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Michael Arthur and Ying Zhang, "Developing a Statewide Print Repository in Florida: The UCF Experience with FLARE" (2013). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284315246>

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Developing a Statewide Print Repository in Florida: The UCF Experience with FLARE

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Abstract

Many academic libraries are struggling with collections size reaching or exceeding building capacity. Meanwhile, the movement of twenty-first-century libraries calls for user-centered space. The combination of these two factors has challenged libraries to identify ways to eliminate physical collections without losing access to content.

The academic libraries in the State of Florida, including the University of Central Florida (UCF), have discussed and developed plans for a shared print repository for several years. For the past few years a statewide Shared Storage Task Force was convened with representation from the state university libraries, and eventually formed the Florida Academic Repository (FLARE) under the leadership of the University of Florida.

In 2012, FLARE received the first large shipment from a participating library, the University of Miami. After a few months of active planning, UCF implemented its project preparing materials to send to FLARE and is poised to be the next library contributing to FLARE.

As presented, the UCF FLARE project requires tremendous coordination and collaboration within the multiple units in the Technical Services Division at UCF and with the external FLARE Team in Gainesville. Policies and procedures were developed with guidance from the FLARE Team, and internal workflow was designed to ensure accurate processing. This presentation focused on providing an overview of the FLARE project with a specific focus on the UCF experience in selecting and processing materials.

Statewide Shared Storage in Florida: Realizing the Benefits of Cooperation

The University of Central Florida (UCF) is one of the fastest growing universities in the nation. The John C. Hitt Library, as the first building on campus, is quickly approaching its capacity for both collections growth and user space. Options such as expansion, renovation, and on-site storage had all been explored. But due to funding limits or logistic issues, none had materialized.

At the same time, many of UCF's peer institutes in the State of Florida have been facing the same dilemma. That was how the idea of shared storage was born. Early discussions about a statewide shared storage project go back several years and may well have originated when the Collection Planning Committee for the State University Libraries in Florida created a task force to review the "Six Key Challenges for the Future of Collection Development" as presented by Ross

Atkinson at the Janus Conference held at Cornell University in 2005. After months of planning and discussion, this committee presented slightly edited versions of the original Janus Challenges, and the name "Janus in Florida" was given to the new initiatives that included creation of separate task forces to address each of the six major challenges. One of the major challenges in this initiative was a shared print repository. A new committee was formed to explore the idea of a shared facility. Initial discussions revolved around location, building specifications, financial support, collection parameters, resource sharing, circulation policies, and the inclusion of a state-of-the-art conservation lab.

Early plans to house a digitization unit within the storage facility turned out to be forward-thinking and advantageous given the current importance of balancing print repositories with digital access to the print content when possible. As planning and design moved toward physical location, the

University of Florida (UF) was the logical choice for this new facility. The geographic location of the University of Florida in Gainesville is somewhat center in the state. This is an important factor as institutions to the far north and south will have an equal distance for transfer of materials and to receive shipments back and forth once the facility starts lending.

The statewide committee continued to work on many facets of planning for the new facility, and multiple collection related factors were considered. A complete review of JSTOR holdings was conducted with each library given the option of final disposition of JSTOR duplicates. A comparison to the UF holdings resulted in removal of all JSTOR holdings from the UCF Libraries. This was an early space saver as the bound volumes were not relocated to Gainesville. The new idea of shared storage had proven valuable even before a physical facility existed.

Throughout the planning process, several standing committees contributed to the storage task force, and these efforts helped ensure that important areas would be addressed, such as development of a Last Copy in Florida Policy and special guidelines for acceptance of rare materials and archives. Circulation, cataloging, and interlibrary loan were all involved with the development of circulation policies and together helped with planning for the new statewide shared catalog.

The planning effort that went into the process was rewarded with the announcement that a location and funding had been secured for the shared storage facility. The next important step was to get a name for the facility and start a new phase of cooperation between the state universities. The new facility was named Florida Academic Repository, or FLARE. FLARE has an OCLC symbol, participates in UBorrow, and is a separate instance in ILS.

