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## Interview of Pauline Rodriguez-Atkins, Manager, Metropolitan Library System

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new purchases to end users) can be especially useful for smaller libraries or those without dedicated marketing personnel. Whether a library is looking to enhance outreach, prove value on campus, or simply looking to get a little more bang for their buck, there is really no limit to the types of collaborations the account development team is willing to try. We are always interested in hearing your own ideas, as well.

### Everything Else

Earlier, I mentioned implementation and discovery assistance. We communicate regularly with the editorial, platform development, and metadata teams so that we can answer any questions libraries may have about MARC records or how **Springer** works with various discovery services. Occasionally we will perform a “discovery review” on a random library Website. This entails crawling the search environment, searching for **Springer** content, and recording its findability. Exercises like this provide valuable insight — not only into how our content is organized and discovered in the field, but also helps us keep up with trends and changes in the land of discovery.

There’s a twelve hundred word limit on this column, so I’m not able to include every single way account development teams work to add value to licensed content. If you see us during conferences or at your campus library, please say hi — we’d love to meet you! 🌻

turns to reading while she is away at work. Prewitt was a boxer and bugler and a soldier destined to be a thirty-year man before fate intervenes. Still, reading opened up a whole new world to him, never mind that he was unable to take advantage of it.

Studs Lonigan, the Irish Catholic protagonist in **James T. Farrell’s** trilogy tells of a boy’s life into manhood. I read that trilogy while I was in high school, and it is among my all-time favorite books. That aside, I thought of Studs as I wrote the lines about Prewitt. However inadvertently, Prewitt discovered literature and, had there not been a war going on, he might have gone on to be a writer much like his inventor, **James Jones**. **James T. Farrell**, on the other hand, does not give such an advantage to his creation. The system didn’t allow it, and Studs also dies young. Studs, the right book would have done you a lot of good.

Once children have learned to read, how do we keep them reading? What causes some to read only what is required of them and others like **Richard Wright**, the novelist, to forge signatures in order to check out books from a library that excluded blacks? Nature or nurture or a bit of both? Let them have books! 🌻

# Let’s Get Technical — Moving Technical Services to an Off-site Space

## How One Public Library System Worked with Architects to Make this Happen

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### Introduction

When we started this column, one thing we wanted to do was to hear stories about problems and solutions from other technical services departments. So, we sent a message to various technical service listservs, asking if anyone would be interested in being interviewed for the column. Our first conversation was with **Pauline Rodriguez-Atkins**, Manager of Cataloging and Interlibrary Loan at the **Metropolitan Library System** in Oklahoma. We were interested in her story of how their technical services team was able to work directly with architects to design a customized space for technical services when their department moved off-site. Working directly with the architects enabled them to design a building specific to the needs of a dynamic, fast-paced, and large-scale technical services section. As **Rodriguez-Atkins** states of working directly with architects: “It was such a great experience. Once in a career experience. For us, very often you know with technical services nobody asks you what you need, they tell you what you get. It was such a great experience to be asked what we needed.” The following column is a summary of the phone interview we had with **Rodriguez-Atkins** on May 18, 2015.

### The Library System

**Metropolitan Library System** is a public library system serving Oklahoma County, covering around 700 square miles and serving a population of approximately 720,000 in and around the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. The library system is comprised of 19 library locations, 14 of which are full-service library locations and 5 that provide limited service. Outside of Oklahoma City, the communities served have populations of between 600 and 87,000.

#### How do Technical Services operate?

Technical services (called Materials Services) is comprised of Acquisitions, Cataloging, Processing, and Interlibrary Loan. The whole unit is centralized for the entire system. Acquisitions includes the staff who select the material for purchase. The Acquisitions staff and selectors have always resided apart from the rest of the unit. When the unit moved to the new building, Interlibrary Loan joined them.

