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Media Centered--Have Fun Storming the Castle!

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Media-Centered — Have Fun Storming the Castle!

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Column Editor's Note: *The use of media in the classroom is ubiquitous. Visual theses are on the rise. Academic interest in and classroom use of film and global cinema is growing at an exponential rate. Resultantly, the importance of a rich and varied media resources collection is essential to academic institutions, public libraries, and K-12 media centers. It takes a lot of work, development, and research to maintain and grow a collection like this. Resources that aid in this process are invaluable... — WFM*

Over the last couple of years, I have utilized this column to discuss several essential components of Media Librarianship ranging from content (documentaries, feature films, collecting resources and the festival circuit), pedagogy and copyright to nuts and bolts information on streaming media and distribution to keeping attuned to the current media delivery landscape. If I were asked to identify a foundation or common thread running through each of these discussions, it would have to be collection development. Why? Because it always comes back to the stuff. Streaming and distribution are about providing access to and (in part) preserving the stuff, copyright is about protecting the stuff, and pedagogy is about teaching, researching and ultimately producing more stuff. That will, in turn, need to be collected.

Now, do not get me wrong — I am in no way suggesting that Media Librarianship can be distilled simply and solely down to collection development, but I do believe it to be central scaffolding for core components comprising the work. I use media in almost every class I speak to and almost every instruction session or presentation I give. It is extremely rare for me to complete a consult without illustrating some point with a scene from a film or documentary or referring to a media clip online. No matter if I am in the classroom, media production lab, curating a screening or advising a project, the work ultimately always ties back to the collection.

So, collection development and careful curation remain key.

This is certainly something that has been underscored for me time and again and most recently in a myriad of interesting consults with grad students conducting summer research and with faculty prepping their syllabi for new classes. In one particular series of consults, where I was walking a couple of graduate students through the process of crafting a visual thesis for their media project and outlining how to storyboard or rough out their initial ideas, we kept returning to the collection — not only for research content but as a means for me to illustrate examples of clear theses, effective interviewing techniques, and to begin introducing ideas about good camera placement, sound quality and editing choices. A week later, when a faculty member came to me for help providing samples of media to contextualize a number of themes he will be presenting in a new class in the fall semester, we successfully mined the collection to meet a few of the themes, found some relevant docs available freely online to address a couple more, and uncovered a subject area gap needing to be explored. While each of these consults required me to actively engage a rich range of skills — their success depended on my utilizing both the collection and my collection development expertise. Happily, these consults also yielded an almost simultaneous organic review of the collection — reflecting areas of content wealth and highlighting areas needing development — allowing me to not only apply but sharpen that expertise.

It's a Prestigious Line of Work, with a Long and Glorious Tradition.

When I heard that one of the central themes for this issue of *Against the Grain* surrounded **Adversity in Collection Development**, things like budget, access and delivery, and copyright sprang to mind — but they were each soon eclipsed by the notion of complacency.

Let's sit with that for a minute.

By complacency, I am talking more of the sense-of-security/repose/equanimity use of the term, not so much the self-satisfaction/smugness

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scanner operators, and he discussed common types of scanners. He argued the merits of JPEG vs TIFF, resolution issues, consideration of the end purpose, and the recommendation for a “master file” and one for presentation. Put files in logical folder structure, he advised, and don't randomly number. **Kumar** discussed the purpose of metadata, and advised that decisions should be made based on a sampling, that some decisions may need to be made on the fly, but that there should be a team for identifying variations, and that “90% clear vision is best.” (**Marty Tannenbaum** from **Innovation Document Imaging**, was involved in original plans for this session, but did not attend). Questions ranged: about duplicating (or not) what has already been digitized, about item notes, about human eye and DPI, and about reduction ratios.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2015 AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION

Hyde Park Debate. Resolved: Altmetrics are Overrated —
Presented by **Rick Anderson**, Moderator (University of Utah); **Maria Bonn** (University of Illinois); **Derek Law** (University of Strathclyde)