Statewide Shared Storage in Florida: The UCF Experience

The UCF Libraries had been an active participant throughout the planning and evolution of FLARE. The librarians had also started promoting the importance of the facility to the University

teaching faculty and administrators as a win-win for all FLARE participants as FLARE would increase access to additional content previously not held at UCF. As an early signatory to the FLARE project, UCF is on the verge of becoming the first state university to permanently place materials in FLARE.

The first step was the formation of the Weeding Task Force. Librarians representing various functional areas within the library were selected by the Director of Libraries with a goal of developing policies and procedures necessary to manage the relocation of approximately 70,000 volumes. This number was chosen based on the estimated physical space needed for planned renovations. The task force was given flexibility toward identifying materials based on a number of factors. Discussions centered on serial content that was duplicated electronically with perpetual rights or where access was deemed to be safe from cancellation. Monographs were also discussed with duplicate print, dated or low use content, and subject areas no longer supported as leading factors for possible relocation.

With JSTOR already removed from the collection, the focus on bound periodicals went to other electronic packages with perpetual rights and stable access. A preliminary list of thousands of titles was generated from a cross section of holdings in link resolver and the catalog. Staff had to manually search each title to verify the nonaggregator online access indeed duplicates the print holdings and then update the list. This step was critical, yet very time consuming.

On monographs, a report was generated on multiple copies in the main circulating collection. Information included the title, barcodes, location, and circulation statistics. However, it was difficult to decipher merely from the catalog records whether two items were indeed duplicates, supplements, or, in some cases, different editions due to inconsistent cataloging practices in the past. Again, visual comparison of the physical items with the records was necessary to confirm the duplicates.

Once the scope of the FLARE project was determined, UCF Libraries started the

implementation in early 2013. Due to the uniqueness of ShareBib, where all 11 public university libraries shared the same instance of bibliographic records in the ILS, the team had to establish a new workflow to process the materials in the ILS with extra caution to minimize duplication of efforts with partner institutions.

The workflow was designed based on three main premises. First and foremost, it should be easy for the users to identify and request materials in FLARE. Just because materials are relocated to off-site storage, they should still be displayed clearly to the patrons. Second, the removal of materials had to be conducive to efficiency for the movers who would handle the physical moving. Reducing the handling and preparation by the movers saves money and time. Finally, the workflow had to easily fit into the space constraints of the library building. Minimal space was available to process the workflow.

The bound periodicals at UCF Libraries were never barcoded or itemized. In order to relocate them in

the catalog, each volume had to have the barcode. Therefore, processing FLARE bound periodicals included identifying titles and volumes to be processed, locating and marking the volumes, adding barcodes, and creating item records in ILS. The monographs had barcodes and item records; therefore, processing monographs involved slightly different steps.

The team worked closely with all parties involved, including Acquisitions; Cataloging; Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC), who manages the server on the ILS SharedBib; FLARE staff; and University of Florida librarians. Many possible scenarios were brainstormed, tested, and then retested. The collaboration resulted in development of procedures to cover all aspects of the project with the expectation that changes will be made as the project moved forward. The project also required that the team submit a cost proposal to the Library Administration for hiring and purchasing decisions. In order to write that proposal, many questions had to be answered: Should the work

