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This Ain't Your Papa's Allocation Formula! Team-Based Approaches to Monograph Collections Budgets

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Abstract

In 2009, the University of Guelph (UG) Library's Organizational Renewal Initiative created new strategic teams to replace its existing liaison-based service model. The five new teams were charged with the delivery of service clusters (traditional and emerging) in alignment with the University's academic mission. The new Information Resources (IR) team of specialist librarians and professional staff are charged with deepening their skills and engagement within specified team objectives/accountabilities, collection development, management, and assessment.

The team-based ethos of the new IR Team has reshaped how the institution allocates, budgets, and orients its work for monographic collections. Factors which have shaped UG's unique approach to this core team activity include increased consortial licensing, evolving publishing trends, the growth of multi-institutional research teams and discipline clusters within the University, evolving research and teaching modalities, an increased focus on accountability, and the demise of formal university governance bodies. Monograph budgeting has shifted from departmental budget allocations to broader, cross-institutional allocations in response to resource format changes and shifting strategic priorities. A paradigm shift from allocation metrics towards post hoc adjustments based on curricular need and efficiency is described. Time-series linked examples of current UG Monograph budget structures illustrate this budgetary evolution, and external systems and tools to actively manage monographs budgeting and expenditure processes will be discussed.

Strategies from a Selector's point of view and that of the Team Head to adapt, change, guide, and modify budgeting practices also are analyzed. Two significant challenges to the team-based process (monitoring expenditures and improving stakeholder communications) are identified.

Introduction and Background

The University of Guelph (UG) is a medium-sized comprehensive university located in Guelph, Ontario, Canada, with traditional strengths in agriculture, veterinary medicine, life sciences, and the applied social sciences. The University was founded in 1964 through the amalgamation of three existing colleges: the Ontario Agriculture College, the Ontario Veterinary College, and the Macdonald Institute (a women's college specializing in home economics). Since 1965, the University has grown from an initial complement of 350 faculty, and 1,700 students to a current campus population of seven colleges, 780 faculty, and over 24,000 FTE students. As an organization, UG has identified the following strategic values: student focused, experiential learning; residentially intensive student life experiences; and a curriculum that offers a significant range of

e-learning and distance learning course modalities. The University is strongly committed to the integration of learning and research within a highly collaborative and interdisciplinary (within and beyond the university) environment.

Prior to 2009, the UG Library system maintained a traditional structure that had at its core an academic liaison librarian model. Most professional librarians were generalists with multiple departmental responsibilities and a wide range of job roles—these included information services accountabilities, such as reference and instruction, as well as collection development responsibilities and other projects as assigned." "Matrix management" reporting lines meant that liaison librarians reported to the Head of Information Resources for that part of their collections duties (on average, 25% of assigned

work), but had the Head of Academic Liaison as their primary supervisor.

Recognizing the need to redefine and refocus its staffing resources in order to address new and emerging areas of academic library services, the UG Library undertook an Organizational Renewal Initiative to re-envision the Library's entire institutional mandate within the University. The Organizational Renewal Initiative engaged staff at all levels of the organization to define the Library's core vision and values and to redefine its work (including academic liaison roles), institutional structures, and priorities. The resulting final report recommended the creation of five core service teams (including the newly cast Information Resources Team), and a number of cross-functional teams. Four core principles which are relevant to this discussion emerged out of the Organizational Renewal process:

- Liaison is not exclusively about departmental alignment and is not done exclusively by librarians
- The situation in which "everyone does everything" was no longer sustainable
- The new model is intended to support development of deeper skills and professional learning networks

- The new model should discourage the "siloization" of work by actively encouraging enhanced collaboration across the Library and with many groups on campus

Formation and Outline of the IR Strategic Team

A core mandate of the new strategic IR Team is the provision of a coordinated and collaborative approach to collection development and management across the library system to ensure that useful resources are available for users in ways that integrate seamlessly with their learning and discovery activities. The operational work of the new Team has three core foci: collection development, collection management, and evaluation and assessment. As a result of this realignment, the library was able to reduce the number of professional librarians involved in collections work from 12–14 liaison librarians, each with a notional 25% workload in collections, to 4 professional librarians focused 100% on collections tasks. The new organizational chart is listed in Figure 1.

