Against the Grain

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Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services -- Case Study One: I am not the Expert! Or, How to Approach Doing Collection Development in a Subject in Which You Have No Expertise

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Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services

Case Study One: I am not the Expert! Or, How to Approach Doing Collection Development in a Subject in Which You Have No Expertise

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Camilla got to work a few minutes late, as she usually did on Monday mornings. The post-weekend traffic was thick, and driving in to the university at this time of the morning and the week always made her slow down and drive more carefully. After getting a much needed cup of coffee, she sat down at her desk and logged in to her email. **Camilla** deleted a number of non-important emails, then began to read the work-related ones beginning with those from upper management. The first one she read was an email from her supervisor **Megan**, head of the collection management department. **Megan** had sent it late on the previous Friday evening. She wanted to meet with **Camilla** sometime on Monday to talk about how the collection management department was going to cover for the collection responsibilities of **Tim**, the life sciences subject specialist, who was leaving in two weeks for another position at a university across the country. **Camilla** groaned to herself, her own collecting responsibilities in the physical and mathematical sciences were daunting, how would she be able to not only add more, but also learn about the subject area enough to do a good job? She responded to **Megan's** email that she was available anytime after two. After hitting the send button, she leaned back, closed her eyes, rubbed her temples and tried to relax.

What could she do to prepare for the meeting with **Megan**? She knew she would be asked to take on **Tim's** responsibilities; there was no one else on staff with any sort of science background. In the past few weeks she had an itchy feeling in the back of her mind that this would happen, but she had done a pretty thorough job of avoiding those thoughts. After reading **Megan's** email she realized now that there was no other person on the library staff, besides her, who even came close to having a knowledge of the life sciences. After taking a few more deep breaths, she figured that the more mentally prepared she was, as well as prepared with a proposal on how she would incorporate these new subject areas into her work, then the better her meeting with **Megan** would go. And upon further reflection, **Camilla** reasoned that **Megan** had entirely too much on her own plate to give **Camilla** much support. So **Camilla** picked up a pen and a pad of paper and started to brainstorm...

What do you think **Camilla** came up with? We asked two experts for advice, and depending on **Camilla's** relationship with her supervisor, and how much time and effort she thinks she can put into the work, she can decide to follow one or the other, or even create a hybrid response of her own.

Expert A: Thorough and Far-reaching Approach

Camilla has some leverage if she approaches this correctly. She can turn this into a positive situation for not only her and the collection management department, but she also can have a great deal of influence managing the way the library is viewed by the life sciences faculty and their departments. The faculty are probably upset that **Tim** is leaving, so if **Camilla** handles the transition smoothly, with lots of communication, they will most likely feel that the library will continue to support their information needs no matter who is appointed as their liaison. I also suggest that **Camilla** show up at her meeting with **Megan** with a positive attitude, lots of enthusiasm, and an extensive plan of approach. The plan ought to be multifaceted and needs to include:

Historical perspective

a) Try to meet with **Tim** before he leaves if at all possible [we all know staff who use up vacation and/or sick leave during their final days at a job — SO this probably will be difficult to do — a free lunch may help!]

b) Review any collection assessment documents for the life sciences, especially a collection policy or history of the collection, if there are any.

c) In lieu of any documentation or policies, or even in addition to reading these types of documents, conduct a physical walk through of the collection, look for sections of the collection that may be growing, notice call number areas where there have been no recent purchases (or are all these books checked out?), look for high use of materials (are they worn, are there multiple copies of specific items?), keep note of types and topics of the materials previously collected.

Subject area perspective

a) Conduct a thorough physical review of all the reference materials, including electronic databases, see what you have. Extend this type of search to the Websites and catalogs of peer institutions to see how your library's compare.

b) Review the approval plan profile if there is one. If possible, use the approval plan Website to review the publishing output in the life sciences for the past few years — where are the major works coming from and what topics are the big ones at the moment? Also use the data to see what the average costs are for life science materials? And who are the major publishers?

c) Find out who the major journal publishers are in the life sciences. Are there any societies that publish monographs or journals? Review all their Websites for trends and cost data.

d) Look through an encyclopedia for the life sciences, or a more general science encyclopedia (the *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science and Technology* is a terrific place to start) to get an idea of what specific topics are included in life science — what kind of research is being done and why? What are the overlaps with other science and technology disciplines?

Outreach and liaison

a) Draft an announcement to the faculty of the departments affected telling them of the change in staff and confer with **Megan** on who ought to send that announcement out — **Camilla**, **Megan**, the library director or other administrator? Then send it out as soon as possible.

b) Meet with key faculty or departmental library representatives to learn about their library needs and any concerns they may have.

c) Review departmental Websites, and those of individual professors to find out areas of concentration to help in creating a list of selection criteria.

Budget

a) Do a thorough review of the funding and budgeting for the life sciences — Ask these types of questions: Where is the budget now? How much is left to spend in the fiscal year? Are there any discretionary funds that have been spent or that need to be spent? Has the budget changed much in the recent past? For the better or for the worse, and if so, why?

Affect on her regular collecting duties

a) Acknowledge that this work will take away from your other obligations, look at your list of priorities and see if there are things that can fall off of it for a while. Negotiate with **Megan** for possible relief to pursue these additional responsibilities.

b) As much as possible, change your routines to include your new collecting areas.

Finally, think long term; no matter how long you are expected to collect in these areas, the knowledge that you gain can be shared with the next life sciences bibliographer, and what you learn can help you with her own disciplines. The

continued on page 74

And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — NASIG Conference

Column Editor: **Sever Bordeianu** (University of Mexico) <sbordeia@unm.edu>

North American Serials Interest Group (NASIG)
"Roaring into Our 20s" — May 19-22, 2005, Minneapolis, MN.

