University of North Texas Libraries Profile
Background

Since 2004, the UNT Libraries have been funded nearly completely by a student use fee, with undergraduate and graduate hourly caps. Until 2010, the increase in student enrollment exceeded the increase of costs due to inflation. Student enrollment, however, has plateaued since 2011, reducing the purchasing power of the library. From the 2011 to the 2015 academic years, the UNT Libraries has reduced its collections budget by 36%, accomplished largely by cancelling most approval plans, eliminating dual print and electronic subscriptions, breaking up selected journal “Big Deals,” and reducing firm-order or one-time purchase funds.

Before 2012, collection development at the UNT Libraries was largely decentralized, with subject specialists or Liaison Librarians responsible for spending a set amount annually on one-time purchases. The management of this collection development method was cumbersome, given the innumerable accounts (firm orders, subscription, etc. for each subject). Also difficult to manage were the selectors themselves. Many of the funds were spent appropriately, but there were those that were overspent, underspent or unspent.

Methods for the Three Sets of Cuts

Managing Budget Cuts from 2011-2014

The first year of cuts, $750,000 for budget year 2011-12, was relatively modest and met by eliminating most approval plans, reducing firm order funds by over 70%, and converting from print-plus journals to electronic only. The next year, another $1 million was eliminated from the collections budget. The focus of these cuts were on the recurring expenditures. The criteria used to evaluate these resources were low overall usage, high cost-per-use, overlap, and access restrictions. In addition, we invited the Liaison Librarians to rate resources specific to their fields based on feedback from faculty. Despite liaisons inability to rate related resources purchased from other funds and challenges with librarian ratings of resources, we were able to meet the budget reductions.

For the 2013-14 year, the UNT Libraries was provided funding to cover inflation, sparing additional cuts. We used this year to prepare, by compiling more longitudinal usage data and to revise our evaluation methods. The article by Foudy and McManus (2005) described a method to rank resources for de-selection purposes, incorporating measures of access, cost-effectiveness, breadth/audience, and uniqueness inspiring our current method.

Measures Used in Evaluation — We used five measures in our evaluation: Overlap, Usage Trends, Cost-Effectiveness, Cost Trends, and Librarians’ Input. For overlap, we examined not only full-text overlap of journals (as compared to subscription access), but also of database indexing. Several tools were used for this analysis for comparing coverage between full-text aggregators, as well as database in...

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