Reported by: **Ramune K. Kubilius** (Northwestern University, Galter Health Sciences Library) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

As moderator, **Anderson** stayed out of the fray. The opening poll of this entertaining debate about altmetrics was close: I agree (20) vs I disagree (15). **Law**, the eloquent scholar from Scotland, argued that with altmetrics, what's measurable becomes more than what is important. Altmetrics eliminate judgement in favor of what can be measured. Comparing altmetrics to metrics is akin to comparing medicine to alternative medicine. Other arguments: crowd sourcing is populist, a third of tweeting papers are not academic, and pseudoscience can be raised to the level of science, bad science can get high scores, manipulation is possible.... **Bonn** argued that all metrics are overrated, yet, in order to hear the stories, narratives are rich, and, yes, she desired all tales and numbers. In the next round, **Law** mentioned the spider web in the old house of **James Thurber's** 1937 “Tales of Our Time.” There is no safety in numbers or anywhere else, he argued. Altmetrics focus on what is measurable more than what is important. Don't blame the bricks for the shoddy house, and remember the Trojan horse. Audience comments included — what does it mean to have impact, it can be said that metrics are power, and yes, altmetrics are over-rated because there is a presumption that there is one dominant tool. “Political agendas will drive altmetrics,” argued the ultimate winner, **Law** (more attendees joined the ending poll and the gap between “yes” and “no” was larger). 🌲

*That's all the reports we have room for in this issue. Watch for more reports from the 2015 Charleston Conference in upcoming issues of **Against the Grain**. Presentation material (PowerPoint slides, handouts) and taped session links from many of the 2015 sessions are available online. Visit the **Conference Website** at www.charlestonlibraryconference.com. — KS*

bit. And, it is a notion I cannot help but consider when reviewing hurdles to collection development. Budget issues are really hard to ignore in that they permeate pretty much everything: collection building, staffing, access, licensing — the list seems endless. But complacency is harder to identify and it can show up in spite of some really great things like expertise, quality engagement, and substantial use stats.

Working in close proximity to the **School of Information and Library Science (SILS)** at UNC, I have the opportunity to guest lecture in one of the collection development classes offered each semester, something I readily do. I am also regularly approached by **SILS** students asking that I share my Center's collection development policy and plan with them, something I rarely do — because Collection Development plans for media can be a bit of a moving target considering the nature of the medium and the speed at which delivery options continue to morph and change. Instead of sharing a static plan, I prefer to talk about a few of the things I see as basics for effectively nurturing and curating a media collection. Turning an eye to the process remains a good exercise for me too, to hold onto and often rediscover what's important and crucial to collection development in the moment and hopefully avoiding complacency in the mix. Here are the five things I offer up to them:

Hello, My Name Is Inigo Montoya...

Clearly, one of the first steps in a successful collection development plan is to identify whom your collection serves and which of these groups are the primary stakeholders according to your institution's mission. Often times this is easier said than done in that in a University environment, much of this is constantly in flux as whole groups of library users are continually matriculating each year, either from undergraduate or graduate programs, or progressing through their careers and moving to other institutions.

So, I underscore the importance of moving beyond identifying a static list to engagement. Knowing staff, faculty, undergraduate and graduate students and what their areas of research and instruction interests are is crucial. Just as important is their knowing who you are and what your Media Center has to offer.

You also need to extend the stakeholder list to include colleagues beyond your campus who play an essential role in helping you deliver your Center's collections and services — area consortia, vendors, distributors, filmmakers, and media colleagues at other academic institutions.

Anybody Want a Peanut?

