and to promote transparency among team members, the CD department uses a shared email alias for vendor contact. This shared email address functions like a listserv and copies multiple members of Collection Development on communications. With this email address, we receive both automated messages and vendor representative communications. The intention is to minimize confusion about vendor contact, reduce email forwarding, and to include pertinent parties in conversations from start to finish. Using a shared address requires that we have clear internal workflow indicating who follows up on what pieces of information shared by vendors. However, additional workflow processes with trello.com facilitate next steps and project management as action items are created.

Vendors plan site visits to share new product information, review accounts, and solicit product feedback. These visits are a chance to learn more about a company’s business model, make meaningful connections, and to evaluate existing subscriptions or consider new resources. When a company has multiple vendors representing different product types this can mean multiple vendor visits per year. In order to manage a burgeoning visitation schedule, the MSU Library encourages vendor visits biennially. This standard is applied to all vendors with the goal of maintaining consistent and fair practices to cultivate vendor relationships. It also helps us relay a realistic and manageable schedule to our liaison librarians.

We also convey to our vendors that one of the most helpful interaction points with them for our library is the opportunity to understand more about our existing subscriptions and owned products to promote their use to our patrons. While vendor representatives frequently advertise new products during site visits, quite often ongoing vendor support is pricelessly. To maximize the value of current subscriptions and provide quality service to patrons, it is important for librarians and staff to become familiar and comfortable with subscribed products. Therefore, we encourage vendors to provide quick video tutorials, training webinars, and responsive customer service that reinforces the value of existing subscriptions, in turn fostering trust, a positive user experience, and good product usage. Creating time for patrons, librarians, and staff to become familiar with the functional aspects of product platforms, or new upgrades proves beneficial and is less time consuming than costly site visits.

Finally, caller ID on our library telephones helps us manage our vendor communications. When facing challenges like trying to troubleshoot a broken resource or negotiating a contract or having a colleague in your office, caller ID can be a big time saver. It allows us to answer a support-case call or to decline an unexpected contact. Likewise, some vendors have disregarded our communication preferences, in which case caller ID can provide the vendor an opportunity to connect with your voicemail if you are otherwise occupied.

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