Against the Grain

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ATG Special Report: Workflow Collaboration at the American University Library

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ATG Special Report — Workflow Collaboration at the American University Library

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American University is a private, co-educational institution in Washington D.C. with an FTE of approximately 11,000 students. It is known for its programs in international service, public policy and public affairs, and international law and human rights. The library is a member of **ACRL** but not **ARL**.

In 2009, the library decided to broaden our services with the book vendor **Blackwell** to provide us with shelf-ready processing for our approval plan books. **Blackwell** would attach the spine label, apply the bookplate and property stamp, add the security strip, and attach the barcode. At the same time, the library contracted with **OCLC** Worldcat Cataloging Partners to provide us with MARC records for these shelf-ready approval books. Once the books arrived into the library, the Acquisitions Receiving Specialist would receive the books and review that all the pre-processing was done, and then divert all of the titles to the Cataloging Services Department for the record to be reviewed.

Once the shelf-ready program was up and running, we discovered that shelf-ready and computer-selected MARC records did not mean books were consistently ready to be put on the shelf. All the books were being routed to Cataloging. However, Cataloging did observe that many books coming in through this workflow had no problems with their records and could have been sent directly to Circulation to be shelved after the item record was created. At this point, in 2009, the Acquisitions and Cataloging Departments entered into their first collaborative effort to streamline this workflow.

In 2010, with **Blackwell's** bankruptcy, the library decided to use **Coutts** (now **Coutts Ingram**) as our primary book vendor. We wanted to continue shelf-ready processing approval books with them as well as the collaboration we had established between the two units.

The Idea

If the Receiving Specialist was already receiving the approval book and checking that the shelf-ready processing was complete, why couldn't she also check that the book's bibliographic record was complete enough to by-pass cataloging? This was the idea that the heads of both Acquisitions and Cataloging decided to explore. We needed to make sure that the Receiving Specialist had the time, knowledge, and attention to detail to ensure the MARC records would be thoroughly checked and that it was done in such a way to make Cataloging staff feel comfortable with not examining every bibliographic record for newly acquired approvals books. It was decided that Cataloging would develop a checklist that the Receiving Specialist would

follow. If the book and record matched everything on the checklist, the barcode would be scanned to add the item to the record and the book would be routed to Circulation. If the book and record did not match even one item on the checklist, the book would be routed to Cataloging for review.

The Specifics

Cataloging developed a checklist that is used by the Receiving Specialist to check for bibliographic errors in records for shelf-ready approval books. Elements of the checklist include a physical check for processing, instructions for routing non-standard books including folios, multivolume sets, literature that needs reclassification according to local practices, or books that should be sent to our music library. The Receiving Specialist initially checks the Encoding Level (Elvl) of the record, so that books with full-level ("I" or "_" (blank)) records are eligible to go through this checklist. The checklist includes basic matching checks of elements on the book and in the record. This includes:

- ISBN
- Existence of 035 in record with **OCLC** prefix
- Call number on the vendor-provided spine label matching the 050 and/or 090 in the bibliographic and holdings records
- Matching publisher information in the record and on the piece
- Matching dates in the 050 and/or 090, 260 or 264, and DtSt field in the 008
- Pagination

The checklist also includes more complex elements to examine, such as a check for variant titles (246) in records and more extensive instructions on how additional contributors such as illustrators and editors to a book can be reflected in a record. It should be noted that because the sometimes complex aspects of these elements can't be fully covered in the checklist, it means that sometimes titles are routed to Cataloging for work when they have otherwise good quality records.

Any books with errors or missing information in their records are routed to Cataloging for correction and enhancement. In 2014, the Receiving Specialist who performs this work was trained to check and compare encoding levels in **OCLC** and in our ILS. She was trained to import and overlay full level **OCLC** records onto our existing Voyager record in order to update them from prepublication or minimal level to

full level. She then applies the checklist to the newly imported record.

The Results

When we began this workflow in 2009, it initially resulted in 24% of approvals bypassing Cataloging, but with additional refinements and additional training of the Receiving Specialist who performs this check, we have increased this number by approximately 10% per year over the course of the past four years, raising the total number of approvals books bypassing Cataloging to an average of 60%. The Receiving Specialist's accuracy in checking these books was typically 96% to 97%.

More Collaboration

Since collaborating on the shelf-ready approval project (the library also has firm order books pre-processed, but these titles always go directly to Cataloging. This may be a future project to analyze, to see if we can apply the checklist to these titles), the Cataloging and Acquisitions Departments have worked together to improve workflows by Acquisitions' contribution to a long-term move to storage project in which we are moving approximately 100,000 volumes from our library's main stacks to a shared storage facility that is part of our consortia, Washington Research Library Consortia (WRLC). The purpose of this move to storage project, which will move approximately 15% of our main stacks to storage, is to make space for increased student study and programming space, as well as being part of a renovation of the library. The renovation of the library is somewhat dependent upon creating space in the library based on this move, so moving items has needed to happen at a rapid rate, at times being the Cataloging unit's number one priority since the project began approximately two years ago. As part of the move to storage process, we confirm that the cataloging record and barcode match the item in hand, make corrections to bibliographic records that are incorrect, correct holdings statements as needed, and examine materials for damage or mold.

