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Biz of Acq — The Wiki of Acq 2: Outreach from Acquisitions to Collections Staff Using a Wiki

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Column Editor's Note: This is Xan's second article describing Stanford's use of a **wiki** to improve Acquisitions services. In her first article, she described the use of a **wiki** for internal Acquisitions procedures, and in this article, she describes using it to improve communication and services provided to Collection Management staff. The article provides useful ideas for content as well as insight into how to design and launch to maximize the impact on the intended audience. — **MF**

How do Acquisitions and Collection Management Departments communicate? Currently Collection Development staff may send approval slips on paper or by email, accompanied by instructions or comments, but Acquisitions often has no systematic method of informatively responding to bibliographers. We may be liaisons in Collection Development meetings, hold trainings for selectors, or send out emails to explain a change in procedure. The Acquisitions Department may have a website with some basic information, an organizational chart, and contact information. But the quickly changing work of Acquisitions means that websites become outdated and any emails or trainings are old news before too long.

How can Acquisitions provide information to Collection Development in an organized manner, allowing dynamic updates as needed? One possible answer is a **wiki**. A **wiki** can function as a knowledge base that conveys information in one direction only. Acquisitions librarians can use a **wiki** to create a resource for bibliographers that can be changed easily as procedures are updated. Different Acquisitions staff can add or change different pieces of information, according to their specialty, so the resulting work is collaborative. If we create a central place for bibliographers to find the most current acquisitions-related information, the two departments will always know where to find the documents and procedures needed for their work together.

What Information Do They Need?

Bibliographers in a large academic library need a great deal of information about acquisitions policies and procedures to perform their work efficiently. As libraries start to take advantage of online vendor ordering databases, for example, bibliographers must learn how to use these databases for selection of material and they will need a continuing reference in how these databases function. The **Integrated Library System (ILS)** is another complicated system that bibliographers use to varying degrees. As the **ILS** is upgraded and procedures change, Technical Services units

will adjust quickly, since they use the **ILS** every day. Bibliographers, on the other hand, who may only search the **ILS** once a week or less, need a quick reference guide for some basic procedures in the database.

Some major types of information that bibliographers may need from Acquisitions are:

- Serial and monograph price projections for the upcoming year;
- Historical data about price changes over the last few years;
- How to locate fund and budget information in the **ILS**;
- How to run expenditure reports in the **ILS**;
- Serial cancellation deadlines for the year;
- Acquisitions contact information and organizational chart;
- Basic **ILS** help, such as how to search for duplication and how to see if the library has a standing order for a series;
- How to use vendor ordering databases;
- How to access usage statistics from the link resolver;
- How to report electronic resource access problems.

How We Got Started

The **Stanford Libraries** Acquisitions Department started by creating **wikis** to document and store staff procedures within the department. These internal resources grew and the managers realized that the **wiki** could be used just as effectively to communicate with groups outside Acquisitions. The Collection Development team was the most obvious first step. With over 35 bibliographers working in many sites around campus, our Acquisitions team has struggled to keep a consistent flow of information between the two groups and we found ourselves frequently sending the same emails or holding the same trainings several times to make sure we informed the entire Collection Development Department.

The creation of a bibliographers' **wiki** was easy, after our previous work creating sites for internal Acquisitions use. Since we use an enterprise-level **wiki** with several distinct **wiki** "spaces," we could repurpose existing procedures from the staff spaces, such as **ILS** help documentation, for the use of the bibli-

raphers. This was done quickly either by creating a link in the bibliographers' **wiki** directly to the relevant page in another **wiki** space, or copying the needed document and loading it to the bibliographers' space.

Making It Pretty

One common problem with **wikis** is that the basic markup to create a document is easy, but creating an attractive page is more difficult and many **wiki** software programs make it nearly impossible. But if you're using a

wiki as a method of outreach to a group whose members don't know much about Acquisitions processes, it's important to create an attractive user-friendly space. Otherwise, it becomes a resource that no-one uses because it stands in the way of the procedures it explains.

We used a few tricks to make the bibliographers' space pretty. First, the documents in the **wiki** are explained through screenshots, whenever possible. Each step of a procedure is written out as well as shown in a screenshot to help the more visual learners. A good screenshot tool is important for this process, especially one that allows addition of boxes and arrows to highlight for the viewer what each picture is trying to demonstrate.

Next, where appropriate, we added short videos to explain procedures. The videos are screencasts that take the viewer through each step of the process, with voiceover narration. An example is our video of how to set up an advanced search in the **ILS**. While the procedure takes only a few steps, it can be complicated and difficult to explain in words, whereas a two-minute video makes the process clear.

Finally, we put a picture on the front page. The picture, of an owl, is the only element that is purely decorative; it serves not only to put a more inviting face on the **wiki** but it also helps identify the space for users who may be navigating through several linked **wikis**.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

So you have a brand new bibliographers' space with lots of acquisitions information. Will any of the bibliographers see it? How can you market your new tool?

