An Electronic Resources Workflow Is Worth a Thousand Words

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An Electronic Resources Workflow Is Worth a Thousand Words

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Abstract

The processes involved in managing electronic resources are complex. They are becoming even more so with the addition of streaming media, demand-driven acquisitions (DDA), evidence-based subscriptions, weeding, and unanticipated changes. Rowan University's electronic resources group recently documented its electronic resource management workflows in order to a) communicate complex processes to a diverse group of library stakeholders such as reference and instruction librarians, collection development professionals, acquisitions, and technology and systems staff; b) provide guidelines to train new employees; and c) to establish a record of current processes for future reference, evaluation, and revision of workflows. This poster session shows how one academic library has customized workflows to accommodate the needs of its users, and how sharing these workflows has positively contributed to the library.

Why Documenting Workflows Is Worth Your Time

The electronic resources team at Rowan University recently documented workflows for the e-journal, database, and e-book lifecycles, including processing of newly purchased e-books, subscribed e-books, e-book DDAs, and e-book deselection. By illustrating the steps taken to manage these resources, the team has been able to increase understanding of electronic resources among library stakeholders, train new employees, and record, evaluate, and revise their workflows to increase efficiency.

Through sharing workflows, understanding of electronic resources has increased among library administration, reference and instruction librarians, acquisitions, public services, and other technical staff. The electronic resources team hosted a meeting to discuss e-books, how they are managed, and problems librarians identified with their machine-readable cataloging (MARC) records and discoverability. This meeting was well received by many in the library, quieted many concerns, and directly led to positive change. Feedback from this meeting informed management decisions, including increasing the frequency of MARC record loads from the ProQuest Knowledgebase to the catalog to twice

per month, and changed the default e-book search platform to Summon discovery.

These workflows have also served as a training tool for new employees to understand the complex interworking of various library systems. After reviewing the workflows, one employee began testing e-books with added efficiency, identifying more problems, and even recommending solutions. In the future, supervisors will spend less time training as the workflows provide context and eliminate repetition.

Documenting workflows has also increased efficiency in the library as a whole. The decision to increase MARC record loads to twice a month reduces lag time and dead links in the catalog. The new e-book search platform removed some confusion and created continuity for students and the librarians who train them. Training new employees now takes less time, since the processes are already documented and easy to understand. Continuing to evaluate and revise the workflows is well worth the effort, as it will save valuable time, further increase efficiency, and improve the experience of patrons.

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Figure 1. An electronic resources workflow is worth a thousand words.