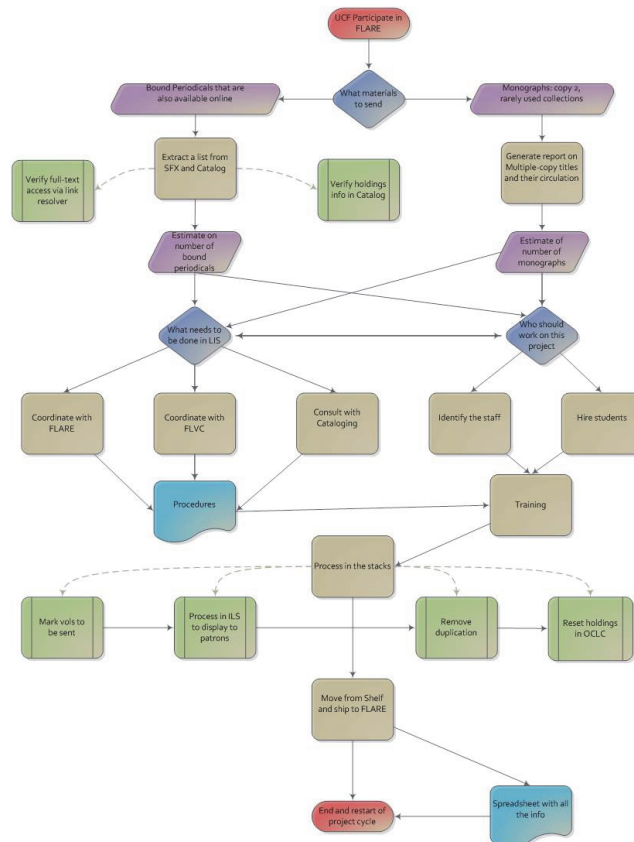


Figure 1. Decision Making and Workflow Chart Used by UCF in FLARE Relocation Project

be done by librarians, staff, or student workers? Should it be done by Acquisitions, Cataloging, or Public Services? How many people need to be placed on the project? How many laptops and mobile carts would be needed to expedite the process with work being done in the stacks? What about software installation? Ultimately the workflow was established in two-person teams paired by staff personnel and student workers bringing a mobile workstation into the stacks, marking the volumes distinctly, entering or modifying the item records in ILS, and verifying the display in the OPAC. In the life cycle of this project, accurate data, open communication, appropriate staffing, and complete flexibility were absolute crucial elements in ensuring success.

The data, which included the lists and reports generated from various sources, made up the foundation for the entire project. Vetting them one by one may appear tedious, but it was the only and best way to ensure accuracy. That means checking the sources, searching and verifying each entry, and updating with the new data into a master list. And this master list had to be backed up consistently on multiple drives.

Open communication with all partners and the stakeholders was equally vital. The FLARE materials were being processed on the open shelves and remained circulating until relocation. Internal to the UCF Libraries, Acquisitions, Cataloging, Interlibrary loan, Circulation and Reference all had to be on the same page so that patrons were aware of the latest changes and policies. And because this is a statewide project in the SharedBib environment, how UCF processes the FLARE materials impacts multiple partners. Therefore, the process has to be clear and coordinated with the partners, and only through candid communication can it be identified and located by the internal and external expertise available to ensure accurate processes.

Staff and a great group was an integral part of the project. Although the project received some extra funding, it was financially and operationally impossible to hire all new people. The group was

comprised of existing staff in the Serials Unit and newly hired student workers. The staff worked on the FLARE project in addition to their routine job duties. The Staff Supervisor for the Serials Unit who reports to the Acquisitions Librarian was appointed the Group Leader who served as the single point of contact for the operation of this project. He worked closely with the Acquisitions Librarian to determine and develop necessary training and workflow, and then, in turn, trained all other group members. He continues to oversee the daily operations of the project and is charged with quality control and weekly updates on project status. Like an airport traffic controller, his role in this project has been invaluable.

This project required a high level of flexibility. Because of the uncertainty on timeline, facility, and other factors, the project experienced changes that were both expected and unexpected. The workflow was designed to allow changes. Whenever changes took place, the FLARE Group was notified and the procedures were adapted promptly. Though most processing was completed by technical services, the FLARE project is centered on users and keenly aware of the user perspectives. Throughout the project, efforts were made to reduce confusion in the record display and provide clarity for easy delivery. The FLARE Group was also mindful of our partners throughout the state and particularly colleagues at the University of Florida. The workflow was designed to serve as a prototype for other SUL participants who may be able to save a lot of effort and time and avert some predicaments.

As of November 2013, over 96,000 volumes of bound periodicals have been barcoded and processed, among which 64,000 will be sent to FLARE. Although adding barcode and items to each bound volume was very time consuming, it brought the great benefit of inventory check, which will help for future collection management decisions. Meanwhile, about 20,000 volumes of monographs are being processed. The project completion is expected in the first quarter of 2014, at which time the goal of relocating 70,000 volumes of materials for FLARE will be reached or exceeded.