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Moving From Good Effort to Best Practice -- Refining a Weeding Process in a Dental School Library

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receives all print books, both approvals and firm orders, completely shelf-ready from **YBP**. The library receives files of bibliographic records for print books from **YBP** and files of bibliographic records for eBooks from various vendors. These include monthly updates from ebrary, records from **Coutts** for purchased titles and records from **OCLC** for patron-purchased **EBL** titles. In addition, the library receives weekly files of records from the **UC Shared Cataloging Program** for electronic resources licensed by the **California Digital Library**. These include records for databases, electronic journals and eBooks. All records go to the library's authority control vendor and are then loaded into the local catalog. Files are extracted weekly from the local catalog and uploaded to **Melvyl**, the **University of California** union catalog. One person in technical services handles all record import and export regardless of source or format.

- Integration of eBooks into the systems of print vendors has greatly improved. **NetLibrary** titles have been available through **YBP** for some time. Recently **YBP** has announced agreements with both **EBL** and **ebrary** to make their titles available through **GOBI** as well. It is also possible to order individual eBooks through the **Coutts** online system, **OASIS**.
- Many publishers, though certainly not all, have begun to offer more realistic licensing terms that recognize scholarly sharing and permit at least limited downloading, emailing and printing.
- Acquisition models are evolving with ebrary offering both a subscription model and a single-purchase model for acquiring eBooks. Access models are also evolving. While some providers cling to a single user at a time model, others such as **EBL** with their non-linear lending model and **ebrary** and **Coutts** with single and multi-user purchase options have moved beyond the older model. However, a library is still required to choose between a subscription that allows for unlimited simultaneous users but no perpetual access to the content and a purchase that limits simultaneous users but provides for perpetual access to the content.

While the landscape has changed for the better in many ways since 2003, in one significant respect it has not. Publishers are still refusing to allow interlibrary loan of eBooks.

At **UC Merced** we have begun to investigate whether all of our science, engineering and business monographs should be electronic. Faculty and students clearly prefer journals in electronic format; the library literally could not give away print copies of biomedical journals that had to be taken in order to acquire online access. Users in these disciplines are usually

not reading a book from cover to cover, but rather are interested in discrete segments, thus lessening the problems associated with reading large amounts of text from a monitor. The thinking of the librarians has also been influenced by the increasing number of announcements of the building of all-electronic, or as **Stanford** says "bookless" engineering and business libraries. Library staff has begun to schedule focus groups to test this hypothesis.

Even if science and engineering faculty and student preferences are overwhelmingly in favor of eBooks, however, the ILL issue would still be a barrier. In a few years the library could be faced with a situation in which most if not all of the science and engineering collection could not be loaned to other libraries. The solution is not to expect libraries to purchase duplicate print and electronic copies in order to permit interlibrary loan. Rather, libraries should work for licensing that recognizes the purchase of electronic titles as "first sale" to allow interlibrary loan and for business models that recognize fair use.

So far this discussion has been limited to local initiatives at **UC Merced**. At the same time, the **UC Libraries** are beginning to investigate system-wide consortial licensing of eBooks. The **UC Collection Development Committee** has recently charged a task force, of which the author is chair, to "develop a set of guiding principles for collecting books in electronic format, in the broader context of system-wide monographic collection devel-

opment, shared print goals, mass digitization projects and preservation."

This paper began with the statement that **UC Merced** librarians did not start out intending to create an all-electronic library. From the composition of the library's current holdings it appears that it is headed strongly in that direction, at least in science and technology. The author expects that the **UC Merced Library** will be collecting in print in the humanities and some of the social sciences for some time. The rationale for this prediction comes principally from the information-seeking behaviors of persons in various disciplines. The shift from print to electronic, particularly with regard to journals, has been fastest and most complete in science, technology, medicine and business. Faculty in these fields has been highly receptive to the use of eBooks. On the other hand, in literature and history **UC Merced** faculty continue to express strong preferences for print, even to the extent of requesting print titles that duplicate existing eBooks. This preference appears to be independent of the age or experience of the individual faculty members.