The move to a new team-based structure conceived of both practical/operational benefits as well as work-based cultural benefits. On a conceptual level, the establishment of the IR

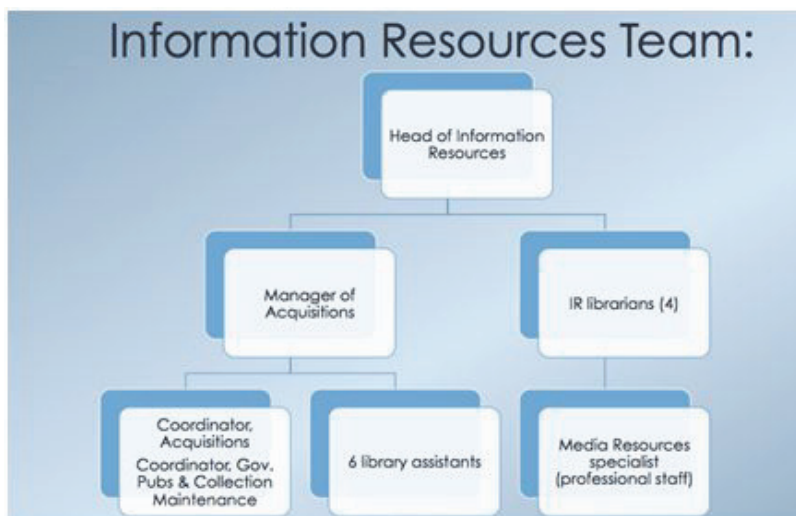


Figure 1. Information Resources Team Organization Chart

strategic team has created a new peer community of four selectors, the team manager, and two professional staff who, together, form the IR Steering Team. Over the past 3 years, this peer group has gradually evolved to form a “community of practice” around collections work. Peer-to-peer learning, enhanced professional development opportunities, and collaborative approaches to strategic planning have enabled more focused and deeper skills development than was possible with the more diffuse job roles associated with the liaison-librarian model. By building on shared and diverse strengths, the new peer team is able to tap into the benefits of team-based work to encourage innovation, agility, and collaboration in carrying out their collections work.

Factors Precipitating Budgetary Change

In the new team-based environment, the practical aspects of monograph budgeting have also undergone a paradigm shift. Previously, monograph budgets were set and allocated at the academic-department level, with only a few broader-based funds available to address such cross-institutional needs as reference works or e-book packages. Allocations at the departmental level were primarily FTE driven, but also reflected many years of accretion and changes made for political reasons rather than according to numeric criteria. Over time, significant budget anomalies and imbalances developed because of historical instances of excessive advocacy by librarians and faculty or (the opposite problem) lack of engagement and advocacy where it was needed. There was a multiplicity of budget allocations within the overall monographs budget (over 60 different funds), and over 50% of that budget was spent through labour-intensive “firm” ordering of title-by-title selections.

In recent years, a number of additional factors internal and external to the University have necessitated rethinking and re-engineering of how our Library manages its monographs budget. The nature of publishing has changed, offering greater availability of “monographic” e-formats (books and primary sources), often through consortial e-book licenses which are both costly and multidisciplinary in nature. Libraries require broader funding models in order to respond to the

way that publishers now aggregate and integrate information “packages” that serve multiple disciplines.

