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A Rock and a Hard Place: Print Collections and Faculty Attitudes

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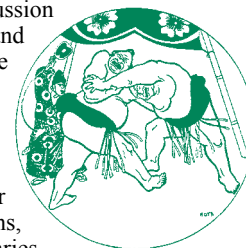
Endnotes

1. **U.S. Government Printing Office.** *Report to the Congress: Study to Identify Measures Necessary for a Successful Transition to a More Electronic Federal Depository Library Program.* Washington, D.C. (June 1996). GPO publication 500.11; Supt. of Docs. no.: GP 3.2: EL 2/3/FINAL. http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fdlp/pubs/study/studyhtm.html.
2. 44 U.S.C. 1911: Regional depositories; designation; functions; disposal of publications." ...in addition to fulfilling the requirements for depository libraries, [Regional Depository Libraries will] retain at least one copy of all Government publications either in printed or microfacsimile form (except those authorized to be discarded by the Superintendent of Documents);..."
3. UF is in the second year of a three-year project to catalog and bar code over 300,000 federal documents currently in a medium density storage facility, so they can be moved into high density storage when the new facility for the **State University System of Florida** opens in 2012. An estimated 330,000 documents currently housed in the Government Documents Department on campus will still be uncataloged when this project is completed. Those that are candidates for high density storage will need at least minimal cataloging records. Those that are high-priority titles that need to be retained on campus will need full cataloging records.
4. **The Association of Southeastern Research Libraries** (www.aserl.org), also known as **ASERL**, is the largest regional research library consortium in the United States. Its members are academic research libraries from ten states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. Its mission is to foster a high standard of library excellence through inter-institutional resource sharing and other collaborative efforts.
5. Additional information about the **ASERL Collaborative Federal Depository Program** is available on the **ASERL Website** at www.aserl.org.
6. The **University of Kentucky** is establishing a Center of Excellence for an historical agency that no longer exists, the **Works Projects Administration (WPA)** and related agencies. The **University of South Carolina** is working on a Center of Excellence for an existing agency, the **Department of Education**.
7. The report is available at <http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/documents-for-a-digital-democracy/>. It was issued in December 2009.
8. For purposes of this initiative, the southeast region is defined as the ten states represented in **ASERL**, as well as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands because of their affiliation with the **University of Florida**, which serves as their Regional Federal Depository Library.
9. The members of the **ASERL Dean's FDLP Task Force** are: **Judy Russell, University of Florida** (Chair); **Larry Boyer, East Carolina University**; **Bonnie MacEwan, Auburn University**; **Sarah Michalak, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**; **William Potter, University of Georgia**; **Lance Query, Tulane University**; and **Julia Rholes, University of Mississippi**.
10. After it was approved by **ASERL**, the discussion draft was provided to the **Government Printing Office (GPO)** and reviewed by the **GPO Office of the General Counsel**, which determined that the proposal was compliant with 44 U.S.C.
11. The complete discussion draft is available at: tinyurl.com/ASERL-FDLP-Discussion-Draft and the executive summary is available at: tinyurl.com/ASERL-FDLP-Exec-Summary.
12. The **Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC)** (www.cic.net/Home.aspx) is a consortium of mid-western universities. These world-class research institutions have advanced their academic missions, generated unique opportunities for students and faculty, and served the common good by sharing expertise, leveraging campus resources, and collaborating on innovative programs. Governed and funded by the Provosts of the member universities, **CIC** mandates are coordinated by a staff from its Champaign, Illinois headquarters. The current members of the **CIC** are: **University of Chicago**; **University of Illinois**; **Indiana University**; **University of Iowa**; **University of Michigan**; **Michigan State University**; **University of Minnesota**; **University of Nebraska**; **Northwestern University**; **Ohio State University**; **Pennsylvania State University**; **Purdue University**; and **University of Wisconsin-Madison**.
13. The project Website is www.cic.net/Home/Projects/Library/Book-Search/Govdocs.aspx.
14. The Website for access to electronic government information through **FDsys** is <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>. Additional information about the system is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/projects/fdsysinfo.htm>.

