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People Profile: Barbara A. Gushrowski, MLS

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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these are to provide much needed space for new materials; to save staff time in re-shelving; to rid the library of out-of-date and/or out-of-scope materials; to balance the subject coverage and content of the collection; and to save on the cost of housing the collection.^{1,2,3,4,5}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 To rid the shelves of out-of-date and out-of-scope materials; balance the collection by analyzing the subject content and coverage; and gain much-needed shelf space.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

Access and Instructional Services Librarian
IUSD Library
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Barbara A. Gushrowski, MLS

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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