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You Want to Do What? Graphic Novels in an Academic Library

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from the previous year as a starting point, a sub-set of the ABCD group investigates ways to enhance the resources supporting research in the targeted disciplines. Given the large amounts of money, title-by-title procurement is not feasible; instead, the guiding principle is to identify purchases that provided access to many resources at a single pass. The ABCD group reviews and discusses the final recommendations for each enhancement purchase.

Preparing for the Inevitable Drought

Endangered Species — The Endangered Species list was created to monitor our ongoing subscriptions using the criterion created during the budget crisis. These resources, as well as those newly added to our collection, are given three years, during which time the liaison librarians promote or review the resource. The ongoing and open nature of the list offers our liaisons ample opportunities for feedback and awareness not previously provided. The analysis gives us valid reasons for cutting a product and using the money in other, more productive ways.

Open Access — Beyond the current methods outlined above, we must prepare for a lack of funding. Including high-quality, librarian-evaluated Open Access materials in our library catalog is one method of preparing for the future. However, simply pointing a patron to an Open Access resource may not be enough. We are exploring ways to harvest and archive a local copy of Open Access resources through collaboration with our Digital Library. Furthermore, our current budget allows us to support Open Access Initiatives, such as Knowledge Unlatched or Independent Voices, providing current and future access to scholarly materials and ensuring the future of our collection.

Parting Thoughts

As we approach our uncertain future with funding for collection development, our decisions become more important in providing access to quality resources that are in demand now. Cost for materials and demand for items increases every year, but with strategic growth and detailed plans, we are able to transition and remain relevant to our users. We were fortunate to gain a temporary infusion of funding. With these funds the ABCD group, DDA, and targeted subject area enhancements will prepare us for the possible drought. The continued detailed monitoring and analysis of our electronic resource subscriptions and the addition of open access resources will take the collection in new directions.

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against the grain people profile

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Emily Billings

BORN AND LIVED: I was born in Mount Vernon, TX and have lived all my life in the East Texas area.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: While I pursued my undergraduate degree in English, I received a job in the university library. I LOVED working there so much I decided to become a librarian. My first professional position was as a Public Services Librarian at a community college. I have participated in the **Association of College and Research Libraries**, Immersion program teacher track as well as the **Texas Library Association**, TALL Texans leadership program.

FAMILY: I am very close with my two younger sisters and parents.

IN MY SPARE TIME: I spend a lot of time knitting and reading fiction. I volunteer with the SPCA, the Junior League, and the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority.

FAVORITE BOOKS: I enjoy reading romance or science fiction novels. I have read *Frankenstein* by **Mary Shelley** numerous times.

HOW/WHERE I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I see the industry improving and expanding on the evaluation of electronic resources especially in the areas of accessibility and usability. 🌱



You Want to Do What?: Graphic Novels in an Academic Library

by **Christi Piper** (Instruction Librarian, University of Colorado Colorado Springs' Kraemer Family Library) <cpiper@uccs.edu>

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In the spring of 2015, a series of coincidental events took place at the **Kraemer Family Library at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs**: we had a faculty member approach the librarians with a request for us to be involved in the annual **Denver ComicCon** and noticed that more faculty on campus were using graphic novels in their classrooms. This led a group of librarians to question whether the library was truly meeting the graphic novel needs of the campus. Specifically, we wondered if more students than we were aware of were interested in graphic novels and if the demand was being met. In order to explore that question, we designed a student feedback survey and began to reach out to faculty already integrating pop culture materials into their curriculum.

We focused our survey efforts on reaching a wide-range of students to gauge interest in graphic novels and to try to understand the level

of awareness of the library's collection. The results were eye opening. Of the 459 students who completed the survey, over 57% responded that they read graphic novels, but 74% of the same population did not know that the library had a collection of graphic novels. This lack of student knowledge about the collection prompted an investigation of how well our current graphic novels collection was, or was not, circulating. When the circulation statistics were run, we found that 58% of the 230 titles had been checked out at least once in the past year. We also found that there had been over 150 consortium requests for graphic novels to be brought in from other libraries. Some people were obviously finding the collection and it was getting good use, but we were not keeping up with the demand for more and newer titles, as in that same year only 22 new volumes were added to the collection.

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Before bringing this information forward to the entire library, we created a plan and gathered the necessary information to support our case for a standalone graphic novel collection. While popular reading materials have been accepted in academic libraries for a considerable amount of time, a focused collection for graphic novels in academic libraries is a newer concept. Luckily, other people before us have defended the purpose of graphic novels in the academic library. **Lorena O'English** et al. noted the rise of academics and scholars using graphic novels in their classrooms and for their scholarship. In response to the research indicating that faculty are beginning to embrace graphic novels, we examined if that was also occurring on our campus and found that at least ten courses utilized graphic novels and many others allowed students to use graphic novels for assignments within the course. However, graphic novels in courses are not the only reason to build a graphic novel collection in an academic library. Many researchers, including **Lorena O'English** et al., have found that graphic novels are important for promoting pleasure reading. **Elizabeth M. Downey** suggests they are important for illustrating broader social lessons. **Steven Hoover** offers that they are important for "combating entrenched views of literacy within academia." **Beth Jane Toren** concluded that they help create a student-centered library that works to serve the underserved populations of visual learners. This cohesion between literature about graphic novels for scholarship and literature for pleasure reading shows that our desire to build a standalone graphic novel collection was supported by the professional community at large and by the demands of our campus. Now we just had to garner the support of the other librarians on our campus.