A Rock and a Hard Place: Print Collections and Faculty Attitudes

by **Ross Housewright** (Research Analyst, Ithaka S+R)
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Libraries can often feel stuck between a rock and a hard place in making strategic decisions about their print collections, simultaneously encouraged to make aggressive choices and warned against doing so. Many libraries may feel they realize little concrete value in the eyes of their constituents through the continued maintenance of print materials — especially journals — but remain concerned that any attempt to reinvest resources towards new roles and services may provoke a strongly negative reaction. A number of important questions must be wrestled with as libraries seek to evaluate the appropriate role of print collections in an increasingly digital world, including pressing challenges around preservation issues as described elsewhere in this issue; here, we consider the question of whether or not a strategic move away from print is in the interest of or supported by the library's users. Based on ongoing work to survey faculty members at colleges and universities across the United States, **Ithaka S+R** can offer some insight into this question. Several points of data from the *Faculty Survey 2009: Strategic Insights for Libraries, Publishers, and Societies*¹ provide the factual basis for the following discussion, although this discussion in many places ventures beyond these data and into interpretations and impressions that we have built up through site visits, interviews, and other engagement with the library community in this area.



Faculty members have hardly given libraries an overwhelming show of support for significant investment in local print collections, especially for journal materials. Many libraries have had direct experience with this, having watched usage of their print journal backfiles fall off dramatically in recent years. The 2009 Faculty Survey findings reinforce a perception of declining interest in print journal collections. Over the years, the share of respondents to the Faculty Survey that have indicated their strong belief that "Regardless of how reliable and safe electronic collections of journals are, it will always be crucial for my college or university library to maintain hard-copy collections of journals" has continued to fall; in 2009, only about a third of all respondents indicated their strong agreement with this statement. And this declining interest in print journals isn't limited to local collections; although a higher share of faculty respondents indicate their belief that "...it will always be crucial for *some* college or university library to maintain hard-copy collections of journals," this number has also continued to fall, to the point where now just about half of faculty respondents indicate their strong agreement with this statement.

Beyond simply offering libraries at best marginal support for local roles focused on the long-term maintenance of print journal collections, a growing number of faculty demonstrate readiness to see their library move more strategically away from print journals. In the Faculty Survey 2009, the percent of respondents who indicated their strong agreement with the statement "Assuming that electronic collections of journals are proven to work well and are readily accessible, I would be happy to see hard-copy collections discarded and replaced entirely by electronic collections" rose significantly across disciplines; over forty percent of respondents in the sciences and social sciences and over twenty percent of respondents in the humanities strongly agreed with this statement in 2009, in each case about twice the level of agreement reported in the 2006 study. Although still far from pervasive, these responses are somewhat startling; the fact that nearly half of the respondents in some fields would be *happy* to see print journal materials outright *discarded* suggests fast-growing levels of not just acceptance but *appetite* for a move away from print (even if such a view is restricted to a minority).

But while faculty attitudes in the aggregate appear to be shifting

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towards comfort with a library taking more aggressive strategic actions with its print collections of journals in particular, these decisions are made on the local level and will be judged based on local constituent attitudes. Cautionary tales of faculty members speaking out against even the appearance of a print drawdown, including protests at **Syracuse** over the idea of moving a number of materials to off-site storage and at **Cal Poly Pomona** over the deaccessioning of backfiles of journals available through **JSTOR**, have reinforced the idea that a strategic move away from print still requires a significant investment of political capital at the local level. Hence, the sense of being between a rock and a hard place, as many faculty members demonstrate little interest in print collections of journals in particular while they remain in place, but some may react strongly and negatively if they view the continued maintenance of these materials as threatened. It is not always easy to separate real user needs for print access from an attachment to print that may have to do more with the symbolism of the library than its actual practical function; although some faculty have clear, immediate concerns about the impact of a print drawdown on their teaching and research, others may have strong conceptual objections to the de-prioritization of print even if they themselves rarely or never make use of library print collections.