The speed at which our monographic collections become digital will be primarily governed, not by user desires or expectations, but by the willingness of publishers to view eBooks as other than adjuncts or threats to their print revenues. For the benefit of all library users, the author hopes that the progress that has been made toward meeting user needs will continue. 🐾

Moving From Good Effort to Best Practice — Refining a Weeding Process in a Dental School Library

by **Barbara A. Gushrowski, MLS** (Access and Instructional Services Librarian, Indiana University School of Dentistry Library; Phone: 317-274-5204; Fax: 317-278-1256) <bgushrow@iupui.edu>

In the autumn of 2005, the staff at the **Indiana University School of Dentistry Library (IUSDL)** commenced a major weeding project of the circulating collection. Since weeding was previously not performed vigorously or with any regularity, the library had reached critical mass in the stacks shelving. The shelves were filled to capacity, including the topmost shelf of each unit, and a major initiative to analyze the collection and weed out the unused and aged items began.

Through fits and starts this project has proceeded for 18 months, and, though progress has been slow, we are seeing good results. We began with lofty goals, unrealistic timetables, and a labor intensive process. As the project proceeded, our goals changed to become actually attainable, timetables are now very flexible, and our process has been refined so that more time is spent making decisions

than on gathering data.

Most librarians can list the standard reasons for weeding a collection; to save space, save staff time in re-shelving, increase patron satisfaction, etc. And all librarians can provide justification for why their collection is not weeded regularly; not enough

time, not enough staff, no process in place, the need to report growth in the collections each year, etc.

While the author makes no claim that what follows will solve all of the above-mentioned problems, this article does present details of a process that, through refinement, works well

in the **IUSDL**, an explanation of the work flow, and the story of how a "Good Effort" became a "Best Practice."

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Rationale for the Project

Even the most cursory review of the library literature reveals a list of compelling reasons to regard the weeding of a library collection as a good and gracious process. Chief among these are to provide much needed space for new materials; to save staff time in re-shelving; to rid the library of out-of-date and/or out-of-scope materials; to balance the subject coverage and content of the collection; and to save on the cost of housing the collection.^{1,2,3,4,5}

The **IUSDL** serves the undergraduate DDS students, Dental Assisting and Dental Hygiene programs, as well as 14 post-graduate programs. In addition, we serve the Oral Health Research facility and all Dental School faculty in their teaching and research. Much of this research is cross-disciplinary in nature and the Library strives to provide dental and non-dental materials across several medical and scientific disciplines. The **IUSDL** staff consists of a Head Librarian, Access & Instructional Services Librarian, and three Library Assistants.

In 2005 **IUSDL** staff measured and calculated the current state of the stacks shelving for the circulating collection. The stacks area totals 1,409 linear feet of shelving space. Unfortunately, 210 feet of that space comprise the topmost shelf in each of the 72 units. This meant that about 15% of the collection was out of reach without the aid of a step stool. On any given day it is estimated that shelves were filled to 91% capacity. Assuming that 20% of the collection is circulating at any one time, it was clear that the library was woefully short of space to house our collection.

The library staff developed a simple plan. Start at the beginning (A) and work through to the end (Z); assess the collection via some criteria; weed out unneeded items; then shift the collection so that the top shelf of each unit was left empty and space was available on each shelf for new purchases.

Our objectives were clear. To rid the shelves of out-of-date and out-of-scope materials; balance the collection by analyzing the subject content and coverage; and gain much-needed shelf space.

And so in our blind innocence we began... and immediately encountered difficulties. Staff turnover, an undefined process, an absence of written collection development policies, and other library work taking precedence threatened to undermine the entire project. Despite the difficulties, the even greater difficulty of dealing with crowded shelves led us to persevere and slowly progress was made.

It became clear early on that we needed to refine our process, write collection development policies, establish definite weeding criteria, and create a reasonable timetable for completion. Here, then, is the result of our trials and errors that has become a process that works in our library. The author is hopeful that readers may find aspects of this process that can be applied to their libraries.

against the grain people profile

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BORN & LIVED: Born in Indianapolis — lived in several cities in Indiana — two years in a very small town in North Carolina and now back in Indianapolis.

EARLY LIFE: Grew up in Terre Haute, IN.

FAMILY: I have three charming and talented daughters, two equally charming and talented sons-in-law, and one very precious three month old granddaughter. I have two older and two younger brothers, four terrific sisters-in-law, six nephews and two nieces.