#### How did you operate before coming together in one building?

Initially, all of the technical services operations were located in the downtown library

branch. Because of construction being done around the main library in the 1970s, the Cataloging and Processing units were moved into a smaller 1950s-era branch. It was difficult to operate in that building because Receiving and Processing were located on the first floor and Cataloging was on the second floor. There was only one elevator in the building, and it sometimes malfunctioned. Materials would then have to be moved from hand to hand up and down the stairs. This “temporary” relocation of technical services in 1974 lasted until 2010! By that time, the library system had expanded and the space was just too small to be able to handle the influx of materials.

#### What was the rationale for having a building just for Technical Services?

The library system does not outsource any technical services operations or buy any shelf-ready materials. Technical services was no longer able to function in their space, despite being creative and utilizing every inch. The idea of moving to a new space was first brought up in 2002 and finally approved by the library commission in 2006, with the units moving into their new space in 2010. The library commission was told that if they wanted to build a huge new library, with a collection of over 100,000 volumes, more space needed to be made for Cataloging and Processing. Within three years, the process went from nothing to design, construction, and moving in. The library system delayed the construction of a new branch library until Technical Services was able to move into their new space.

#### Why was Acquisitions in a separate location and where is it now located?

When Cataloging and Processing were moved out of the downtown building, there wasn’t any room to put selectors or Acquisitions staff in the branch library, so they stayed in the downtown library. When the new downtown library was built, Technical Services was supposed to be reunited with the selectors and Acquisitions in the new building, but the planned technical space was reallocated. There was discussion when the design phase started on the building that currently houses Technical Services that it would include Acquisitions, but at that point there was a desire from the administration to keep Acquisitions in the same building with them, together with financial operations.

#### Why did you decide to work directly with architects? What were the benefits of being

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*able to work directly with them to plan your space? Were there any drawbacks? Do you think working with consultants would have helped improve your workspace design or workflow processes? Is there anything you would have done differently in retrospect?*

**Rodriguez-Atkins** states that, "for all building projects for the library system, there is a full-time director of construction. He is a construction engineer and is the point man on all of these projects. He and the library administration generally believe more effective results happen by working directly with the people who are going to be on a site than by working with a consultant." She says the entire process was a great experience. She and her staff had worked in such cramped and inefficient space for years, so they knew what worked and didn't work, and specifics about what a technical services space needs to function most efficiently. She says, "the advantage of working directly with the architect was that we could say things like there can't be pillars in the middle of the floor because we have to be able to move materials around easily throughout the building. Another important detail was the need for diffused lighting." **Rodriguez-Atkins** wanted to design a production building and to have the staff heavily involved in designing a space that would work for them. For her, "the benefits far outweighed the drawbacks because I feel that bringing in a consultant would have ended up with an extra layer of possibilities for miscommunication."

### *How do you handle routing of materials?*

**Rodriguez-Atkins** tells us about how they manage to route materials between buildings: "Before Material Services moved into the new building, Maintenance was located at a site away from where Cataloging and Processing were located. They would drive the delivery trucks over, load all the new materials, take them back to the maintenance site, sort them according to which library they were going to, and then run the delivery. There is now an RFID sorter at the new building. There are also two smaller versions of the sorter at two of the library sites within this county. The new building houses big, giant rolling bins, the kind that are in book drops that have the floor that drops down as you add stuff to it. When the processing staff are processing materials, the last step in the process is to activate the RFID tags and set the material on a conveyor belt. The material goes up onto the sorter, and the sorter software not only reads where the material is owned but also if there's a customer waiting to pick it up. That information is linked, and it sorts it either into where the customer is waiting to pick it up or where it's going to be housed. The delivery drivers roll these big bins out onto their delivery truck, take them, drop them off at the library, and as the library gets material returned they put them in big black bins. The

drivers bring them back, roll them back into the area where the sorter is, and just put them on the conveyor one after the other. The RFID sorter assigns them to their appropriate location."