Some libraries therefore seek to shape a conversation that will both elicit needed input about priorities and will also enable the library to communicate its strategic vision and long-term objectives to its users. Towards this end, following a community framework (ideally one grounded in a more scientific approach to preservation planning) can be helpful in taking some of the emotion out of the dialogue. From that perspective, **Ithaka S+R's** *What to Withdraw* framework and decision-support tool can be helpful not only in making decisions about collections management but also in articulating these to campus stakeholders.² Through more deliberate engagement with constituents around these issues, can the library help to establish trust that its decisions about print collections will sustain long-held community values, even if in some cases they may be realized in different ways? By shaping a constructive conversation with constituents, the library may gain needed flexibility to take more deliberate action in reshaping print collections to support the library's intended roles and services. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **Roger C. Schonfeld and Ross Housewright**, *Faculty Survey 2009: Strategic Insights for Libraries, Publishers, and Societies*. <http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/faculty-surveys-2000-2009/faculty-survey-2009>
2. **Roger C. Schonfeld & Ross Housewright**, *What to Withdraw: Print Collections Management in the Wake of Digitization*. <http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/what-to-withdraw>

against the grain people profile

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BORN AND LIVED: Born in Arlington, Massachusetts; grew up in suburbs of Chicago. Since my father was a professor at the **University of Chicago**, my family and I had the opportunity to travel with him when he did research at other institutions. Lived a year and spent several summers in Cambridge, England and also lived for a year in Princeton, NJ. Went to undergraduate and graduate school and worked at **Cornell University** in Ithaca, NY. Also lived in Boston, MA and Madison, WI. Currently live in Silver Spring, MD.

EARLY LIFE: I have a Bachelor's degree in History and Government from **Cornell University**. I also have a Master's degree in Regional Planning from **Cornell** and had a very short lived career in that profession. I still have an interest in historic preservation.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: My Master's in Library Science is from the **University of Maryland**. I've worked my entire career as a librarian in the areas of technical services and collection development. I am Chief of the U.S. General Division and Acting Chief of the U.S. and Publisher Liaison Division at the **Library of Congress**. In my positions I have managerial responsibility for the Cataloging in Publication, ISSN, Dewey, and Children's and Young Adults' Cataloging programs at **LC**. My divisions are also responsible for selecting materials received in all formats from the **Copyright Office** and CIP Program for the permanent **Library of Congress** collections. Prior to working at **LC**, I was Head of Acquisitions and Chief Collection Development Officer at the **National Agricultural Library** where I assisted in creating their institutional repository, AgSpace. I have also worked at **Georgetown University**, the **University of Wisconsin-Madison**, the Executive Office of the **President Library** and the **National Library of Medicine**. I worked with colleagues at **UW Madison** to set up an early patron-driven acquisitions program and gave a presentation at the **Charleston Conference** on the program in 2001. I have held numerous positions in **ALA ALCTS**, including Chair of the Acquisitions Section. I am currently President of the **ALA Federal and Armed Forces Libraries Round Table**.

FAMILY: My husband, **Tanner Wray**, is Director of Public Services at the **University of Maryland**, College Park so we get to talk about libraries all the time. We have two guinea pigs, Spooky and Bessie.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: I am an avid scrapbooker and don't know how families will preserve their histories if they rely solely on online services to manage their photographs. **Tanner** and I love to travel. Our most recent big trip was to Namibia. I also have a love of English history, particularly the Tudor and Stuart period.

FAVORITE BOOKS: I do not have one in particular. Currently I am reading **Dave Eggers' *You Shall Know Our Velocity***. Previous to that I read **The Pickup** by **Nadine Gordimer**.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Having staff tell me that they "were never informed," when there is ample evidence that they were informed, often multiple times.

PHILOSOPHY: Always listen to your Cassandras.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Assisting with the creation of a new library for the **Georgetown University School of Foreign Service** in Doha, Qatar.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I think in five years we will finally see the benefits of the cross-mapping libraries have been working on to link classification systems and subject terminologies to easily retrieve content across systems for a variety of purposes. I am privileged to be working at an institution which is in the thick of this critical work. 🌱

