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Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services -- Case Study Eight: The Search Committee -- So Many Resumes, How do I do My Part?

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The Internet has driven publishers to replace the instructor's manual by a variety of online resources, the scope of which has broadened relentlessly. It is now common to see:

- Websites to support the instructor: not only "tips for tired teachers", but also animations, images, podcasts and **Pow-erPoint** presentations.
- Interactive features such as visualisation tools, online homework, self-assessment and testing, and video-conferencing.
- Links to third party resources to provide seamless access to a wide range of supporting information, such as the links **Cengage Learning** has built from its textbook sites to the **Gale** databases.
- Custom publishing to enable an instructor to "slice and dice" available textbook content to create a textbook dedicated to the instructor's course, e.g. **McGraw-Hill's PRIMIS** service.
- Links with learning management tools and **Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs)**. Many publishers have agreements with **Blackboard** to provide e-textbook components via the **Blackboard** platform.
- The larger publishers have invested heavily in assessment and testing products to support teaching by providing the tools to measure learning achievement. **Pearson's** investment in such products includes its acquisition of **National Computer Services** and **National Evaluation Systems** in the USA, and **Edexcel**, the UK's largest examining body.

The use of non-print media to support learning is not new. An early pioneer in multi-media instruction is **The Open University (OU)**. It is the UK's only university dedicated to distance learning, with 150,000 undergraduate and 30,000 postgraduate students, of which 25,000 students live outside the UK. Thirty five years ago **OU** teaching material comprised textbooks and printed course material, radio and television. Today, the **OU** has largely replaced its textbooks, printed course material, radio and television with a Web-based platform that delivers all the services students working on their own really need. The **OU Library** provides 2.5 million page views a year, and 110,000 students use its conferencing system.

The direction this is going is clear. Instructor support is being extended by the provision of workflow tools that integrate all of these features into a single environment. **Wiley** has done precisely this by launching **WileyPLUS**.

It is not just a one-way street. Publishers are not the only, or even the most important innovators. The use of learning management tools such as **Blackboard** or **VLEs** is familiar. Much of this development has originated within universities and colleges, or commercial training or software companies such as **eCol-**

lege (now part of **Pearson**), **emantras Inc.**, and **Angel Learning**.

Web 2.0 is also making itself felt. **Web 2.0** technologies can help develop resources collaboratively authored by the instructor and students. **MySpace** and "**e-portfolio**" systems are emerging: **Allegheny College** in Pennsylvania is using a **MySpace** page to create a sense of community among students and to provide a repository for fixed information such as student records and information entered by the student, such as comments on classes, learning experiences etc... (For a really interesting description of such innovation in UK universities, see *Information World Review* May 2007: www.iwr.co.uk/2189465). **BioMed Central (BMC)** has launched a **YouTube** channel (www.youtube.com/BioMedCentral) on which research authors are encouraged to upload video discussing their work. It clearly believes that it can use social networking sites to enhance research as well as teaching.

Dancing around the margins of the textbook market are sites that offer free textbooks online. At present, they are relatively small, but their development represents a potential threat to the major textbook publishers. The idea that educational information should be free is a powerful one. These sites tend to be of two types: sites that host books and provide free downloads, and sites that provide authors with the facility to upload their own works for free online distribution. But they need financial support to pay their way. One of the business models being explored is one based on advertising and sponsorship. This, of course, is not grounded in reality; it

ignores the fact that advertisers do not want to pay to advertise to small audiences that have little money, such as students. Moreover, the long-term sustainability of volunteer-operated or advertising-supported business models is open to question. The quality of such content is compromised by a lack of the review and quality control processes that publishers routinely operate. In many cases it is little more than vanity publishing.

So what has this to do with libraries? Libraries are being brought into teaching by the side door. They provide, free at the point of use, a range of information for undergraduate use: eBooks, e-journals and aggregated databases. They are already involved in the implementation of learning management systems and **VLEs**. While in the USA course packs have often been handled by local college bookstores, in other countries like the UK, the library has cleared the rights and made printed course packs available to students. It is but a small step to expect libraries to supply textbook content. Students that are expected to pay large sums of money in tuition fees believe that they are entitled to the provision of all content for their courses. They increasingly behave like consumers.

In the past few years, many librarians have worried about the future of the library in an online environment. But libraries are at the fulcrum of information provision in the institution. It is a transformational role. Librarians are at the center of undergraduate teaching and learning. All it needs is for the case to be made to the institution, and the budgets to make it possible. 🌸

Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services

Case Study Eight: The Search Committee — So Many Resumes, How do I do My Part?

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Steve and **Heather** were chatting in the elevator on their way to a committee meeting. They discovered that they were both concerned. **Steve**, as a collection development librarian in his second year of work, had never served on a search committee before. He really didn't know what to do, or what was expected of someone on a search committee. **Heather** had a different problem. It had been years since she had been asked to serve on a search committee, and she knew that things had changed in the intervening years, and that she had a lot to catch up on. This was a search that was important to both of them — the person hired would be their new supervisor — and they wanted to be sure they knew what their responsibilities were and that they helped the library pick the

right person. They also wanted to figure out some organized way to sort through all of the applications that filled the full file folder in the human resources office. What to do?

The Experts Speak:

First, it is good to remember that often the institutions libraries are a part of have specific policies on how to run searches for open positions, as well, library organizations have their own policies or guidelines on how searches for especially open professional positions ought to proceed.

Steve and **Heather** will want to familiarize themselves with the various guidelines or policies as they apply to their own institution.