We waited until we had created a critical mass of relevant well-organized information before announcing the **wiki**. In this way, the utility of the tool would be obvious from the start. Like most people, I have often been introduced to a new resource that was still

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From the University Presses — The Value Added by Copyediting

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In all the fierce debate about open access, there is unanimous agreement that whatever the means of scholarly communication in the future will be, it is absolutely essential that peer review be maintained as a core principle. The assumption, of course, is that having scholarship reviewed by experts will give those who access it reasonable assurance that it meets the standards currently accepted by a discipline for originality, conceptual clarity, responsible use of sources, proper application of methods of analysis, logical coherence, relevance of the evidence adduced to confirmation of the hypotheses proposed, and the like. The fundamental meaning of “fair use” comes into play here, too, as this process of one scholar building upon the work of predecessors, quoting from their previous writings and suitably acknowledging them in footnotes and bibliography, and thereby advancing the state of knowledge in the discipline is what that legal doctrine has always been intended, first and foremost, to protect. (This is in contrast with efforts to apply “fair use” to justifying the sheer multiplication of copies of the original, with no value added, which is the Pandora’s box that **Congress** opened with the reference to “multiple copies” in Section 107 of the **1976 Copyright Act** in response to heavy lobbying by higher education institutions.)

Very little attention has been paid to date, however, to the importance of copyediting in ensuring the integrity of this process. Perhaps the reason it has been ignored is that the debate over open access started within, and has remained primarily focused upon, scientific disciplines where most publication is done via the vehicle of the article in a journal, often

highly technical, where equations and formulae may sometimes dominate over prose and leave less scope for a copyeditor’s skills with language to be deployed. (I am assured by one editor who responded to a draft of this article and has done substantive and developmental editing on thousands of scientific articles, however, that there is still wide scope for significant editing. As he says, even in highly technical articles “the equations are usually accompanied by thickets of impenetrable prose,” and a lot of his work “involves making sure that the text and the equations say the same thing.” He also adds that he checks “the basic math in tables, since it’s amazing how often scientists get the sums and averages wrong.”) For journals in the humanities and social sciences, at any rate, copyediting surely must continue to play a major role in the process of quality control. As advocates of open access, having scored significant victories in the realm of scientific, technical, and medical (STM) publishing including the mandate for deposit of NIH-funded research articles in **PubMed Central**, now move on to rally scholars in the liberal arts to their cause, this role deserves more understanding and emphasis than it has hitherto received.

I admit here to a personal bias. I began my publishing career in 1967 working at **Princeton University Press** as a copyeditor. Even after becoming social science editor, then assistant director, and finally editor-in-chief there, I still copyedited manuscripts from time to time for the sheer enjoyment of doing so. And even for the first several years after becoming director at **Penn State University Press**, I took on a few manuscripts every year

to copyedit — until copyediting went the way of everything else and became a job carried out mainly on computers. Not that I have anything against editing on computers, mind you, but I do miss the tactile pleasure of wielding a blue pencil to make marks on paper. And once a copyeditor, always a copyeditor: it is painful to read many newspapers today because of the numerous grammatical and other errors they have on display. A particular pet peeve of mine is the sign at the checkout counter found in many grocery stores and in **Wal-Mart** that says “10 or less items” (ouch!).

At first, as a beginning editor, I was appalled to find so many mistakes in the footnotes of even senior scholars. I especially remember an expert on **Martin Luther** whose chapter in an edited volume contained multiple errors in the citations to the authoritative edition of **Luther’s** works, which I systematically checked in the **Princeton** library after becoming suspicious. I also recall a major scholar on **Voltaire** having similarly been in need of such remedial assistance. And an author of a book about **John Stuart Mill**, I discovered, had many of his quotations from **Mill** wrong, as I discovered when I checked the originals. Any copyeditor can tell such tales of scholarly lapses many times over. They know how much their help is needed by scholars. Perhaps the most memorable example in my experience is a book that won a **Pulitzer Prize** whose copyeditor, I was aware, had done a yeoman’s job of rewriting the work. I was foolish enough to have mentioned this example, naming the title and author, in a public forum once and subsequently received a letter from the author’s attorney threatening a libel suit if I did not publicly retract my comment and offer an apology. But fortunately, from my connections with the legal community on copyright matters, I was able to benefit from pro bono advice from a top law firm, and the letters I wrote in response carefully crafted according to that advice, combined with the knowledge that I could produce complete documentation to establish the veracity of my claim, dissuaded the author from pursuing the complaint. But, even though this is an extreme example, who knows how many scholars have been spared from major embarrassment by their copyeditors working quietly behind the scenes to repair their flawed writings?

I therefore marvel at the readiness of so many advocates of open access, starting with **Stevan Harnad** who has long championed what he calls Green OA (which means authors’ self-archiving of their peer-reviewed, but not yet copyedited, articles on their personal Websites and those of their institutions), to accept a world in which scholarly communication will increasingly be dominated by writing that has

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in the process of being created and the result has been that I look at it once, find very little information I need, and don’t remember to check back later, when the resource has been fully populated.

Since the announcement, we have taken every opportunity to put the **wiki** in front of the bibliographers. For example, a mass email announcing training sessions on a new online ordering system will include a link to screenshots posted up on the **wiki**. During these training sessions, I show both the new ordering system and the place in the **wiki** where the bibliographers can find a review of the session. In casual conversations and meetings, I ask if there are any documents or procedures they would like to see in the **wiki**.

Also, when there is a new procedure or

document, I highlight it within the **wiki** by adding a star next to the link or by moving the link to the banner at the top of the main page. The **wiki** can be changed quickly, so when the document is no longer the newest and most relevant link, the star can be removed or the link returned to its original place.

If Not A Wiki, Then What?

While we use a **wiki**, the central idea is not the tool itself, but the creation of a stable space for bibliographers to access up-to-date acquisitions-related information. Too often the available information is scattered or outdated, leading to miscommunication and endless repetitions and retrains on the same procedures. By dedicating an area of the library webspace for Acquisitions communication to bibliographers, all parties save time and effort by having a single reference point for the work they do together. 🌿