Aggregation of departmental book budgets into larger pools of money is also driven by larger societal trends. Ease of access to information through the Internet fosters interdisciplinary knowledge discovery, research, and teaching activities. This is reflected in the growing number of faculty cross-appointments and multi-institutional research teams at our University and by the increasing tendency for faculty and students to form research networks through social media channels. Wider networks of academic knowledge creation and sharing have diminished more traditional forms of departmental affiliation and identity, and our monographs budgeting model needs to become more flexible and agile in order to accommodate the growing interdisciplinarity of scholarly monographic communication. At the local level, UG has recently streamlined our formal university governance structures, eliminating the Senate Library committee and the departmental library representative committee structure which underlay it.

Examination of New Budgetary Structures and Processes

With all of these factors driving the need for change, and a new team-based structure to help effect change, what does our new model for managing the monographs budget look like? For firm orders, we have affected a major transition by creating larger, more flexible spending categories with the older department budgets now aggregated up into college-level funds. This broader approach provides more flexibility for interdisciplinary spending, purchase of large e-book packages, and for responding to collection gaps identified through formal program and course assessments. More of the available funding (60%) is now spent on approvals rather than firm orders, and we have created one approval plan fund which is curriculum based and which plays a pivotal role in guiding the bulk of our monograph acquisitions (the approval plan is effectively self-regulating in budgetary terms, meeting collection objectives within a fixed budget). Several fully

centralized funds have also been created in order to enable the acquisition of some of the new products (primary sources, streaming media, e-book packages, image repositories) which are steadily replacing or supplementing traditional monographic sources. A conceptualization of the realignment of our monographs budget is shown in Figure 2.

Team Head Strategies to Adapt to New Budget Process

At the Team Head level, the process of change applied to the IR budget could best be described as moving from an *a priori* formula to *post hoc* adjustments to maximize efficiency and derive the greatest value from funds. At the macro level, the IR budget is managed through a host of factors:

- an adherence to overall budgetary balance, described as the “80/20 rule,” whereby in total, monograph budgets are held to approximately 20% of the total;
- across-the-board increases/decreases to the budget;
- increases that result from new resources requests arising from course or program assessments;
- changes to budget structure arising from format trends (in particular, the move from print to digital formats);
- a “non-punitive” framework when dealing with carry forwards.

At a structural level, if one were to examine the UG IR budget for monographs in fiscal year 2005–2006, there would be more than 70 allocated monographic budget lines with detailed lines for most departments and subdivisions for both firm and standing order (STO) types. Moving forward to fiscal year 2012–2013, the allocated funds were reduced to eight major allocated funds with an additional five allocated in a generalized library ledger. This flattening of the monographic budgets has made overall management and tracking of fund performance less complex and labor-time intensive. College-level budgets continue to provide enough subgrouping by broad discipline clusters to make sense to various stakeholders inside and outside the library. Moreover, while providing for greater overall size and flexibility for IR Librarians, there still remain sufficient safeguards within this higher-level grouping to ensure some level of disciplinary equity and cost containment.

The evolution of UG budget structures is illustrated through an examination of the Springer eBooks license. This license was first negotiated in 2008 through the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) consortium. In the first year, the UG Library licensed 8 of 12 subject collections of e-books, apportioning the cost between four college/departmental budgets (15% Life Sciences, 20% Ontario Veterinary College, 17% Humber College [social sciences], and 48% central e-books fund). In the second year (2009), Guelph licensed all 12 subject collections and apportioned the