After introductions have been made, you have to cultivate relationships with your on-campus and off-campus stakeholders. At this moment, I feel the need to give a shout out to **Dr. Barbara Moran** and my fellow students in the two Management classes I took at **SILS** years ago; **Dr. Moran's** instruction and feedback from my fellow students highlighted all of this for me so very well. Those classes underscored the importance of engagement and partnership. Knowing your community, its strengths, needs and interests better prepares you to function effectively as a partner in the field. All of the following are essential:

- Providing consults to faculty, students and staff regularly
- Asking for syllabi, crafting filmographies, creating focused resource guides
- Teaching or speaking in classes, assisting with assignment design, providing feedback
- Working sporadically at the public service desk, volunteering at new student and faculty orientations
- Participating in faculty searches, giving tours to prospective grad students, speaking at Library Friends events
- Co-curating campus programming with campus partners
- Attending departmental and student-run campus events
- Serving on Departmental Advisory Boards, Faculty Council and other campus groups
- Participating as an active member in professional Media groups, at conferences, writing or editing for journals, and serving on professional advisory boards

I Mean, If We Only Had a Wheelbarrow, That Would Be Something.

Now that you have begun to more closely define your current key stakeholders and have identified some of their immediate research and instruction needs, it is time to take careful stock of your collection. Taking both a proactive planned approach and being open to organic discoveries are equally important. Either way, you can uncover collection gaps, dispel misunderstandings surrounding media pedagogy with your patrons, and better educate yourself and patrons to the pretty endless potential / academic application of the collection. These are some useful examples:

Planned

- Conduct comprehensive annual inventories
- Conduct quarterly inventories based on pre-assigned content areas
- Match catalog to curricula for existing classes served through reserves and/or semester bookings
- Review subject holdings and any existing collecting agreements across local consortium (for us, that is the Triangle Research Library Network) noting areas of strength and need
- Conduct reviews of collections and resources available freely online

Organic

- Match catalog to curricula based on consults (this can yield unexpected gaps and forecast emerging areas of interest and identify areas needing more publicity)
- Match catalog to curricular and general need based on engagement at the service desk
- Co-create and/or test-drive assignments that utilize the collection
- Curate campus programming for events across the curriculum

You Rush a Miracle Man, You Get Rotten Miracles

When you feel like you have made good progress getting a handle on what is in the collection and have uncovered areas of potential growth, it is time to survey the media landscape and begin to keep current with new and emerging resources. This is comprised almost entirely by reading and trials:

- Read the professional literature internal to librarianship, media centers, communication, digital collections, film & cinema studies, documentary studies, etc.
- Participate, negotiate or craft trials of emerging media and platforms
 - Some of these will lead to successful additions to the collection, while others might grandly fail or find no purchase with the curricula
- Actively engage with the content by programming, presenting, writing and research

All of this can be somewhat overwhelming at the best of times, which leads to the final suggestion I usually pose to the **SILS** students.

You Keep Using That Word... I Do Not Think it Means What You Think it Means.

Ask for help when you need it and do not be afraid of failure. Knowing your current limits, learning from them and how to overcome them is integral to establishing expertise. And really, everything I have suggested thus far ultimately dovetails here. In asking for help when needed; you are typically addressing a research or instruction need, you are utilizing and often strengthening the relationship building process, you may be acting on things uncovered from taking stock of your collection, or you may be responding to questions that have resulted from trials or your review of the media landscape. Either way, if you are not sure about something ask. Look to listservs, local or external colleagues, professional literature, etc.

You Told Me to Go Back to the Beginning...So I Have

After I have outlined my five suggestions to the **SILS** students, I take care to emphasize that this is an iterative process that must be observed

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Curating Collective Collections — Open Sesame: Collection Development at the Network Level



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A few years ago, the editors of *Rethinking Collection Development and Management* gave me¹ and more recently the editor of *Shared Collections: Collaborative Stewardship* gave **John McDonald** and me² a chance to sound off on the future of shared U.S. library collections. In both essays, the future looks beyond the hierarchical, tribal, and territorial bases (yes, easy as pie) on which library general collections, dominated by the workflows and access practices of printed objects, have been designed and managed up until the last 20 years. These two pieces and many essays and presentations by others foresee a communal future in which libraries, by agreeing to play certain roles and work in regional and national partnerships, would manage collectively the aggregation and preservation of and access to the body of published or otherwise extant material, print or electronic, held in general, circulating collections.

