotion, logistics and nearly all aspects of the book sales. For some libraries a major staffing issue will be to make a decision about which position or positions will be responsible for gift operations. And to determine how much latitude to give specific staff as it relates to making important decisions about what to keep and what to discard or sell.

WORKFLOW

The process for getting materials into the building and the way in which decisions are made certainly changed after the workflow analysis. The large backlog of materials that were taking up so much physical space resulted from the requirement to have several librarians involved with review. Often materials were on the shelves for weeks or even months. This all changed with the new procedures that call for materials to be reviewed quickly with only the most relevant items being placed on shelves for review. Now materials arrive and are reviewed quickly with most being sold or discarded. The good stuff is set aside for review by the Head of Acquisitions & Collections Services or appointed subject librarians. This results in a more manageable number of items being held for review and streamlines the process.

A major part of gift operations is the sale of unwanted materials. Materials that are not going to be reviewed for possible addition to the collection may be set aside for the sale. Eventually some of the materials reviewed by professional librarians will also be set aside for the sale as less than 10% of gifts are added to the collection. Materials that are to be added are searched in the catalog and

OCLC, processed and forwarded on for cataloging or binding. Sale materials are set aside for review by an outside book vendor for possible online sale. This process will be described more thoroughly in a future section. The key here is that staff members within the gifts unit have to balance two different processes for sale items that being book sale versus outside sales by the vendor.

REVIEWING GIFT MATERIALS

Gift materials are received in various conditions and some of them need to be removed from the library as soon as possible. Materials that have insect infestation or mold need to be removed so that the problems do not spread to other areas of the collection. Some materials are brittle, dirty or damaged. These materials are dealt with upon initial review and may receive various treatments or be discarded depending on the condition and importance of the item. Gifts Unit staff members discard or set aside for the book sale all materials that are in formats the library does not support. Materials that are marked with pen, pencil or highlighter are also separated out. This frees up space and time to focus on the more important materials which occasionally do arrive at the library. Staff members are trained to watch for gift materials that are of the content and quality to justify further review by a professional librarian. The following areas are of particular importance:

- Pre-1900 (particularly pre-1865)
- Items with less than 10 holdings in OCLC
- Rare books or unique content
- Materials that should be reviewed by Special Collections
- Orlando or Central Florida history
- Materials in UCF's strong areas
- Travel and tourism (particularly Central Florida)
- Spanish language
- CDs & DVDs

While less than 10% of gift materials are added to the collections at the UCF Libraries, some large collections of note from retiring faculty or long time collectors have been added to the collection over the past few years. However, even in these cases because of duplication or condition not all of the donated items have been added. There are times when all items in a large collection are added, but these are named collections that are being placed in Special Collections. Gifts are also added to the branch libraries particularly the Universal Orlando Foundation Library at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management (Rosen Library). Because of the unique collection at this library those trained in gifts processing are always on the lookout for materials that may be suitable. The head of the Rosen Library is always eager to review materials during periodic visits to the main library so materials awaiting his review are held in the Gifts Unit a bit longer than most gifts.

During the past two or three years some very exciting materials have been received and added to either the general collection, Special Collections or the Rosen Library. In fact, some gifts have been forwarded on to other state universities in Florida. While wading through the gift materials can be time consuming it is exciting when materials can be identified that are added to the collection, particularly when the materials are unique or will expand the collection in UCF's strong disciplines.

DISPOSITION OF UNWANTED GIFTS

Having clear written policies for donation of gift materials is very important when it comes to final disposition of gifts. The gift policy makes it clear to donors that donated materials may be sold or discarded. It is important for the goal of efficiency not to have to go back to donors for permission

when steps other than addition to the collection are considered. It is likely that the majority of gift materials will either be sold or discarded with some of them being discarded right away. Libraries should also consider other libraries in their state or consortiums that may benefit from unwanted gifts. UCF has contributed in this way though the majority of gifts received by the UCF Libraries are eventually sold either in library hosted book sales or by a private book dealer.

