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Collaboration and Reallocation: Implementing a New Collection Development Model

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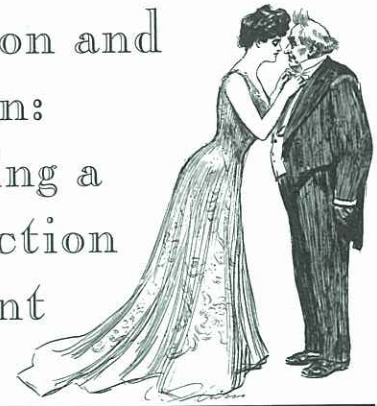

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Abstract

The distribution of library resource funds to academic departments/disciplines at many college and university libraries is often times based on historical tradition with little rationale behind it. The escalating cost of serials in certain disciplines exacerbates the challenge of fairly allocating monies. At Furman University, we are planning to implement a new model for collection development to improve the quality of the collection and to ensure fairness in the allocation of resources. The new model includes increased collaboration with librarians in selecting resources and the implementation of an allocation formula.

Over ten years ago in an article titled "Allocating the Academic Library's Book Budget: Historical Perspectives and Current Reflections," author Richard Werking said " a review of the literature indicates that allocation is virtually the only collection development budgetary issue about which there has been significant controversy."[1] While over the past ten years other collection development budgetary issues have emerged, the allocation of funds for collections have continued to be a topic of discussion and on some campuses, dissension.

Background on Allocation Formulas

Allocations have taken on different forms in different libraries. In some libraries, such as Furman, funds are distributed to academic departments. In others, funds are distributed to subject areas or are allocated to broad academic divisions -- Arts, Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences. Typically, the library receives a portion to support general, and reference purchases. However, there are a few libraries which have forgone allocations because they are either in the fortunate position of purchasing everything that their faculty wants or the collection budget is spent unsystematically until the money is gone.

The basic premise of using an allocation formula is that objectivity and equity may be achieved by the quantification of a variety of numerical data. As in any system there are benefits and drawbacks. The benefits of the formula approach are: 1) an array of variables is considered, 2) it is more objective and equitable, 3) it minimizes favoritism and politics, and 4) it can incorporate and reflect changing trends in the parent institution and the external environment. The drawbacks of an allocation formula are: 1) it is time consuming to implement, and 2) some areas of study cannot be quantified (programs, concentrations, etc).

The use of allocation formulas has decreased over the past 50 years. In the 1940s, 73% of US college libraries were using formulas.[2] In the 1970s, 68% of southeastern academic libraries were employing them.[3] In the late 1980s, 41% of academic libraries were making use of them.[4] A survey conducted in 1994-95 of small college and university libraries indicated that 40% of the respondents used some kind of allocation formula.[5]

The literature indicates that allocations can be made in a number

continued on page 41

Collaboration and Reallocation:
from page 40

of ways. One popular method is the historical method. When used, past allocations will be reflected in the present, i.e., the level of support that a department received last year will be the driving factor to determine what they will receive this year. Another option is the percentage based allocation. This method is employed when the percentage of the library's material budget allocated to each discipline is equal to the percentage of the parent institution's instruction and departmental research funding.

In their 1989 article based on a survey mailed to over 800 academic libraries, Budd and Adams identified six most frequent variables found in their survey sample. They included number of credit hours, cost of materials, number of faculty, circulation by department or subject area, number of courses offered by a department, and number of students majoring in a subject. They noted that the components of a formula depend greatly on the type of institution which a library serves, the curriculum of the institution, the basic collection of the library, and the makeup of the student body.[6]

A Short History of Materials Allocations at the Furman University Libraries

Furman University is a nationally recognized liberal arts college located in Greenville, SC. It has an FTE enrollment of 2800 and an FTE faculty of 200. In addition to bachelor's degrees, it offers masters degree programs in Education and Chemistry.

In Fall of 1996, one of the first fiduciary responsibilities of the new director of the James B. Duke Library, was to present the materials budget and departmental allocations to the Library Committee for their approval. Since there was very little time to analyze and evaluate the allocations, she decided to present a budget reflecting the status quo.

The following Fall, after completing her first year and after going through various Library Committee and budget files, the director realized that for the past ten years, a combination of factors had determined departmental allocation increases. These included requests for increased funding from specific departments, the development of special programs and most significantly, the increase in the cost of supporting current journal subscriptions.

Years ago, an allocation formula had been used to apportion funds to academic departments. However, the formula was dropped when employing it would have meant that certain "journal intensive" departments would experience significant cuts. So, for many years, allocations made to academic departments have sustained journal subscriptions to the detriment of the book budget and the library's general fund. Adding to the pressure has been the increased cost of and demand for electronic resources.