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However, there are some standard guidelines that they can keep in mind as they start their work on the search committee. The most important thing to remember is that as members of a search committee their job is not to select the person that gets hired. They have a few specific roles, and though few, they are important and valuable to the hiring process.

Finding the Best Candidates

First, you must keep in mind that you are there to find the best candidates from the pool of applicants who fit the job advertised as described in the job ad and the job description itself. It helps also to keep the vision, mission and goals of your organization in mind as well when looking for the best candidates.

A very efficient way to cull through the file of candidates is to make a table or chart that includes all of the various pieces of the job description. Be sure to include the required attributes for the position as well as the preferred attributes. As well, any narrative from the ad or job description that describes what the person will do, or ought to know how to do, or any appropriate text that describes the person in the job will need to be included. This table can then be used to enter information from each of the candidates files. Having one place to quickly and easily find information about candidates is far easier than shuffling through a big pile of resumes and cover letters. As well, armed with such a table it is easy to refer to the qualities of each candidate when the committee meets.

Reviewing the Candidate Resumes and Cover Letters

When you first look through the file it helps to go quickly through the candidate packets and rule out any candidates who do not meet the minimum requirements, such as education requirements, length of work in a specific type of field, experience and skill requirements.

Once you have eliminated the candidates who don't meet the stated requirements, you can go through the remaining resumes and cover letters with a closer eye to detail, and make tic marks or notes in your table for each candidate noting any attributes that match, and especially those that match well. It is important to look at both the resume and the cover letter as each will have different information, and reading both will provide a fuller picture of each candidate.

Depending on the number of applicants, the lengths of the resumes and cover letters and the number of attributes in the table or chart, this process can, and may need to take place over multiple sessions. Taking breaks can be important so that information does not get blurry from the reading of one applicant's documents to the next.

Once you have completed your initial run through. It is good to let it rest for a day or more, and then if you have time, to quickly review each of the candidate packets once again to make sure you didn't miss anything.

Some organizations require that this review of documentation take place in the human resources office, or in a secure room. Other organizations will allow search committee members to check out the folder and take it home overnight. As well, all of the notes and documentation you create may need to be given to the human resources office at the completion of the search for legal reasons, or you may be asked to shred your notes. Make sure you have a good understanding of what is required at your library.

The Committee Work

You will then most likely meet as a committee to discuss the short list that each committee member has come up with so as to create either a list of candidates to bring to campus, or at least a short list of candidates who may need further examination.

Once the committee has narrowed down the pool to a shorter list, they may need to further winnow the pool by taking part in phone or sometimes airport interviews. Or even, at this point the group will decide to contact references to gain more insight into possible candidates.

Other institutions don't contact references until after candidates have already interviewed, often to see if there is additional information that references can share. These contacts can be done through email, phone calls by one or multiple people, or by formal letter. Often it is a designated person from human resources or the search committee chair who handles the contacting of references.

Once the candidates who will be interviewed have been identified by the committee, the committee has a couple of tasks that will need to take place before these interviews are scheduled. This part of the work focuses on two major activities: deciding who the candidates will need to meet with during their visit to campus, and what questions will the search committee ask during their time with the candidates. It is important in both of these activities that each candidate meets with the same people and groups and the questions that the search committee asks of each candidate are the same. To prepare, it helps if you create a little form for yourself to jot down the answers each candidate gives to the same questions so that they can be easily compared at the end of the search.

Once the schedule has been planned, and human resources has set up the interviews, the committee members will also need to make sure they themselves are available during

the interview days to manage the interviews process: to greet and meet the candidates, to escort the candidates from meeting to meeting, to make sure the candidates have water or other refreshment if they need it, to be a timekeeper during group meetings, and make sure that time for bathroom breaks are honored and offered throughout the day or days. It is important that search committee members are gracious and act like hosts or hostesses throughout the interview period. The candidates need to be welcomed, feel supported and have their needs met during the entire time they are interviewing. Committee members are representing the library and need to make sure they do a very professional job. It helps to consider yourself an ambassador of the library and the larger institution. Thinking of yourself as such will help the candidates' day go smoothly.

After the interviews have taken place, **Steve** and **Heather** will need to prepare for the meetings where the committee will work on how to present the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate for a document that will be given to the library administration, or often, just the library director. To make sure this meeting goes smoothly, it helps for each committee member

to not only review their own notes and files ahead of time, but also to review and perhaps tally or organize any comments the committee receives from the members of the

library or organizational staff who met with the candidates. Some libraries have formal feedback forms, while others solicit feedback in any form staff choose to send it in. It can often help to create your own strengths and weaknesses list for each candidate as you prepare for this meeting. This can make it easier to contribute to the discussion, and as well can help the committee chair create the final document.

Finally, it is important throughout the entire process to remember that everything that happens during the search and in your work as a committee member is considered confidential. You may not share information with anyone outside of the search committee and the library human resources staff as appropriate.

You will most likely get to know your fellow search committee members quite well, and will gain experience that can be valuable to you when you apply for a new position. You will have learned tips on how to write your cover letter, how to format and what to include in your resume, and you will likely gain lots of ideas on good behaviors of candidates during an interview.

Just remember — keeping organized about how you gather information about each candidate can help you and the committee save time, and ultimately, the final decision is not yours or the committee's, so you can just sit back and do the work of managing the interviewing process without worrying too much about the final decision. 🍄

"It helps to consider yourself an ambassador of the library and the larger institution."