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Tyler Smeltekop Profile

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of currently-implemented digital solutions like NCRS and D2L in that 24/7, on-campus technical support already exists. This frees our staff up to focus on other aspects of our operation.

Course Packs and the Library: Better Together

The CMP was not always part of the Library; the program and its staff were adopted by the Text Management Unit of the Library four years ago from the on-campus printing and mail processing operation when they decided to shutter the program. We have found that the Library environment, personnel and resources have significantly enhanced our ability to serve the campus. On several occasions, subject librarians have stepped in to assist faculty in their particular academic specialization to find replacements for selections with expensive royalties that are pertinent while resulting in cheaper fees. Departmental librarian liaisons have also been absolutely indispensable in connecting our marketing with the departmental leadership, enhancing the reach of word-of-mouth recommendations from deans and directors to their faculty. There's also the obvious benefit of having rapid access to a monumental collection of books for us to scan selections to include in course packs, as well as making the task of tracking down original sources for materials that have been republished multiple times much less time-consuming. Perhaps most of all, though, I have found that the values and priorities of the library environment strongly encourage the development of products and services that meaningfully engage with faculty and students.

Becoming a part of the Library has also brought more tangible, direct impacts on our services too. We quickly realized that for many of the licenses governing our electronic journal access, language specifically addressing the use of that content in Library-produced course materials would be permitted, with no additional royalty or licensing required. We discovered that the entire journal catalogs from some publishers could be included in our course packs without charge — something any other provider would have to pay royalties on. E-journal licenses are consulted on an as-needed basis, and we are in the process of developing a spreadsheet logging the arrangements pertaining to our course packs for each journal and publisher. While a fairly intensive process, this has helped us bring our pack prices down significantly, in some cases.

To make this program run efficiently, legally and comprehensively, we often rely on others with expertise in areas where we have less experience. For example, in order to begin outsourcing our printing work, we received assistance from our campus purchasing department to negotiate the process of receiving and evaluating bids from prospective printing vendors. Our partnership with bookstores to ensure that the distribution process remains overseen by managers who have had years of experience is also a case of this.

against the grain people profile

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Tyler Smeltekop

BORN AND LIVED: Born in Lansing, Michigan. Raised in Williamston, Michigan.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Began at the Course Materials Program as a student employee during my undergrad at MSU. In the eight years since my hire, I've moved from a student employee to manager of the program.

FAMILY: Lovely wife and a little cat.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE: Playing tennis and racquetball, seeing good friends often.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Fight Club*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac*.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Doubling our Fall printed volume my first year as manager.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Become a librarian and continue to work towards bringing resources to students.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Until more universities create and/or adequately support their own course materials programs, providing an alternative for faculty that emphasizes the utilization of already-licensed library resources, students will continue to pay more for content than they might have to. 🐼

By having these aspects handled externally, we are able to narrow the range of roles that need to be filled. Our Program is primarily staffed by student assistants, undergraduates and graduates alike, who are charged with a diverse array of responsibilities. Chief amongst them is the management of thousands of permission requests sent to publishers, presses and individuals all over the world, along with the follow-up work often required for cases where the rights have changed hands over time. Our permissioning work is made easier through the **Copyright Clearance Center** and a portion of our royalties are paid through them. Everyone shares in the customer service work, interacting with faculty while moving course pack projects from conception to having them ready in the bookstores. Currently, we have one on-call staffer, and two full-time employees (including myself). Administrative support is exceedingly critical since growth in our program has surged — expanding the size of our team was essential to keep up.

Our Course Materials Program has required a steady stream of creative solutions and innovative tactics to develop new services, such as our e-packs, and keep pace with the ever-changing landscape of academic use of copyrighted materials. If you are interested in replicating our program at your institution, or enhancing currently-implemented course materials services, I would urge you to consider a few important factors. The scalability of our operation has moved from producing packs on a small number of photocopiers, in the program's infancy, to professional printing ven-

dors on machines capable of 125 impressions a minute, a demonstration of the range of print production that can be undertaken. Electronic course packs eliminate the need to manage a supply chain for a printed product, making an already-complex operation a bit more focused.

If parts of our services already exist at your institution, it can be relatively simple to parcel out other components to supplant existing services, such as copyright clearance. An existing library copy center may have the capacity to serve a limited number of courses, and the additional staff to negotiate permission requests on behalf of faculty ensure that the photocopying will be legal and in accordance with copyright regulations. Similarly, production might be able to be handled by on-campus printing programs as well, with your library managing the permission clearance and order intake.

The **MSU** Course Materials Program now pays for itself, covering all costs from print production, royalties and wages for our staff, as well as other overhead costs. Librarians considering implementing similar programs at their institutions should know that it takes a few years of hard work, trial and error, and outreach before enough faculty adopt the service and costs begin to balance out. Remaining at-cost is imperative for our operation and we believe that with the support of the **MSU** Library, we have been given the flexibility and resources needed to continue developing more sophisticated and affordable products for our students. 🐼