With our data and research in hand, we developed the following plan. First, fix the inconsistent cataloguing of graphic novels to contain the MARC 655 genre heading "Graphic novels" to make the collection more findable in the library catalog. Second, obtain monetary resources to create a specific fund to purchase graphic novels from that could be used to build up a core collection and get newer materials. Once the collection had a chance to grow, we proposed that the collection should be separated from the main collection in the library, moved to a public area, and given an individual location marker in the catalog. Once the physical move of the materials was complete, we planned to engage in very targeted marketing to different communities on campus to draw awareness to our improved collection and its newly improved accessibility.

The group of librarians working with this collection created an internal plan and presented it to the full library staff in order to gain feedback. We were confident that the plan would be well received and we would be able to quickly move on to implementing the plan. After presenting our plan to the library staff, it became clear that we needed to better

communicate with our colleagues about why a standalone graphic novel collection was important to our users. We recognized that not all of the library staff were in agreement about why graphic novels, as a specific format, should be awarded their own collection location. We needed to offer a primer on graphic novels and why they would be helpful for our student population before we could begin to discuss the logistics of moving the collection to a separate location. Additionally, subject librarians needed to agree on what funds would be used to purchase graphic novels. Some subject librarians purchase non-fiction graphic novels to support their disciplines, while others were purchased from a general fund. If there was to be a specific graphic novel fund, we needed to decide how graphic novels would be purchased. For the sake of consistency, we decided that all graphic novels, no matter the subject, would be bought from the graphic novel fund. So despite the ongoing debate about the definition of format and the future location, the collection was granted a small fund from the materials budget, which would be used to purchase all of the new graphic novels. Moreover, once the new location is established, all graphic novels will be housed together, no matter subject area.

Several staff members expressed concerns about the proposed location of the standalone collection. The library recently established a collaborative space which houses group study tables, white boards, and other standalone collections such as young adult literature and children's literature. Due to the high volume of students in the collaborative space, the nature of that space, and the lack of space elsewhere in the library, we proposed moving the graphic novels to this highly visible shared space.

Concerns were raised about the proximity of adult graphic novel content to the children's and young adult books. This discussion was fruitful and allowed the librarians and staff members to debate about censorship and what are appropriate materials for an academic library. Ultimately, we came to agreement that the proposed location would remain the same due to the fact that our primary audience is undergraduate students and that all materials are available to any user, no matter the location.

We learned a number of important lessons from our bid to create a new, highly visible location for our graphic novel collection. Firstly, we mistakenly assumed that all of our colleagues knew what a graphic novel is and why the format is unique enough to warrant its own location. Instead of taking their buy-in for granted, we should have put together a presentation to explain what a graphic novel is, highlight the diverse subject matters addressed by graphic novel authors, report on the literature about their place in academia, and highlight how our peers at other academic institutions had built distinct, highly popular graphic novel collections for their students and faculty. This would have better educated our colleagues who were unfamiliar with graphic novels and perhaps had biased views of the

format. For instance, we quickly learned that several librarians and staff members believed that graphic novels were dominated by simplistic superhero stories or that the "graphic" in graphic novels meant adult-themed stories full of questionable language and subject matter. To combat these views, we could have brought in a sampling of our collection that illustrated how authors were using the format to write memoirs, recount biographies of famous historical figures, and address important issues such as racism, LGBT rights, and privacy concerns in the digital age. This would have gone a long way to overcome any negative views of graphic novels and would have better connected the format to the curriculum.

Secondly, we recommend considering all voices before attempting to move forward with a project of this nature. Our library includes employees with the rank of faculty and others who are professional staff. Historically, the faculty/staff divide has been a source of tension in our library, with a feeling that faculty members sometimes ignore the opinions and concerns of staff members. However, some of the best questions were raised by staff members at our library, especially those who work in Technical Services. They expressed philosophical concerns about creating a separate shelving location for graphic novels instead of including them in our main collection. Having this conversation collectively allowed other staff members to chime in with their own opinions. For instance, another librarian pointed out that we had created separate shelving locations for our Young Adult and Popular Reading collections, so creating a new shelving location was not without precedent. By giving everyone



an opportunity to voice their opinions, we were ultimately able to reach consensus as a group. Those who initially expressed reservations about the new shelving location were eventually satisfied with our reasoning for doing so, which led to increased buy-in. If we had attempted to push through our plan without giving everyone a chance to provide input, our plan would have more likely failed, especially since it was dependent upon the support of the Technical Services staff, who process new items and add them to the collection.

