Against the Grain

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People Profile: Randy Roeder

Editor

the Lean guidelines. Not surprisingly, it was tougher for some more than others to detach from well-known processes, just as it was much easier for "outsiders" to the workflow to see steps which didn't add value, but which took time and energy to complete. When push came to shove, the serials ordering process was reduced to six or seven steps, depending on the type of serial. The Lean pattern was repeated for monographic acquisitions (which didn't have as many steps) with similar results and for electronic resource acquisition and activation.

Agreement to improve the serials acquisitions process came by emphasizing improved internal processes and adding staff (via internal reassignment) without significant change in vendors or technology. The similarities between print and electronic serials resulted in a number of processes being merged. This was not the case with the monographic acquisitions process (which included approvals). Not only were local processes evaluated, but a recommendation was made following lengthy discussion to leave our long-time approvals vendor and move to **YBP**. We chose to establish a system-wide virtual approval plan, where automated processes would do the pre-order checking and, at least at first, no physical books would ship automatically. This was a huge step for a very traditional operation, and one which would alter workflows and a number of job descriptions. The most radical piece, although no one realized it at the time: selectors would place their own orders without intervention from ARC staff. With support from the University Librarian and the Directors for Central Technical Services and Collection Development, ARC went forward with our largest Lean recommendation. Selectors were, if cautious, willing to give the experiment a try. To prevent duplicates, we loaded ISBNs for every item purchased from 2001 to date into our ILS and weekly ISBN updates were scheduled. We also provided the titles of some 3200 standing orders to **YBP**, in order to prevent "approval" selections from duplicating against them. Thus armed, we felt the chance of duplication from the virtual approval process was slim. The plan went live in January 2007; while there were glitches, most were minor. The duplicate check/standing order block works exceptionally well. Nine months later only five items had duplicated which couldn't be attributed to initial bugs in getting the checks operational. Selectors appreciate the control offered by the virtual plan. They can identify and order books online without looking at physical volumes or paper slips via **YBP's GOBI** selection database where and when they want. All materials selected are directed to receiver/catalogers immediately upon delivery, and are now on the shelves very quickly, often within two weeks of ordering.

The Lean process, coupled with the merger of three units into one (and genuine assurances from management that no decision was set in stone), gave ARC staff the freedom to try

something new. Multiple workflows were reviewed and adjusted, but none so completely as the monographic approvals process. The success of that change helped ease the way for other adaptations: the sky didn't fall, no one lost their job, and improved processes made for better relations with our internal and external customers. Overall, working with a Lean process helped staff take ownership of the new unit and to the opportunities its formation provided.

Complex Cataloging Unit Planning

The CCU will face a number of challenges in the coming months. The number of newly acquired resources will decline as shelf-ready arrivals increase and collections requiring cataloging will be targeted for transfer to the Archival Facility and/or prioritized for a **Google Book Search** project. The unit's role in creating metadata for a growing number of digital initiatives will be defined. Given the success of the ARC Lean review, management contacted Organizational Effectiveness for assistance in planning for the transition.

After some discussion, the Lean methodology was again selected. The CCU planning effort was not an obvious candidate for a process review. The unit was more interested in planning than in existing operations; workflows are relatively straightforward; the unit has little control over the work assigned to it; and there were no obvious hitches in production.

Once the decision to use Lean was made, we wrote a case for change, defined the scope of the project, developed objectives and metrics, and established a time frame. All unit activity was defined as within scope of review. Seven objectives relating to processing time, item tracking, project completion, communication and sustainability were defined. Metrics for customer and staff satisfaction, project completion, and processing efficiency were developed. A 16-month time frame for meeting the objectives — based on the expected crunch

time for the **Google Book Search** project and the Archival Facility—was chosen.

After completing the initial work, we met with OE to review the project's scope, examine the unit's organization chart, and determine appropriate participants. Eight participants were chosen on the basis of supervisory responsibility or unique expertise. A customer — a branch librarian sometimes critical of unit services — was added to the mix. The nature of the objectives reinforced the decision to use a standard Lean process, and to schedule three full-day meetings — a Kaizen Blitz.

Two facilitators from OE guided the process, and as with ARC, kept planners on task and on schedule, established ground rules, focused the discussions, and defused occasional tense moments. The facilitators were flexible and adapted quickly when the group made an unexpected request to change the status of the CTS Director from "on call expert" to participant and to add seven more objectives — focusing on collaboration within CTS, training, documentation, and technology needs. After adding the new member and finalizing the objectives, the group analyzed the gap between its current state and an imagined ideal to develop a pragmatic vision of a more efficient future.

Although the planners worked through the Lean review in the traditional way — with a structured multi-day blitz — the composition of the team, the nature of the work performed within unit and the unit's position in the CTS workflow produced atypical results. Of the twenty seven action items developed, twelve extended beyond the boundaries of CCU. Although the group may have felt more comfortable looking beyond unit borders with the departmental director present, all action items were generated at the staff level. CCU's straightforward workflow with few hand-offs, did not prove to be fertile ground for streamlining. Action items focused on efficiencies

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FIRST JOB: Serials/Reference Librarian at **Coe College**.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I joined the staff of the **University of Iowa Libraries** in 2005 — after 26 years at **Coe College** as Head of Technical Services, ILS administrator, reference librarian and College Archivist.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: The OPAC, as we know it, will be dead. **OCLC** will have redefined the concept of the master record. Academic librarians will be astonished at the use that paper resources are still getting. Library seers will continue to talk of the "death of cataloging" as a new generation of metadata librarians wrestles with the traditional issues of description and access. 🐿