### *How do you ensure materials don't get lost?*

**Rodriguez-Atkins** says that has not been an issue. "The materials are supposed to get coded at every step of the process. The unit has what is called a tracer system so that if you can't find something and somebody says they've returned it, a tracer code is triggered which then sends out a message to all the libraries to check their shelves to see if it's been shelved at the wrong location. The libraries are supposed to check their hold shelves and remove everything that hasn't been picked up within seven working days." There are very rare issues with missing materials, but it's not a huge issue because there are so many checks and balances with things being run through RFID readers at every step in the process, that it is easy to trace the movement of an item.

### *How do you handle materials repair? Are damaged items moved back to the Technical Services building?*

**Rodriguez-Atkins** says the library system overall prefers to replace than repair, and is lucky enough to have funds to do so. What repair is done is generally done at the library level. She tells us that "library staff do their own repairs unless the barcode needs to be replaced. In that case, the item is sent back to Cataloging. Those titles go on a shelf and Technical Processing has a commitment to work on those within one work week after they go up on the shelves." Those titles are prioritized since they are items that are available in the catalog.

### *Tell us about staff morale in regard to moving off-site.*

One of the issues was the fact that the unit was not in a building with a library. This made it difficult for staff to borrow their own material. The administration made special accommodations and allows a little circulation desk in the building, which is open for one hour a day for staff. The staff in the old locations were so happy to be able to have spaces where they had enough room to work and enough space to be spread out and not feel like they were sitting on top of each other. It really helped to overcome the fact that the unit was moving away. **Rodriguez-Atkins** says there is some sense of isolation, regardless. There is frustration with the idea that the staff working in the libraries don't always understand what goes on in technical services and all the work that is done, although that existed even before the move. She says that sometimes she has felt left out of supervisory communications, because it is easy to forget that not all supervisors are at the downtown library or at a branch. Morale was the lowest during design and planning phase of the building process. The approval for the new building took so long, and then it took three years to build the building and the staff weren't sitting in the meetings on a daily basis in the way that the managers were. There was the sense that it was never going to happen, which was a negative experience

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for many of staff. However, once it actually happened, everybody was very happy. The staff all understand that they are working as a team. They pull together, and if one person is having a bad day, everyone else will step in and do what they need to do. It's been a really good experience morale-wise.

#### **How do you communicate with your colleagues in other buildings?**

Email and telephone communication is encouraged. Staff in all the branch libraries are encouraged to call or email either the department or the manager. **Rodriguez-Atkins** says her staff does not do a lot of Skyping for meetings. Technical processing does Skype with Material Selection when they need to actually show them material. They have electronic meeting abilities, but feel that face-to-face interaction with people within the organization is more important. They have also started to do more e-meetings with the library association and with people outside their particular site, and there is a staff development day once a year where everybody from all the locations comes together for a full day of workshops and activities in one location.

#### **But you must have to have meetings with your supervisor and the other supervisors?**

The Material Services unit is composed of Material Selection, Acquisitions, Cataloging, Technical Processing, and Interlibrary Loan. There are three managers who all report to a division director. There are regular manager meetings about every other month when the managers discuss issues that are coming up for the library system as a whole and planning and preparing for various actions that are coming, such as when a branch will be closed for a period of time to have carpet replaced. They also discuss where there are issues with each of the different departments and how other departments can help address them. **Rodriguez-Atkins** also says that the library staff and managers at different branches are encouraged to job shadow in our offices and visit our offices. If there's a bigger issue going on in one of the libraries, she will visit that library to see what needs to be done. She is trying to make her unit more visible with the branch libraries and do more outreach when time allows. If either the Technical Processing Manager or **Rodriguez-Atkins** needs to interact with their director, she's always willing to come by their building and visit with them or to let them go visit her.