In 1959, when the budget was $10,000, books comprised 67% of the budget and periodicals 33%. During the past six years, our journal and electronic resources expenditures have gone from comprising 65% of the materials budget in 1996 to 80% in 1999. In addition to these ever-increasing budgetary stresses, the collection development process at Furman has not been systematic or equitable.

As a result, in addition to our plans to implement an allocation formula, we have also proposed to change the present traditional model of faculty-driven collection development to one that reflects more collaboration between teaching faculty and librarians.

Inadequacies of the Existing Budget Structure

In discussing the issues that must be dealt with in the budget reallocation process, it became clear that each issue had a dual natureóon the one hand it could be described mathematically, but on the other it had to be viewed through the lens of inter-departmental politics. These political factors included the differing interests of departments that were historically prominent at the university but on the decline, and those that were new but rapidly growing; between large and small departments; and especially between the Humanities and Natural Sciences. Each problem had two facets to

continued on page 42

it, one mathematical and the other political, so finding an appropriate solution to each problem would require recognizing and addressing both aspects.

One example of this duality inherent in each problem can be found in the way that the library budget had been adjusted during the 1990's; i.e., inflationary increases were provided for all journals, so that subscriptions were maintained regardless of cost, but no allowance was made for the slower but just as real increase in the cost of monographs. This arrangement offered no reason or incentive for faculty members to review or cut journals subscriptions whatever the increase in cost. The effect was that journal price inflation stifled the growth of other resources. Book purchases declined steadily without inflationary increases for monographs and the science departments' share of the budget increased disproportionately relative to humanities and fine arts. By 1999, the budget for the natural sciences increased to 55% of the allocated budget, or 42% of the library budget overall. The political result of this trend was a sense of inequity and grievance among the arts and humanities faculty, since they were able to purchase fewer and fewer books every year. This growing inequity was not recognized by the science faculty, who pointed out that they were simply maintaining existing subscriptions, hence not "adding" to the collection at all.

Another example of the interplay of math and politics in the budget process was that the share of budget over which the library had oversight was only 22%, while 78% of the budget was allocated to the academic departments, who had complete discretion over spending within their allocation. This had profoundly negative implications for collection development. While most faculty certainly meant well in their selection of resources, their choices were made without a thorough knowledge of the collection, leading to uneven subject coverage. Selections were sometimes tailored to faculty research interests rather than student or curricular needs. Politically, however, discretion over the library budget seemed to the faculty like a question of academic autonomy, even academic freedom. It seemed self evident to some faculty members that as subject experts they were the only ones capable of selecting resources for their students to use.

The problems with the existing library budget structure at Furman were quite obvious, and the direction of the changes that should be made in the structure were clear. From the library's point of view, the overarching goal of the new budget structure was a collection development system that would better meet student needs. Two primary objectives to help achieve this goal were identified. One was a more systematic approach to collection development, with improved selection mechanisms. This would require either an increased amount of the budget under library oversight, an increased level of collaboration between faculty members and librarians in making selections, or both. The other was the implementation of an allocation formula for the departmental discretionary budgets to establish greater equity between departments and to reflect changes in the departments and the curriculum over time.

Working with the Faculty Library Committee

Identifying these goals, however, was just the beginning, because the library could not implement these changes unilaterally. As at many institutions, the faculty library committee has authority over allocation of the library materials budget, and thus any change had to be approved by this committee. The library committee consists of six faculty members, two student representatives, the dean, and the director of the library. While this is generally a supportive body of individuals who are self-selected for their interest in library issues, only one of the ten members actually thinks like a librarian. It would thus be necessary to explain the issues to the committee in a context and in a language that they would understand, lay out different mathematical options for them to discuss, and ultimately to broker some kind of agreement that would be accepted by all parties. The associate director, a former collection development librarian, was invited to attend meetings. He played a critical role in gathering and analyzing data as well as providing mathematical explanations. This allowed the director to concentrate on the political issues inherent in major changes in policy, procedure and funding. This bilateral approach was exceptionally effective.

As the Library Committee began deliberating on the issues involved in a reallocation, agreement was quickly reached on certain general philosophical principles. These served as the foundation for later discussions:

— An adequate core collection must be provided for each major program regardless of size

— Larger departments should get more than smaller departments

— Departments which use the library more should get more

— Disciplines whose materials are more expensive should be fairly compensated for the difference

The Library Committee deliberated on the problems with the old structure, the issues involved, and the shape that the solutions should take for 18 months, meeting approximately once a month. The reforms that the Committee ultimately agreed upon reflect these four principles of agreement.