One Acquisitions Specialist in particular has contributed significantly to this project, accounting for nearly 35% of the total volumes relocated to storage over the past year. In addition to performing the database maintenance and cleanup aspects of this position, she has also reviewed the work of Acquisitions student workers who have been trained to work on this project during their down time and also serves as a point person for answering student questions. Although she initially only worked on single-volume monographs and titles that were considered the easier part of this project's workflow, she has, over time, learned additional skills and works to correct problem titles

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routed to us that have errors in bibliographic, holdings, or item records. This has allowed us to move significantly more titles to storage and has given Cataloging more leeway to focus on projects requiring higher-level cataloging knowledge and skills.

American University Library's Processing Department is located in the Acquisitions Department, and the Processing Specialist has provided Cataloging Services staff and student assistants training to identify which materials that are moving to storage as part of this project need to be routed to her department for repair, and has trained staff on how to identify mold so that these materials can be isolated and appropriately handled.

Another way the two departments have collaborated has been with eBook cataloging. Over the past five years, we have shifted to purchasing more eBooks than print books. The Acquisitions department is responsible for ordering all eBooks that are one-time purchases (The Electronic Resource Management unit orders subscription eBook packages). Acquisitions has one dedicated staff member who handles the bulk of eBook ordering and importing of records. Initially, he would send a list of titles to Cataloging in order for them to review the records. That staff member suggested that since he was already in the MARC record changing the URL field, why couldn't he just check the record to make sure it was correct? Thus was born another collaborative effort. Cataloging developed an appropriate checklist and several staff members in Acquisitions were trained on using it. This collaboration has resulted in the elimination of the backlog of eBooks to be checked.

Onward

Often times in libraries, various units in Technical Services do not necessarily work together. These units may create their own silos and may not be involved with work other units are doing. At **American University Library**, the heads of the units in Technical Services have worked hard to foster the idea that we are one unit, working for the same cause — to provide the best access to the material for our users. It has been very useful for the Acquisitions unit to learn what the Cataloging unit looks for in a good record. This has provided us with a shared vocabulary and understanding. Cataloging staff have also been trained to work in the Acquisitions module of Voyager. This has helped in the demystification process for everyone. We can do this by collaborating on projects that get the materials out to the user in a timely manner. Our staff members have also been eager to learn new skills and to get a better understanding of what work is done in each unit, and how something Acquisitions does may impact the work in Cataloging and vice versa. One positive outcome has been an increased respect for work done in our units. 🐾

ATG Special Report — Some Thoughts on Polling at the Charleston Conference 2014

by **Erin Gallagher** (Electronic Resources & Serials Librarian, Olin Library, Rollins College, 1000 Holt Avenue, Winter Park, FL 32789) <egallagher@rollins.edu>

A couple of years ago at the annual meeting of the **Florida Association of College and Research Libraries** (**FACRL**), I attended a presentation that included live audience polling. I now fail to remember the content of the presentation, but the interactive polling made a lasting impression. Such a lasting impression, in fact, that I have been looking for opportunities to use live polling in various facets of my life in academic librarianship. Library instruction sessions are a terrific venue for live polling. The students light up when asked to pull out their phones or turn on their computers. They enjoy responding anonymously to questions like "how does writing a research paper make you feel?" and seeing their responses pop up in cartoonish bubbles. They seem more willing to speak up, voice opinions, and ask questions when we have already broken the seal on interaction. And we end up feeling a bit more hip.

When brainstorming the details for our presentation proposal for the **Charleston Conference** this year (with co-presenter **Michelle Leonard**, **University of Florida**), we knew we wanted to do something that went beyond the Powerpoint. With so many competing sessions on our topic, use-driven acquisition, we had to stand out and offer our attendees something buzzworthy. Because our presentation focused on surveying the landscape of use-driven acquisition, live polling was an obvious fit.

In preparation for our session, we pinged a few listservs and asked for suggestions for polling tools. The most common answer was **Poll Everywhere**. Anyone can register and create a free account that allows for all the basic functions and up to 40 respondents.   Paid plans offer more customization, a few bells and whistles, and an allowance for more respondents. We found their user guide and tutorial videos to be incredibly valuable, but there is no substitute for getting your hands dirty creating some test polls. For those of you who may want to incorporate live polling into your instruction sessions, meetings, or conference presentations, we are sharing some do's and don'ts based on our experience. Some relate specifically to Poll Everywhere, but we believe they're applicable to other scenarios.

Are you a first-time attendee of the Charleston Conference?

Do's:

- Give the audience options for responding. This could include text messaging, Web responding, Twitter, etc.

- Depending on the nature of your poll questions, give the audience a mix of open-ended and multiple-choice questions to keep things interesting and to collect a blend of quantitative and anecdotal data.

- Keep the questions and multiple-choice responses as concise and simple as possible. No one wants to spend a long time reading through a laundry list before responding.

- Practice makes perfect! My colleagues here at **Rollins College** were generous enough to attend a polling

What is your favorite presentation type?