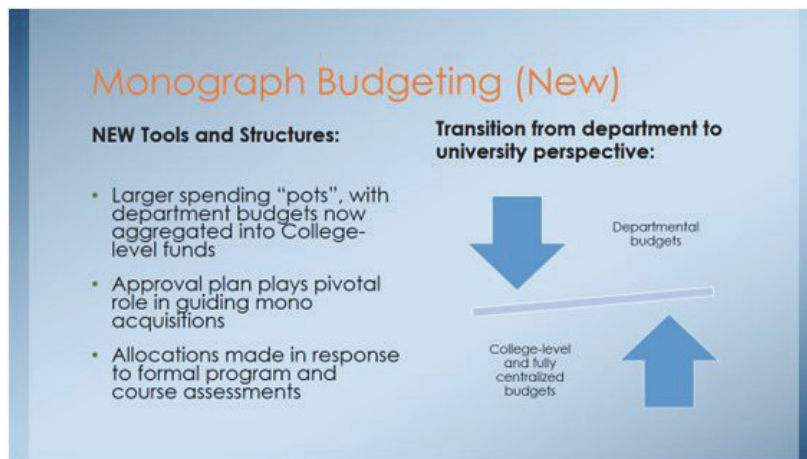


Figure 2. Monograph Budgeting

costs over a larger number of departmental/college budgets to reflect the more diverse offerings (eight instead of four). By 2010, a fewer number of consolidated funds were used to leverage the acquisition of the complete 12 subject collections. Finally, in 2012, the total cost for the Springer eBooks license was funded by a single central e-books budget. This was made possible by transferring proportionate costs from each college level budget to the central fund to streamline the order management for this package. The evolution of this license demonstrates the value of fund pooling and the cooperative approach to evaluating and funding the costs of e-books through a centralized process.

Team and Selector Strategies to Adapt to New Budget Process

Redesign of the monographs budget process at the UG Library has been supported by and inextricably linked with the many cultural changes arising from our adoption of a new team-based culture/approach for collections work. Moving to one larger, shared monographs budget has been a natural outcome of our move from a liaison model (where the focus was on advocacy for our individual departments) to a team-based ethos which valorizes joint work, common goals, peer-to-peer learning, engagement in strategic planning and visioning, and balancing the workload across the team. The team takes a holistic (institutional-level) view of its work, uses a consensus model for decision making, and engages in strategic planning regularly to align its work with the University's strategic directions and academic mission.

The IR strategic team has developed many practices which serve to remove barriers to collaboration between us and between our team and others. At the team's inception, we developed one joint approval plan which is centrally funded rather than divided up amongst academic departments. We have also developed common templates and practices for carrying out program and course assessments, and decisions regarding our centralized "new product" budget are jointly made based on shared discussion and understanding of the University's curricular

directions. We emphasize evidenced-based decision making through formalized assessment processes, using logic models to programmatically describe the work of our team and assign metrics for measuring the outcomes. We recognize the need to increase our ability to analyze and understand how our collections are used by deepening our skill sets in assessment, and the benefits of working closely with other strategic teams to exchange different viewpoints and perspectives on user behaviours and needs. Another major goal for our team is to promote the value and purpose of collections work by working to mentor and train the next generation of Collections specialists so that we can ensure the stability of collections skills (including monograph selection) over time.

In addition to conceptual changes in how we work together, the selector librarians on the IR team have developed more applied tools for managing merged monograph budgets. These tools (some old, some new) include statistical and usage tools from vendors; locally generated COGNOS (MIS software) reports from our ILS; and approval plan reports which allow us to track approval and firm orders to ensure "equity" of spending, to set expenditure goals, and to rebalance or expand disciplinary spending as the curriculum evolves. We use locally designed databases for managing new product suggestions and for sending out news updates regarding new products. Additionally, we use curriculum mapping information sources to ensure alignment of our monograph spending with the University's current and evolving programs; we use Excel for tracking expenditures and for collection management decision-making. Specifically, Excel is used to set and track "nominal" departmental allocations and expenditures for firm spending on monographs based on historical spending patterns. This ensures rough equity of spending across departments within one aggregated college-level fund without constraining the ability to use college-level allocations for firm ordering to respond to collection gaps identified through program assessments, to enable start-up investment in new programs, or to address subject areas where the approval plan does not perform as well as desired. An example of this use