#### **Conclusion**

**Rodriguez-Atkins** says that working with the architect to design an off-site place just for Material Services was a great experience overall. It was a once in a career experience. "For us, very often you know with technical services nobody asks you what you need, they tell you what you get. It was such a great experience to be asked what we needed." 🐾

## From A University Press — Diversity in Publishing

Column Editor: **Leila W. Salisbury** (Director, University Press of Mississippi, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS 39211; Phone: 601-432-6205; Fax: 601-432-6217) <lsalisbury@ihl.state.ms.us>

The #WeNeedDiverseBooks hashtag just celebrated its first birthday. The Diverse Books movement was developed in response to the lack of diversity in the children's book panel at the **2014 BookExpo America** ("It was 30 authors that were all white, and the only diversity was the Grumpy Cat," says **Ellen Oh**, co-founder of We Need Diverse Books). The 2015 panels at **BEA** were more diverse in makeup, but the movement organizers say the conversation is just beginning. Publishing, both in terms of the books that are published and the people who work to publish those books, still has a long way to go when it comes to reflecting the multicultural society in which we live.

Over the years, I've thought about this issue in relation to our university press community (and publishing more generally). On the whole, we are a very homogenous group, and I am not sure this has changed much in my 22 years in publishing. There are surely many reasons for this, but I do wonder if part of the issue is that publishing is still basically an apprentice system, whereby people eventually get paid jobs in publishing after unpaid work or internships. By its nature, this system trains only those who can afford to work for free, and that will limit the diversity, socioeconomic and otherwise, of future publishers. In response to this, three years ago our press made a proposal to the Mississippi-based **McRae Foundation** to fund a stipend for interns, either college students or recent graduates, to encourage more young people to consider a future in publishing.

Diversity within our staffs is key, but as publishers we can and should also be looking for diversity in the ranks of our authors and the subjects in which we publish. About seven years ago, our press began a series in *Caribbean Studies*. Shortly thereafter, we were fortunate enough to be part of a **Mellon Foundation** grant for *Folklore Studies in a Multicultural World*, a joint project with the **University of Illinois Press** and the **University of Wisconsin Press**. We used **Mellon** funds to begin attending the annual meeting of the **Caribbean Studies Association** in order to promote the series and augment our acquiring efforts in this growing field.

Two of our editors just returned from this meeting (held this year in New Orleans, which I have often heard described as the northernmost point in the Caribbean), and the first thing they mentioned is the great diversity of scholars working in this field. The majority of potential authors our editors encountered were of African

ancestry, whether African American or Afro Caribbean, including Mississippi's series editor, **Anton Allahar**. Our editors also spoke with authors of Indian ancestry, and one of the most interesting aspects of *Caribbean Studies* is the fascinating mix of cultures and languages in the area, including people of African, Indian, Native, and European descent, who speak English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and other languages.

The result is a marvelous diversity of authors we publish in this area, a diversity that is further augmented by the press's focus on civil rights and African American history in other areas of our list. Upon his return from the **Caribbean Studies Association** meeting, I asked our editor-in-chief, **Craig Gill**, about the diversity he experienced at the meeting, and how it might translate to other parts of our communal work. He commented, "One way to increase diversity in publishing, among authors and in academia more generally, is to make an effort to explore areas where diversity naturally occurs for reasons of geography, history, and subject matter. If a press limits itself in pursuing new subjects, it will also limit itself in other ways."

It is not always easy to walk the talk of diversity, for it requires constant attention and cultivation, for staff, authors, and subject matter alike. Scholars want to place their work where there is a longstanding commitment to their subject matter, to publish where their mentors publish and where they see outstanding and new scholarly work being done. Cultivating these authors and subject areas does not happen overnight, but ongoing attention and outreach do eventually yield results.

And the same may be true for our staffs. It is up to us to do more to reach out to diverse communities, to actively seek out bright young people to mentor and to introduce to the work of publishing (and librarianship), and to work to see that the people who publish scholarship reflect the diversity of the scholarship being published. What additional programs can we create that will result in our readers and patrons seeing themselves and their own particular communities reflected in the content we produce and in the people who help them access that content? As with so many issues in publishing, there is more work to be done. But if the end result is that we better reflect and serve our communities, then the continuing conversations and subsequent work to produce tangible results are more than worth it. 🐾