Core Collection Development

In order to provide improved support for the undergraduate core collection, it was proposed that the library materials budget be restructured with 20% allocated to general resources, 30% to core collection development, and 50% to the academic departments for discretionary spending. The "general" line would correspond closely to the funds traditionally under library oversight, but a significant portion of the budget previously controlled by the faculty would now be managed in collaboration with the library in order to meet curricular needs. The key was convincing faculty of the desirability of giving up unilateral control of these funds. This was initially counterintuitive to several of the faculty members on the Committee since it seemed self-evident that he or she was in the best position to select materials for their students. This issue tapped into a sense of academic independence and even academic freedom. Other members of the Committee (including the library director) used logical arguments about the need for a strategic approach to building a collection, balancing the collection rather than just acquiring materials meeting narrow research interests, and making comparisons with peer institutions and the way their budgets were structured.

Quantifying Size of Departments

The Committee reached a consensus that beyond a guaranteed core collection for each department, the budget should be largely allocated on the basis of the size of the departments. The question was exactly which of numerous possible criteria should be used to quantify the size of a department. Three indicators were selectedócredit hours generated, number of graduating majors (as opposed to declared majors), and number of FTE faculty. These three represented a rough political balance. Credit hours generated would be of most benefit to the Humanities, who teach the largest number of general education courses, constituting large numbers of students without a concentration of majors. Number of graduating majors would tend to benefit the Social Sciences, who teach relatively fewer general education courses but have large numbers of majors. FTE faculty, on the other hand, would benefit those departments which, for various reasons, have particularly low numbers of students and courses per faculty member. The best example of this is the Music department, whose faculty spend a great deal of time working with individual students or small ensembles.

Quantifying Library Use

An even more contentious issue was how to count "library use." There was a general consensus that departments whose students and faculty used the library more should get a larger share of resources, but the criteria to define library use were both complex and elusive. Suggested criteria included

continued on page 43

Collaboration and Reallocation:
from page 42

circulation in the discipline's subject area, journal use, participation in bibliographic instruction programs, participation in the University's undergraduate research program, and faculty research productivity. While none of these is easy to neatly quantify, some are clearly impossible. In particular, faculty research productivity, which most committee members felt should be an important factor, is extremely difficult to assess both quantitatively and qualitatively. After some circular and rather frustrating discussions, the director laid out the futility of trying to assess this criterion in a way that would be equitable to all disciplines. She asked questions such as: How would publication of a book count relative to publication of an article or the publication of a book review vs. presentation at a conference? Would an article in a refereed journal count more than an article in a non-refereed journal? What if a play was performed rather than published? After consideration, the faculty research productivity criterion was withdrawn from the table by consensus. The idea of counting participation in bibliographic instruction, a notion dear to the librarians and advocated by the director, failed to gain support on the committee, particularly among the representatives from the Natural Sciences, in which classes tend to participate in library instruction less frequently.

The issue of counting journal use in the formula was the subject of very extensive discussion. There was a general agreement that counting journal use in the formula would be desirable. It was also agreed that if circulation of the book collection, which primarily reflects library use in the Humanities, was used as a factor, journal use statistics should be counted as well, in order to reflect library use in the Natural Sciences. The difficulties in getting accurate counts of journal use are well-known. The librarians felt that the method used at Furman for assessing journal useóreshelving statistics for both paper and micro formats, equated to a sampling method and was a reasonable way to assess the relative use of different journals. Translating this into an absolute figure, however, would be impossible to do accurately. This problem was compounded by the fact that the physical differences between the main library and the branch libraries in the music and science buildings would certainly cause very different patterns of use and patron behavior in reshelving journals. Moreover, this count would not reflect the growing use of full-text online journals. In the end, the compromise reached was to use another indicator of library useóparticipation in the undergraduate research programóas a sort of surrogate for journal use. Students in the Natural Sciences constitute a majority of participation in the university's formal undergraduate research program, and it was agreed that while there was no hard evidence, intuition suggested that participation in this program would correlate strongly with student use of research journals.

Weighting the Elements

The next issue dealt with was how these factors would be weighted in the formula. The chair of the Library Committee, an economist, began by asking each member of the committee to suggest how he or she thought the factors should be weighted. While it was obvious that most members of the committee were "gaming" the process (i.e., giving inordinate weight to the factors that would most benefit their departments), the average of all suggested values came close to 40% weight for credit hours generated, 30% for graduating majors, 10% for FTE faculty, 10% for circulation, and 10% for undergraduate research ñ- an outcome that seemed fairly reasonable to all parties.