EDUCATION: BS in General Studies at **IUPUI** and MLS at **IUPUI**.

FIRST JOB: I assume you mean professional job — Librarian at **St. Vincent Hospital**, Indianapolis where I had the most wonderful mentor, **Louise Hass**. She taught me all the important things about being a librarian — patience, service, respect for patrons, colleagues, and vendors. (If you mean my first job ever — washing dishes at a lunch counter for 50 cents an hour!)

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: During library school I decided I wanted to work in as many kinds of libraries as possible so that I could find the best fit. I have worked full or part-time in the following: Art school library, newspaper library, art museum library, hospital library, corporate R & D library, university library, and now the Dental School library. I think small special libraries — especially the health science libraries — have the greatest appeal.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Read and garden.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Anything by **Annie Dillard** and all the *Harry Potter* books.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Anyone using a cell phone while driving.

PHILOSOPHY: Whatever goes around, comes around.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: The position I took with the Dental School in 2005 was a PA level. I took with the intention of making it into a professional librarian position which was finalized in March 2007. This is the first time in the **IUSDL** history that there have been two librarian positions. I think this creates a tremendous opportunity for the library to positively impact dental education here at **IUSD**.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: To be head librarian in a special library.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I think we'll continue to see decreasing emphasis on materials processing and other "traditional" library functions and, at least in the school and university setting, librarians will be actively involved in instruction. Librarians are already taking their goods and services TO the patron using increasing sophisticated technology this trend will continue to grow. 🍄

Six Major Steps in Our Process

1. Develop the plan and be prepared to deviate from it.

By the end of this project the library staff knew that the entire collection would eventually be shifted, so it made sense to begin at the beginning to prevent shifting some sections several times. However, it was soon determined that some problem subject areas could be resolved out of the alphabetical sequence. For example, weeding decisions in the computer technology (TK) and library science (Z) sections were relatively straightforward. Multiple copies of older items in several other sections were also withdrawn. We were able to create additional space with very little shifting, and

the few resulting empty spaces in the middle of the collection are a minimal nuisance.

Below is the essence of **IUSDL**'s plan:

1. Generate a shelf-list with usage data. This is accomplished by an email request to the systems librarian at **Indiana University (IU) Bloomington**. He runs the reports and the **IUSDL** Access and Instructional Services Librarians transfers the data to spreadsheets. This process takes less than a day.
2. The **IUSDL** Access and Instructional Services Librarian edits the spreadsheets to reflect only the key data points we need and adds additional columns for

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more data. These spreadsheets are saved to a shared drive and staff members are assigned to each of the spreadsheets.

3. Staff add additional pieces of information for each title.
4. The Access and Instructional Services Librarian reviews the age and usage data on the spreadsheet, reviews the items on the shelf, and makes initial recommendations to keep, discard, and/or update as appropriate.
5. The list with recommendations on which titles to keep, discard, or update is given to the Head Librarian for further review.
6. The final list is prepared and sent to the Library Committee for their comments. Further adjustments to the list are made based on their recommendations
7. Items are pulled from the shelf, withdrawn from the ILS and from OCLC, boxed and shipped to the main library in Bloomington for re-sale at the annual book sale.

2. Keep the Project Manageable by working on reasonable size portions of the collection and involving as many staff members as possible.

The individual spreadsheets are kept to 300 items or less, depending on reasonable breaks in the call number sequence. At IUSDL every staff member has an important role to play in data collection and physical removal of the items.

Remember that the IUSDL has undertaken a major, initial weeding project. Once the initial project is completed the maintenance will be much less labor intensive. Through trial and error we learned how best to distribute the work as evenly as possible, to clearly define the responsibilities for each staff member, and to integrate the weeding project into our workflow while taking into account the ebb and flow of other duties. The work is intermittent, and has become so much a part of the routine work of the library that it is no longer considered extra work.

3. Determine the data to collect and make sure it is the data you need.

By reviewing the spreadsheets created at the beginning of the project, it was clear that the **School of Dentistry Library** was gathering information that was neither needed nor useful. It was also discovered that staff members were not using the same sources when gathering the additional data. The end result was that decisions were being made based on incomplete information.