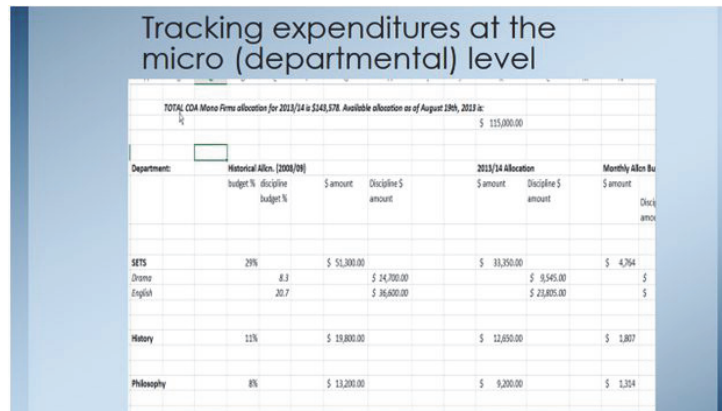


Figure 3. Tracking Expenditures

of Excel to track firm order monograph spending in the College of Arts is shown in Figure 3.

Finally, the selectors use the good old-fashioned Library of Congress subject classification schedules as our touchstone for matching monograph spending through the approval plan to subjects and curricular content rather than to departmental allocations.

Despite the various strategies employed by the IR strategic team to introduce and adapt to a new model of monograph budget management, many challenges remain. The team needs to define and practice assessment strategies at a more formal and systematic way than was ever done in the past and learn to filter through the complex welter of usage data that is available to us in order to decide what has meaning and utility for guiding monograph spending. Our library has, for many years, invested deeply in consortial relationships which have enabled extensive resource sharing of monograph collections, and we need to find ways to retain this benefit for our uses and continue to ensure equity across the disciplines as print-resource sharing is replaced by (hopefully) consortial e-book licensing/purchasing.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined both the rationale and impetus for change in library monograph budgeting as well as the strategies employed to develop and further refine a team based approach to budgeting. In concluding this work, we now turn to a brief examination of the challenges facing the UG IR Team as it begins to fully

incorporate the strategies described herein into the everyday work of the team.

Communicating our new modes of work and our new approach to monograph budgeting represents an ongoing challenge. Having given up the previous relationships and lines of communication that liaison librarians had with their academic departments, the Team has adopted a number of strategies (a Library Open House, New Faculty Orientation, reconstituting one-to-one communications with faculty known to champion the library and resources) and is investigating a number of others, in particular the creation of more push technology and social media tools, to address these complexities. Promoting the value of our work (which is largely invisible to users) and the many kinds of service that we can offer to our academic community also remains an ongoing challenge. This group would include those organizations, such as library consortia (OCUL and CARL), and those with whom we share data and information, such as the university (through integrated planning) and provincial funding bodies, such as the HEQCO (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario). Communications within the higher education sector is challenging at the best of times (particularly so with faculty), and the Team recognizes the need to communicate the value of our work to our core stakeholders.

The other significant challenge going forward, and touched on throughout this paper, arises from the management of e-books from a financial and collections management perspective. While there currently exist numerous funds with the UG

Library IR budget, the overall trend continues towards centralization (within the serials fund) underpinned by joint purchasing leveraged through consortia. This trend reflects the priorities outlined in this presentation of changes in higher education (multidisciplinary of teaching/research) and the publishing industry. Chief among the challenges include: accurately tracking and reporting numbers and expenditures on e-books (for assessment and accreditation purposes) and assessing value for money as a result of challenging metrics and standards as the library moves from primarily print to predominantly online book collections. A final challenge posed by e-books to budgeting is the lack of standard

business models for purchasing e-books. The current Team pooled approach to monograph budgeting at UG is better positioned than previous budget structures to fund e-book projects such as PDA/DDA. Currently, the UG Library uses tracking funds within all the college-level monograph budgets as well as specific funds for reference e-books in addition to the central (serial) e-books fund. At this stage, it is unclear whether this structure will need to diversify or contract to meet the challenges outlined in this paper. In keeping with the new spirit of team-based flexibility, the UG Library will evolve its budgeting practices and the work this enables to meet these new challenges.