Report by **Cris Ferguson** (Electronic Resources/Serials Librarian, James B. Duke Library, Furman University) <cris.ferguson@furman.edu>

This past week I went to the **North American Serials Interest Group** in Minneapolis, MN. The conference opened on Thursday the 18th and closed on Sunday the 22nd. Over the course of the four days I went to many interesting sessions, but there are several sessions programs I want to highlight in particular.

The first session I want to highlight is the opening plenary session, which was given by **Marshall Keys** of **MDA Consulting**. Prior to starting **MDA Consulting**, **Keys** was the executive Director of **NELINET**, the largest library organization in New England. In his talk **Keys** highlighted how today's technology trends affect the libraries of tomorrow. He focused his discussion on chaotic transitions, the period of time in which old and new technologies battle to see which ones survive. In almost all cases, the new technology emerges as the victor and the old technology falls by the wayside. The primary example he used was the continuous changes in music recording formats (45's to 8 tracks to cassettes to CD's and now to music on DVD's).

He went on to explain that new academic library patrons come to school with a "blogger" mentality. They care about community and personalization, but not about privacy, "You are unique, even though you are exactly like everyone else." This new generation of students use their cell phones as their primary information appliance, through text messaging, camera phones, and the ability to surf the Internet and check email. Their attitudes towards information dramatically impact the principles and laws of intellectual property. They feel that anything in the environment, whether it is protected or not, is something that can be captured and shared. Students today see no difference between TV and the Internet. They can watch television through **TiVo**, email, and file sharing, and they can browse the Internet from their television. He highlighted a few examples of places that files can be shared that are virtually untouchable in terms of prosecution for peer to peer file sharing: **Earth Station 5** and **Venuatu**.

For libraries to survive they will have to accommodate users, providing personalized information access. Students want their library interface to be like **Amazon**, showing what they have recently purchased, other materials on the same subject, things that similar users have checked out, etc. At **Duke**, all incoming students were given **iPods** to record and share lectures between each other. They were also given the ability to install **Linux** on the **iPods** to provide more usability. **Keys** emphasized that there will come a time when we will have to treat all students as distance education students.

The second session I would like to highlight is a session called Collaborative Checklist for E-Journal Access. The session was lead by representatives from **Ohio State Universities**, **Swets Subscription Services**, and **Springer Publishing**. During the session it was mentioned that over 50% of North American libraries receive print + online subscriptions. Of the 50% that receive print + online, 90% of those are academic libraries. In order to streamline the process of handling these print + online subscriptions **OSU**, **Swets**, and **Springer** created a checklist outlining what each organization was responsible for when setting up access to e-journal subscriptions. Their biggest challenge was to consolidate responsibilities and to identify who did what. In the end, they created a list of tasks and very clearly outlined what was expected of the library, the subscription agent, and the publisher. (I have a copy of that handout if anyone is interested.) It was interesting to note how much **Swets** is doing for its customers in the handling of electronic subscriptions. In comparison, **EBSCO** (our subscription agent) is not doing a very good job. It made me seriously rethink using **EBSCO** to handle our larger e-journal packages.

This brings me to the third program I want to highlight. There was a poster session at the conference describing in detail the process of switching subscription agents. (I have that handout as well). In light of the session on the e-journal checklist, I have been inspired to give **Swets** a trial run as an alternative subscription agent. Using the information gleaned from the two sessions, I hope to cancel a small number of subscriptions (50 or so) through **EBSCO** and switch them to **Swets** to see how the service between the two differs.

Other programs I attended were related to

- Electronic Journals Workflow — interesting, but not really applicable to an institution of our size. The speakers were from much larger institutions.
- Electronic Resource Librarians — also interesting. Many different types of institutions were represented, and I got to hear about the kinds of things people in my position at other schools were doing
- The role of the media in the division of America between liberal and conservative — This was one of the most interesting sessions, but not broadly useful to the field of information sciences. I have the Web addresses of a couple of really cool organizations that promote responsible media reporting and democratic conversation between political parties.

Lastly, I attended the **NASIG Continuing Education Committee** meeting. I will now be managing the **CEC's** page on the **NASIG** site and be the committee contact for a continuing education event in Mississippi.

Case Study One ...
from page 72

new knowledge you have could lead to greater job responsibilities or even a different job later on in your career.

Expert B: The Fast and Efficient Response

1. Try to get on **Tim's** schedule to ask him about: departments, trends in collecting, you will want to know about how people use the collection in those fields, what their preferences are, are there any new initiatives or trends in the discipline, get a feel for journal prices, book prices, etc.

2. Need to find out about the collection funding, for example, are there discretionary monies? How much money is left? Is there budget planning to be done?

3. Since this is an added duty, your focus would be on keeping it going right now, then maybe if it turns out to be a long-term commitment, you would need to start thinking on types of projects your would need to do — i.e., review of the approval plan profile. However, your main concern immediately would be to make sure you are getting by first. All of this of course would depend on how long you would be expected to take on these responsibilities.

*If you have any ideas for future case studies, or a topic you would like explored in this column, please contact me, **Anne Langley (Duke University)** <anne.langley@duke.edu>.*

In Indian Territory
from page 70

able as a paperback and kept in print. The works of **LeMoyne** and **White** provide the most valuable illustrations of Southeastern Indians made during the 16th Century, and they were rarely equaled.

All of the travel accounts listed in this article deserve to be kept in print indefinitely in hardback editions for libraries and in paperback editions for students. No introduction or notes are

continued on page 93