To resolve these inconsistencies, the fields to be represented in the spreadsheet were standardized and the process of gathering additional data was clarified so that the staff

members used the same sources and gathered the same information.

Much of the data needed is present in the shelf list and usage report derived from the ILS. The report is transferred to a spreadsheet with the following fields:

1. Call number
2. Title
3. Author
4. Date of publication
5. Edition
6. Item ID
7. Number of checkouts
8. Number of in-house uses
9. Date of last checkout

Additional data is entered onto the spreadsheet by two staff members

10. from our ILS they record which other libraries in the IU system own each item
11. from **WorldCat** they determine the most recent edition (if any) of each item

The final pieces of data are obtained when the Access and Instructional Services Librarian takes the shelf list to the stacks and

12. reviews the physical condition of the item
13. reviews the depth and breadth of coverage for each subject area using **OCLC's WorldCat Analysis Service**.

4. Determine criteria for weeding that is as objective as possible.

As recommend by **Slote**,⁵ a combination of use and age criteria is used. If the item is 15 years or older and has no recorded use for five years the initial decision is to remove it.

“...all librarians can provide justification for why their collection is not weeded regularly; not enough time, not enough staff, no process in place, the need to report growth in the collections each year, etc.”

Duplicate copies are easily identified and, unless use is heavy and recent, all but one of these copies is marked for withdrawal.

The content and condition of the item are also reviewed. Shabby, worn, and torn items are marked for withdrawal and/or replacement. Items that are fragile and of historical interest are moved from the stacks to our special collection cabinets. Items that had originally been placed in a vertical file then subsequently catalogued and added to the collection are marked for withdrawal with the notation that the item is a brochure or pamphlet and noting the number of pages, usually fewer than five.

5. Keep expectations reasonable and take heart in every step of progress made.

While library staff had made no firm estimate of time to completion, the author does not believe any of us envisioned the process being prolonged to the extent that it has. As

mentioned above, there were several events that delayed progress. Three of five staff positions were vacated and subsequently filled. The entire library was closed for six weeks to accommodate painting and new carpet installation. The Library committee (made up of faculty, one student, and the Head Librarian) is not available during school breaks, and faculty time is heavily committed at the beginning and end of each semester. And, of course, the everyday work of serving the patrons, processing materials, and providing instruction leaves less time for the weeding project.

However, each section of the collection that is completed provides staff with encouragement to carry on. We simply take each step as we can and don't expect the project to be completed for many months to come.

6. Have a disposal plan for the de-accessioned items and be aware of any restrictions the library may be under.

IUSDL is fortunate that the IU system-wide librarian's organization holds an annual book sale and are eager to acquire items for that venture. IUSDL also holds a semi-annual book sale that is an additional opportunity to find a good use for withdrawn materials.

Libraries that do not have such an outlet must be aware of any restrictions that could be placed on the disposition of withdrawn library materials. Tax-funded institutions may be ruled by state or local laws. The author recommends that libraries discover options prior to removing a single item from the shelf. If a library has done some weeding in the past they may already know of any restrictions.

Where We Go From Here

One thing this project has taught IUSDL staff is the importance of written collection development and withdrawal policies.

Policy statements describing the depth of coverage in a subject area, policies on duplicate copies, how many previous editions of a title are kept, and at what age an item is considered out-of-date are needed to keep the collection under control. Developing and

abiding by written collection policies are first steps in assuring a balanced, well-tended collection. They make the weeding process less cumbersome and withdrawal decisions more objective.

Once this project is completed the next target is the journal collection. While IUSDL doesn't anticipate major withdrawals, we are beginning to develop criteria that will assist in making some of the difficult decision regarding serials.

Among the criteria under consideration:

1. is the title indexed?
2. how many ILL requests do we fill from the title?
3. electronic availability of the title
4. do we have duplicate copies?
5. historical value of the journal

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Library Liaisons and the Organization: An Open System View of Collection Development in the Academic Library

by **Daniel C. Mack** (Head, George and Sherry Middlemas Arts and Humanities Library, Penn State University Libraries, W 327 Pattee Library, 3rd floor, West Pattee, University Park, PA 16802-1803; Phone: 814-865-6779; Fax: 814-863-7502) <dmack@psu.edu> www.personal.psu.edu/dcm11

An enormous body of literature exists concerning collection development in academic libraries. Within this area, there is a respectable amount of research on library liaisons to user populations, especially faculty and, to a lesser extent, students in specific academic units or fields of study. This research includes guidelines, professional standards, assessment, communication, and case studies. One extremely useful way to view the role of the liaison within a library's collection development activities is through the open systems model of organizations.

