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Library Profile: Arlington County Department of Public Libraries, Arlington, VA

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Library Profile — Arlington County Department of Libraries — Arlington, Va.

by **Barbara C. Dean** (Arlington County Public Library) <bdean@leo.vsla.edu>

The County

Arlington County is a 26-square-mile area directly across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. Arlington National Cemetery, the Pentagon, and Crystal City are all in Arlington County. It was originally part of a ten-mile square surveyed in 1791 for the capital, but the U.S. Congress returned the portion of the west bank of the Potomac to the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1846. The area was known as Alexandria City and Alexandria County until 1920 when the county portion was renamed Arlington County. It has no incorporated towns or cities, but is fully developed with a combination of commercial and residential buildings.

The county is an area in transition. It is home to the multi-story modern buildings of Crystal City as well as to storefront businesses typical of a small town. The population of 187,000 people is highly educated as well as increasingly diverse. In 1997, 24 percent of those 25 year olds or older held a graduate or professional degree. One in five residents is foreign-born, and one in four speak a language other than English at home.

The Library

The Department of Libraries has one main library and seven branches of varying sizes. Together the branches hold 671,000 volumes. Total circulation is about 2 million volumes a year. Over Memorial Day weekend 1997, we transferred from NOTIS to CARL for the public catalog, circulation,

and cataloging. CARL acquisitions came up on July 1, 1997. We plan to bring up the serials module this spring.

The library has enjoyed modest materials budget increases during this decade, up 28 percent between 1990 and 1997. The library had to cut periodical subscriptions for the first time this year; it was done to increase funding of electronic products. This spring a team of selectors will examine the serials collection in order

to cut more titles. The portion allocated to books has decreased slightly over the years to pay for serials, electronic products and audiovisual materials, although books continue to command a far greater percentage of the entire budget than all other formats combined. It is possible that by the end of FY'98 we will have to reduce staff in order to accommodate budget cuts mandated by the county government. The Materials Management Division (aka technical services) may lose 18 out of 78 hours of temporary staff and one FTE out of 17.5 FTE. We plan to accomplish this by attrition or reassignment.

Materials Management Division (MMD)

Because MMD reorganized on July 1,

1997, one can't describe the acquisitions unit without discussing MMD as a whole. The obvious reason for reorganizing was to make our processes fit the parameters set by the CARL software rather than NOTIS, but we also wanted the process to be more efficient which meant not only redefining responsibilities, and shifting staff around, but also changing some parts of the work culture.

The tenets we used to guide the redesign follow: complete as much of the process as early as possible in the workflow; avoid duplication of efforts, and too many handoffs, i.e., one person doing a small task on an item then giving it to someone else to perform a small task and then returning it to the first person to do a little more work on it; design work around the norm rather than the exception; cross train people so they can be shifted to where the most work is at any given time; take full advantage of CARL; and create job satisfaction.

Sue Epstein, our consultant, proposed our new structure and continues to advise us as we implement changes. Acquisitions, receiving, cataloging, and processing are now merged in one large group called Bibliographic Services. For now, the functions remain distinct under the Bibliographic Services umbrella, but I expect the lines to become quite fuzzy when acquisitions staff

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sions, 50 discussion groups and numerous scheduled vendor demonstrations.

Programs were organized in nine tracks representing different interests: living in an electronic society, understanding the evolving institution, organizing for information service, focusing on student-centered learning, delivering content in context, foraging for economic solutions, developing strategies for change, hot topics and updates.

Pre-conferences focused on distance education and library services, publishing on the Web, managing multimedia, copyright in network environments, emerging projection technologies and developing I/T competency, to name a few. A post conference held at the University was devoted to change and the organization and change and technology.

Eli Loam, professor of Finance and Economics at **Columbia University Graduate School of Business** and author of *Electronics and the Dim Future of the University* delivered the first keynote pointing to the relationship between higher education and the book and anticipating the impact of distance education, given the new technologies. Sherry Turkle, professor of Sociology and author of *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* stated that we make our technology

and it makes us. Her conclusion is that the new technology supports collaboration, community and consensus. John Grateful Dead and Perry Barlow, lyricist for the

commentator on intellectual privatization of society and is a proponent of "net religion," feeling that everything should be available on the Web.

The 115 exhibitors offered software and hardware for instructional technologists, library directors, chief information officers and heads of academic computing. Although Microsoft was missing, there were multiple presentations on network solutions, the new DVD (digital versatile disk) format, multimedia software. Twenty percent of exhibitors were content providers including: H.W.Wilson, OCLC, Prentice Hall.

In 1998 EDUCOM's annual conference will be held in Orlando, Florida, hosted by the **University of Central Florida**.

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and copy catalogers have been fully cross-trained and are able to perform each others' tasks. For now, requests go from collection development to acquisitions where matching MARC records are searched for and then used as the order record. When materials are received, they go to physical processing A for a barcode, and ownership stamps in an effort to do as much as possible as early as possible. Then they go to cataloging and on to Processing B for a jacket, a security strip, and anything else they need.

The merging of acquisitions and cataloging into one large group changes responsibilities for the heads of the two units. As the head of acquisitions, I am the immediate supervisor of those people whose primary responsibility is acquisitions. I am the process manager for all those receiving materials, and the copy catalogers when they are doing acquisitions. The head of cataloging is the immediate supervisor of catalogers, the receiving/processing group, and the process manager of acquisitions staff when they are doing copy cataloging. As process managers, we are responsible for identifying workflow priorities and bottlenecks so staff can be shifted as needed. We also cross-train staff.

How this dual function of supervisor and

process manager works will become clearer as more people are cross-trained. It does mean the heads of acquisitions and cataloging need to work cooperatively and closely. It also means our acquisitions meetings will grow from 5 to 11 people in attendance with some of those being part-time.

Because the order staff and copy catalogers will be able to do each other's work, I will be able to easily pull some extra people into acquisitions when our workload is particularly heavy and then lend my staff to copy cataloging when our workload is lighter. I'm speculating that, in the future, some minimal copy cataloging may be done when the MARC record is identified as part of the order process. We are one of the first CARL sites to use the Integrated Technical Services Workstation (ITS), searching software created by the **Library Corporation** and adapted by **CARL**. The head of cataloging tells me that editing records in ITS is easier than in PAC. Doing some copy cataloging in ITS would fit our goal of doing as much as possible as early as possible in the workflow, as well as speed up the process.

In order to fulfill the redesign tenet of exploiting technology, we are in the process of learning about and using as many of CARL's bells and whistles as possible. ITS allows us to do our pre-order searching for MARC records in our own PAC, Library of Congress, and will let us search other CARL

databases in the future. When we can't find a MARC record in any of these databases, we'll go to **OCLC**. We have also started using the CARL link with certain vendors making it possible for CARL to electronically transfer orders from our database to the vendor overnight. I receive the confirmation report in email the next morning.

As stated earlier, we also want to change the work culture. In particular, we are trying to discourage people from figuring out how to do something on their own which they may or may not share with their peers or supervisor, and which may or may not make sense when looked at from a broader perspective. I am guardedly optimistic about the possibility of our success in this area only because one of my staff who is proficient at figuring things out on his own said in a meeting that people should ask their supervisor if they are unsure as to how to proceed.

We are still refining our redesign eight months into the process. So far we have discovered we can't do as much as early in the workflow as we originally thought, and some exceptions refuse to be integrated into the mainstream. As I look back on the last months, I also see the building we have done so far toward making our redesign fully operational. It is a satisfying sight. 🌱

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