Cost of Materials

The next issue to grapple with was how to allow for differences in the cost of materials. This was, of course, an especially important issue to the Natural Sciences. The first issue was whether cost would be incorporated into the formula as a weighted figure, or if it be used as a multiplicative factor after the formula was calculated. If it was used as a weighted figure, such as 20%, then even large differences in cost would in practice be swamped by other criteria.

continued on page 44

Papa Lyman Remembers

by **Lyman Newlin** (Book Trade Counsellor, Broadwater Books) <broadwater@wnyip.net>

Just as I was sitting down to scribble a few lines for Papa Lyman Remembers, I turned to p 76 of the just arrived ***ATG*** for September to see what my long time friend and one time colleague, **Bob Schatz**, was saying in his "Sotto Voce" column. But this time the column should have been headed "Forte Voce," if that term can convey the shock and disappointment which overcame me. I'm sure this reaction was common to many readers. Perhaps I should have taken a hint - but Bob has had a row much tougher to hoe than mine. His endeavor to express his thoughts involves baring the soul much more than my effort to recall places, people, past perspectives. All I need to perform is a set of Rollodex cards or search my RAM or a fairly unaddled mind. So I must say with voce fortissimo that I will miss your thoughts, Robert.

Now to the business of recalling the past. No one has ever clearly told me the exact date of the first **Charleston Conference**. We celebrated with considerable fanfare the Fifteenth Anniversary of the C.C. at the 1995 colloquium so let's assume the year was 1980 - add twenty and see what we get - this year's session! I recall that in 1995 there was considerable palaver amongst several veteran attendees (including **K.S.**, the late **Judy Webster**, and **Don Jaeger** who reported 40 attendees including 12 speakers at that number one but Don wasn't sure if the year was 1980 or 1981). **Katina** in a brief question for the "Special Birthday Publication" settled the year as being 1980 "with an attendance of 24 plus speakers and panelists..." As publisher of that special "magazine," I promised a Festchrift for C.C. XXV but I made no mention of XX. I must have had some sort of premonition that the universal celebration of a new century would have us all wrapped up so I will restate my promise for XXV. Plan for a whopper in November 2005.

Now to resort to my tools for remembering. Earlier I mentioned Rollodex cards: I have been using them or their 3" x 5" ancestors for over half a century - once made, by typewriter or hand, a card is never thrown away - I easily have a couple thousand of them. And I have saved most of the 15 or so attendance records of the Charleston Conferences I have attended - and if I don't have a booklet I've got tapes. Following is a brief sally among these tools. As prompters I'm referring to back issues of ***ATG***. My collection begins with Vol I No 2, June 1989 (I don't know what happened to Vol. 1, No 1. Is it so rare that it will wind up at Sotheby's?) Gleanings from back issues follow:

Vol. 1, No 2, June 1989: First book jackets in America were made in Charleston in 1890 by **Isaac Hammon**, proprietor of a bookstore on Broad St., and discovered by a **Harper Bros.** sales rep. Presumably it follows that Harper was first publisher to use dustjackets...**Fred Lynden** *Brown* reports the "Oklahoma Conference (double feature includes Charleston Conference 1988 Rabbit)." Sorry I have not had time to call Fred

continued on page 45

Collaboration and Reallocation:
from page 43

The representatives from the Natural Sciences vehemently stressed that it should be used as a multiplier to "normalize" for cost of materials, and the rest of the committee agreed. Another issue was whether to base the cost of materials figures on standard figures (such as those from Library Journal or the Bowker Book Annual), or on what was actually purchased at Furman. While a case could be certainly be made for the latter, the mathematical effect would be to reward those departments that ordered a small number of very expensive journals, which would not be a desirable outcome. It was thus decided to use standard sources for the relative expense of books and journals to develop a cost index that would be used as a multiplier to reflect differences in cost.

Small is Beautiful

At this point in the process it became possible to do a trial run of the formula to determine its actual impact on budgets. The result was a set of figures that seemed generally acceptable to members of the committee, although it did diminish expenditures for the Natural Sciences considerably. The greatest objection was that smaller departments ended up with extremely small budgets relative to larger departments to such a degree that it violated the committee members' sense of fairness. A number of mathematical devices were therefore suggested that might serve as a counterweight to better balance support of small and large departments. The point that was first made was that support of small departments would be greatly increased through equitable distribution of the core collection development budget. Representatives from small departments felt strongly that a higher level of discretionary funding was required as well. After discussion, it was agreed to build a size neutral component into the formula, which would be distributed equally among departments before budgets were normalized for cost. This was set at 10% of the formula, and the weights for credit hours generated and graduating majors were each reduced by 5%.