The UCF Libraries began working with a private book dealer during the 2006/2007 fiscal year. The book dealer takes selected unwanted gifts and sells them online with the library receiving a monthly commission check. Prior to that time the average amount earned from book sales was \$1,473.45 per year based on the two previous fiscal years. After less than a full year of working with the vendor the revenue increased to \$4,042.84 and at the end of the 2008-2009 fiscal year the revenue had increased to \$6,649.50. There are a few reasons for the large increase in book sale revenue. First, the book dealer is selling for a much higher price those books that previously would have been sold for \$1.00 in the sale. While the library only receives a small percentage of the sale it is still a lot more than would have been received in a book sale. Also, the book dealer often gets large lots of books and only wants the cream of the crop. The library is given a large donation of unwanted books just ahead of a scheduled book sale and all profit goes to the library. As more donated materials are selected by the book dealer the result is a larger online inventory for the library and with it a larger more stable monthly commission check. Of course, the total of over \$6,649.50 made from book sale revenue in fiscal year 2008/2009 is a drop in the bucket in comparison to the overall library budget. The book sale revenue varies from month to month is dependent on many factors. So, why does UCF continue to have sales and why is the new arrangement with an outside dealer so important?

Book sales are a tradition at UCF and we still have a high interest in the sales from students, faculty and staff. Money is not the primary reason for the sale and, in fact, it is not really considered as a factor that determines whether or not sales will be hosted by the library. It is the general policy of UCF Libraries to accept gift books and while some will be a welcomed addition to the collection, most will not. These books have to be disposed of and given their popularity book sales continue to be supported. These sales are handled with existing staff members who consider the sales as part of the overall gift acceptance workflow. Both the workflow and the revenue related to the sale of gift books is variable. Workflow tends to ebb and flow as a result of larger than normal gift collections and during the lead up to book sales which are hosted one or two times per year based on inventory.

While the revenue from book sales does not have much impact on the budget it is important to note that these funds do not have strings attached like state, grant, or foundation funds. The library director is free to spend these funds to support library initiatives and some examples include special travel, pc upgrades, remodeling and the purchase of items for Special Collections. As long as the library continues to have the physical space and existing staff to handle the logistics of the sale it will be considered a standard part of the overall gift materials process.

ABOUT GIFT USAGE

During the development of this presentation it was suggested that some mention be made of gift usage and what role it plays in decision making. Adding gift books is not free because the library does incur costs for staffing and processing supplies. Therefore, it is important to consider the level of usage for gift materials added to the collection. A thorough usage study was not the purpose of this project and so the following information is provided not to withstand scientific scrutiny, but rather to be a starting point for discussion.

In 2008, the UCF libraries received a large donation of materials focused on military history. The gift totaled over 1500 books and these were reviewed based on our normal procedures. Much of the collection was eliminated because the books were already owned or the content or quality of the book did not meet our collection development needs. However, a total of 102 books were added to the collection. That is a lot of work for just 102 books so those working with gifts need to ask if it is worth the effort. After being in the collection for just one year there were a total of 77 checkouts, and 37% of the books were checked out at least one time. A total of four books checked out five times or more. These numbers are not overwhelming so it is important to make institution specific decisions about the merits of gift books.

To put the gift book usage into perspective a number of firm order and approval books in the area of history were also selected. Again, this was not an official study with random sampling so these numbers should only be used for general perspective. Two additional usage studies were considered for both approval and firm order books which have been in the collection for approximately one year. For the 191 history books received via firm order the check out rate was 68%. In addition, nine titles had circulated five times or more. A total of 248 approval books were selected with 199 or 80% being checked out at least one time. A total of 11 titles had been checked out more than five times.

FINAL WORD ON GIFT MATERIALS

Receiving and handling gift materials can provide libraries with some useful materials that meet the collection development policy. While the library does incur costs to add materials, it is exciting when items are either rare or match well with the collecting needs of the library. In addition to the added cost in supplies and staffing there are other negatives related to gift receipt. It can be frustrating to deal with donors and to handle the unwanted donations. During routine management of gifts workflow it is important to focus on the quick elimination of all materials that are not likely to be added so that space and time can be saved. It is important to note that acceptance of gifts and hosting book sales are a great publicity tool for the library and may lead to financial donations. While it is not likely that those who donate books will also donate money there should be an attempt to reach out to each donor, and to keep a donor database. Coordination with the library development office is also recommended. Overall, gift acceptance has been a success at UCF and the result has been some exciting additions to the collection and a small amount of money added to the library for some special purchases.