Thirdly, when developing a plan that requires support from multiple departments, we recommend seeking their input before unveiling the plan to the entire library. This was a lesson we learned after the fact. Our original timeline for creating a new shelving location within the year for graphic novels simply was not realistic. It didn't take into account the other projects that Technical Services was already committed to; for instance, a large reference and microfiche weeding project that would ultimately free up the shelves we needed for our new graphic novel collection. We should have spoken with Technical Services before unveiling our plan to the library. Not only could we have addressed some of their concerns earlier on, we could also have better understood their workload and produced a

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more realistic timeline for the creation of our new shelving location.

Finally, we recommend being realistic about what is possible at your library. Most importantly, be flexible and willing to compromise. We began with the goal of creating a new graphic novel shelving location by the end of 2015. Now, though, it looks like our project will not be completed until the end of 2016, a full year later than what we had originally hoped for. We do not see this as a failure, however. Libraries, particularly academic libraries, are inherently political institutions and compromise is sometimes essential to accomplishing your goals. If we had chosen to stand our ground on the completion date, it would have

created considerable friction between us and the Technical Services department, possibly risking the entire project and doing a disservice to the community we serve. By being open to compromise, listening, and considering opposing views, we overcame a number of challenges that could otherwise have derailed our project completely. It is good to have vision, but you must sometimes compromise on the details if you are to make it a reality.

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The Weeding Planner: How a Research Library Weeded Approximately 2.76 Miles of Print Materials from the Shelves to Repurpose Library Space OR Much Ado About the New Normal

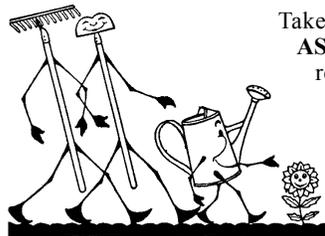
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In the past four decades, academic libraries have changed from print-collection focused spaces to resource and services-driven organizations that respond and adapt to the changing needs of users, the developing technologies that improve access to information sources, and the increasing costs of acquiring and providing access to those sources. In the immediate post-World War II years, academic libraries adopted the mission of purchasing vast print collections to support the expansion of the research focus of universities. As the internet developed into the World Wide Web in the 1990s, print indices gave way to electronically searchable indices, which in turn evolved into our current full-text academic databases. As more scholarly resources became available online full text, reliance on print collections decreased. The popular "Teens React to Encyclopedias" YouTube video is a simplistic and unscientific indication of our current college student's familiarity with using print resources.¹ It can be assumed that future academic library users will rely less and less on print, and that collection development decisions will focus more and more on acquiring electronic information sources.

The use of library space has shifted from a storage space for collections to a space for students to learn and to make. Multi-purpose digital classrooms, collaborative study spaces,

makerspaces, group meeting rooms, presentation rooms, meditation rooms, nap rooms, writing centers, academic success centers, information technology services, and other vital services, such as student advising offices, are common occupiers of library space, with print collections being weeded and then moved off site into remote storage or into automated retrieval centers.



Take a sampling of **ARL** or **ASERL** libraries and see the repurposing of space and offsite storage of print collections happening: the **University of Central Florida's** automated retrieval center (ARC) is under construction²;

the state of Florida has embarked on an ambitious shared low-use print collection storage facility among its academic libraries (FLARE)³; and the glorious new **Hunt Library at North Carolina State University** promotes use of its robotic book delivery system, bookBot.⁴ At a recent conference meeting, a collections management department head commented that she foresees print collections focusing on the arts and humanities, since researchers in science and social science favor electronic access to information, an observation supported by the 2015 ITHAKA S+R Faculty Survey results.⁵

Collection development teams now focus on building robust electronic collections and

acquiring the best journal and eBook packages at the best price in an environment of decreased budget allocations for acquisition of print materials. The roles of the traditional reference librarian subject specialist have also changed. Subject specialists are encouraged to redirect focus to engagement, outreach, and instruction.⁶ The new **ACRL Information Literacy Framework for Higher Education** is a document of its time: the frames focus on core concepts regarding how information is used and created, how students consume and create information, and how students as consumers and creators of information evaluate and contextualize information sources.⁷

Engaging the New Normal

LSU Libraries has responded to this trend of repurposing library space. Information Technology Services has been a resident in the Libraries for some time, as has the Center for Academic Success's (CAS) tutorial center. Both of these services occupy space on the Libraries' first floor, and the conversion of space into a large learning commons/computer lab area in the early 2000s required a removal of print indices to the stacks or to compact shelving. In late spring of 2015, university administration decided on the site for the move of the 8,415 square foot MATH Lab: the east wing of **Middleton Library's** third floor.

Clearing materials from the east wing in eight months was an enormous project. The

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