Thus, the formula the Committee finally arrived at was:

35% Credit hours generated
25% Graduating majors
10% FTE faculty
10% Circulation
10% Undergraduate research programs
10% Base figure (equally distributed)
with the final results normed for cost of materials.

What Next?

The Library Committee approved the final version of the New Collection Development Model in December, 1999, with the understanding that it would be phased in over a period of three years. Members of the Committee felt it was important to be proactive in explaining the new initiatives to the wider faculty. The notions of presenting the plan at a faculty meeting and of making 23 different presentations to each department were discussed and rejected. The plan arrived at was to make five presentations, one to each of the broad academic divisions of the university, and a fifth to faculty involved in special interdisciplinary programs.

During the spring of 2000, the director and associate director will give a formal 30 minute presentation explaining the reasons for the new initiatives, specific details about them, and how they will affect the selection and funding of resources in each of the divisions. A member of the Library Committee will be introducing the presentations and will, along with the director and associate director, participate in the question and answer period.

Lessons Learned

The Furman experience provided a number of lessons that might be useful to any academic library that is in the position of having to negotiate with an academic committee about the allocation of library resources.

The library should have clear goals, but be flexible about means by which these are to be accomplished. We knew what we wanted to accomplish, but we worked with the committee to develop the

continued on page 45

Papa Lyman Remembers
from page 44

for the pull-quote. In Sept 1989 News that the rabbit is still indoors"...

Among Katina's busy April 1989: London Book Fair, Fifth Learned Journals Seminar; UK Serials 12 Annual Conference, a visit to the Cotswolds...The Francis Marion Hotel closed (except for the restaurant March 1, 1989). * This writer has detected a slight improvement in Westin ambience since the reopening as compared with that of Radissons in the 80s. *There's a lucid "overview and sumary" of the May 1989 ARL Project on Serial Prices. Look it up if you want to compare the progress and lack of same in past decade...**W.R. Grace** announces it is planning to sell its stake in **Baker & Taylor**.

Vol. 1, No. 3, Sep 1989: Society for Scholarly Publishing - 11th Annual meeting, theme "Publishing, the next generation." Keynote speaker **Frederick Brown**, NEJM discussed recent events: FAX...a mixed blessing; CD-ROM which has captured the imagination of publishers and libraries. The pullquote for this story is "CD-ROM, HERE WE COME!!!!" *Our favorite bar tender of all time, **Steve Johnson** (Clemson), issues an invitation to join him on a guided Chicago underground bar tour running every night Midwinter during ALA*...Following a "Bet you missed it" item "Acid Reign," ***ATG*** avows in a two column box that it is"ACID FREE." *So far so good with my collection of back issues.*

Vol. 1, No. 4, Nov 89: **Fred Philipp** goes from presidential of **Ingram** to pres of B/NA (**Blackwells**). Previous to Ingrams he was VP of B & T. *Take courage, Al Gore - Fred followed his VP experience to a /couple/ of presidencies*...Katina interviews **Myer Klutz** an editor and VP of Wiley on the meaning of "backlist." *Coincidence - I have just finished reading Professional Scholarly Publishing Bulletin Fall 2000, and learned that Meyer is now the editor of this mouthpiece of PSP. I have long considered him to be one of

continued on page 48

Collaboration and Reallocation:
from page 44

specifics of how, mathematically speaking, that was to be accomplished.

The library must be seen as a fair broker. The library administrators should try to see that each side gets some aspects of what they consider important. Even though it was clear from the start that the Sciences would lose some funding through this process, library personnel advocated enough of the key positions important to the representatives of the Sciences that they would agree that we were honest and impartial brokers in the process.

Find principles of agreement to build on. If consensus can be reached on certain philosophical points, then these can serve as the foundation and context for the decisions being made throughout the process.

Be mindful of both the mathematical and political aspects of the budget allocation process, and how each affects the other.

Endnotes

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4. Budd, John M. and Kay Adams. "Allocation formulas in practice." ***Library Acquisitions: Practice & Theory***,13 (1989): 384.

5. American Library Association, "Allocation Formulas in Academic Libraries," Clip Note #22, 1995.

6. Budd, John M. and Kay Adams. "Allocation formulas in practice." ***Library Acquisitions: Practice & Theory***,13 (1989): 387.