Liaisons are those librarians who "involve the library's clientele in the assessment and satisfaction of collection needs."¹ In academic libraries, the liaison is often active not only in collection development, analysis, assessment, and evaluation, but also in reference work, research mentoring, bibliographic instruction, and other library outreach activities. Librarians serving as liaisons for the first time often require practical advice on how to succeed as liaisons.² Likewise, more experienced librarians may want to expand their liaison activities into areas such as creating Web-based subject guides, for example,³ while administrators may want to assess their liaison programs.⁴ In all of these cases, the open systems view of organizations is an effective model for viewing how a liaison's collection development activities operate within the library and the university. Because the open systems concept presents a model of the entire organization as a dynamic

and holistic entity, as a model it presents opportunities for analyzing, evaluating, and effecting change within the process.

Organizational psychologists have discussed the systems concept of organizations for decades. Among the various theoretical types of systems by which one can view human organizations, the most interesting, and realistic, is the open system. **Katz** and **Kahn** define an open system as a system into the "input of energies and the conversion of output into further energetic input consist of transactions between the organization and its environment."⁵ In other words, in an open system, an organization interacts with its external environment, drawing upon the environment for energy, and transforming that energy into something different, which is then given back to the environment. In addition, a smaller organization, such as a library, may have this same relationship with a larger organization, such as its parent university. This seems like a natural way to model libraries and programs in early twenty-first century academia. The professional literature discusses the open system concept within library computer systems, information management, and similar topics.⁶ However, this view also offers an interesting and useful model for analyzing collection development activities of liaison librarians.

In an open systems view, an organization exists in symbiosis with its larger environment. It is therefore necessary to identify what **Katz** and **Kahn** refer to as the "importation of

energy,"⁷ that is, those external environmental factors that feed into the organization and contribute to its ongoing existence, and the output, which is what the system exports to its environment. Since the library exists within a larger organization, the university, we can analyze this input and output between a system and its larger environment on several levels. At the level of the university as a system within its larger social, cultural, political, scholarly, economic, and technological environment, we can identify certain "energies" or inputs that impact the work of the university as a system. These include external factors such as these:

- the political and economic landscape, especially if the institution is heavily dependent on federal, state, or local funds coming into the system as grants, loans, or subventions;
- the scholarly environment, which is especially important to track because the curriculum is continually becoming more international and interdisciplinary, and because of the advent of new disciplines and methodologies, such as gender studies, queer theory, and the varieties of postmodernism;
- the social and cultural environment, which can shape how the university attracts students, faculty, and staff, as well as societal demand for new academic programs, such as homeland security studies;
- the technological environment, which can determine what technologies are available to the organization and its members.

Likewise, we can identify key "outputs" from the university back into the environment; these include:

- students, who then presumably contribute to society at large as productive members, paying taxes, providing goods and services to society, and in some cases feeding back into the university (or another university) as faculty or staff;
- research, both pure and applied, which then informs both the general society and other scholars, and provides not only social and cultural capital, but also possibly contribute to the political, economic, and technological development of the larger environment;
- economic and technological contributions, such as development of new technologies and products, patents, etc.;
- social and cultural contributions, including artistic creations, performances, social networking, and contributions to general education.

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6. scope — does it still fit in our collection?
7. how many other IU system libraries hold the same title
8. impact factor of the journal
9. availability of the title from our lending partners.

Summary

For **IUSDL**, the results are well worth the effort. We have removed a total of 1,435 items, have regained over 100 linear feet of shelf space, and 13 of our 72 units no longer have books on the top shelf.

This project continues alongside all the rest of the work of the library. Our belief in the importance and value of weeding this collection has been a key factor in the continuation and success of the project to date. By refining the process, defining the criteria, involving the

entire staff, and keeping our expectations realistic, we are shaping a significantly improved collection — one that is valuable to and valued by **IUSD** patrons. 🌱

Endnotes

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