

## Library Space Transformed

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## Library Space Transformed

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### Abstract

Beginning in the fall of 2017, the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University undertook a project to assess our science collections due to a planned expansion of our library information technology department. Our teams evaluated 18,578 shelves of content and decided to either (1) keep an item on the shelf, (2) or move it to on-site auxiliary storage, or (3) withdraw it. They worked with fellow subject librarians and faculty around campus to communicate about the work being done and offer opportunities to review the potential withdraw material before it left the building.

Despite the need to make space for the expansion, the primary goal of the project was to strengthen our collections through meaningful assessments and data-driven decisions and not simply make enough space for the expansion. In the end, because of our focus on improved collections, we were able to accommodate the expansion and simultaneously significantly improve the collections remaining on the shelves. In the end, we withdrew 131,476 monographic records and 4,145 serial records. We moved 16,643 monographic and 3,809 serial items to on-site auxiliary storage.

### Introduction

Brigham Young University is an Association of Research Libraries member with around 30,000 full-time equivalency student enrollment. We undertook a project to assess our science collections when our library information technology (IT) department planned to expand into the current space. This involved reviewing materials on 2,654 single-facing units (7 shelves per unit amounting to 18,578 shelves). The primary focus was on strengthening collections for our patrons with a secondary goal of making enough room for the IT expansion.

### Data Analysis Tools

Assessing such a large collection required multiple data analysis tools. Our starting point for data analysis was GreenGlass. However, GreenGlass alone could not meet all the needs for a project of this scope. Shortcomings of using a single tool include bad data (due to problematic cataloging and not necessarily GreenGlass itself) and GreenGlass's intentional exclusion of serials data. We also used custom reports from our integrated library system (ILS), BlueCloud Analytics (a separate tool from our ILS vendor), Excel, and R. We also created a geo-encoded map (<https://hbll.link/scimove> or [\[byu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e62a4cafbf224e148920e7c7d31e9fc7\]\(https://byu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e62a4cafbf224e148920e7c7d31e9fc7\)\) and a Google Doc to track the progress of the project.](https://</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

### Personnel Involved

Before we started the project, we created a task force to identify all of the people involved, outline the processes, and assign resources that would be required to complete the project. The task force identified representatives from collection development, science librarians, library IT, cataloging, book repair/conservation, serials staff, auxiliary storage staff, stacks management, physical facilities management, and library administration. We also worked closely with our accounting controller to ensure we had all the resources required to complete the project in the allotted timeframe (personnel, equipment, space, etc.).

Without this task force the project would have taken far longer and created many more problems with existing workflows. Additionally, this task force was charged with, and is in the process of, writing a report to estimate the time and money spent so that library administration will have a better idea of how much a project such as this truly costs.

## Criteria Used to Analyze and Evaluate Collections

The criteria used to analyze and evaluate collections was decided by individual subject librarians and was thus widely variable. Some librarians weighted usage heavily while others did not. Overlap with other institutions was an important factor in deciding whether or not to discard something. Age of material, duplication of material in our own collections, and the historical and monetary values were also considered. Representation of the subject in existing electronic resources was another serious consideration.

## Communicating with Campus

In a previous journal evaluation project, we learned some interesting things about the communication preferences of our campus science faculty. They did not want all the data we used to make our decisions. They wanted to take a quick look at the decisions we made and trusted that our subject librarians were making those decisions based on sound judgments and data.

Therefore, for this project we did not use data to communicate with stakeholders. Our IT staff created a virtual review shelf (only available internally) that allowed stakeholders to review materials marked for potential withdraw and, if desired, make a recommendation that the materials stay in the collection.

The review shelf looks exactly like our library's search interface (<https://lib.byu.edu>) but adds an option to mark items for reconsideration when they have been marked for potential withdraw. It records who has made the recommendation and opens the door for the subject librarian to discuss the decision with individual faculty members. It is anticipated that this process will be complete in early 2019.

## What We Learned

Many subject librarians were surprised by how interdisciplinary the collection was, and discovered holes

in the collection, cataloging errors (especially with serials), books on the shelf but not in the catalog, and inconsistent usage information. They were also surprised by the large impact of poorly cataloged materials on usage of the material. In hindsight, this should not have come as a surprise, but a thorough assessment such as this one brought many issues to light that have since improved the discoverability of our remaining collection.

## New Space

In the end, we withdrew 131,476 monographic records and 4,145 serial records. We moved 16,643 monographic and 3,809 serial items to on-site auxiliary storage. With this freed space, we will create more office space for IT, new offices for some of the science librarians, and new study spaces that better utilize natural light for students.

## What We Would Do Differently

Overall, the process went as smoothly as it probably could have. The assessment planning task force was critical in making this successful. We did find that even with the preplanning, the process was not linear and we had to be flexible and adapt our plan as we moved through the project. Knowing upfront that the process is going to be iterative is crucial. Communication is one area in which we could always do better. Improving some of the communication we had, both internally and externally, could have alleviated some unnecessary stress by teaching faculty and librarians not directly involved in the process about what was happening.

## Conclusion

Assessing collections is something that should be done on a regular basis to ensure a healthy, thriving collection. By assessing our science collection, we learned a lot about how we should approach assessments in the future and how much we will need to budget to make it a successful project.