In my 2014 essay, I rehearse the assumptions and practices that underlie the pre-“rethought,” pre-collective understanding of the library print collection and proceed to review in particular the roster of projects that point the way to a collective, rethought future. In the 2016 essay, **John** and I synthesize the results of a number of projects, many of them discussed in the volume in which our essay appears, and go on to prescribe the means by which libraries will move to a shared collections future. In our recommendations, we make passing reference to the role that support for open access publishing might play in the local and collective concept of the collection:

“Continued future support for open access (OA) publishing must be paired with parallel archiving efforts through **CLOCKSS**, **Portico**, and **HathiTrust**, and accomplished by shifting increasing percentages of the acquisitions budget to these efforts over several years. Whether through **Knowledge Unlatched**, **Open Humanities Library**, **OAPEN**, or **Open Access Network**, increasing OA (re)publishing will render many aspects of sharing collections moot and will shift libraries’ roles to creating better discovery and use tools, preserving digital objects, and publishing enterprises as opposed to paying publishers for specific items.”³

It is this theme I want to pursue here in the form of a question: what do the practices of collection development and management look like if a substantial majority of academic libraries’ materials budgets for general, circulating collections has been allocated to support open access publishing, that is, forms of publishing which offer legal, barrier-free access to publications? If most published materials were available to anyone with

an Internet connection, in other words, how would the roles, practices, and purposes of collection development shift? A variety of imperatives for open access to scholarly materials are cited by its proponents, not the least of which is the egalitarian or moral argument about maximizing the opportunities for education to the largest number of people, so it makes sense to think about library roles when the collection, that is, the body of published material, is open to everyone.

Items in local collections have always been open in limited ways — walk-in visitors, interlending and other means of resource sharing, and “black markets” with their person-to-person password transfers, photocopying and pdf-ing, or more recently Sci-Hub’s sharing practices (don’t you wish your IR received even a fraction of that much “participation?”). I am talking here, though, about an environment in which services developed for legally sharing electronically published material render the idea of sharing moot because everything is available to anyone with an Internet connection.

We see glimpses of this future adumbrated by such organizations as the **Open Access Network**⁴ and the **Public Knowledge Project’s MacArthur Foundation**-funded “Open Access Publishing Cooperative Study” as well as the establishment of mega- and single open-access journals and institutional repositories using various business models. We see this open future also in grant-funded projects that have sought to make open publishing feasible or to open the closed doors of retail purchase and subscription pricing on specific items or groups of items like **Knowledge Unlatched** or the **Mellon/NEH Humanities Open Book** program for out-of-print books, not to mention such projects as **University of California Press’s Luminos**, a group of liberal arts colleges’ **Lever Press**, or **Open Library of the Humanities**. Even the latest twist on the serials Big Deal by the **Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU)** and **Wiley** in May 2016, whereby those universities’ scholars’ publications in **Wiley** journals are open without payment of individual APCs, is a step toward this future.⁵

But, again, what does support for publishing instead of purchasing things from publishers look like to a campus library? Taking cues from **Peggy Johnson’s** standard textbook *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*⁶ and reworking text from my 2014 essay,⁷ the “classic” collecting paradigm looks like this:

- the gathering, organization, and preservation of library materials is specific to the mission, curriculum, students, and teaching/learning practices and goals of a library’s parent institution and the degrees it offers;
- this institutional situation informs a collection development policy or set of practices that determines the kinds, provenance, and formats of materials the library owns and places on a shelf or server, subscribes to, or otherwise gives access to;
- this same specific institutional situation determines the depth and breadth of collecting and access efforts, how the library makes replace/retain/store decisions, and the position it occupies in systems or other partnerships for materials provision;
- in turn, the body of material the library purchases or otherwise gives access to grounds staffing configurations, the many elements of user infrastructure (signage, circulation rules, communication lines, advisory and instruction services, space allocation), and services and systems for the discovery and use of materials as well as their interpretation and promotion;
- looking beyond the local campus, the publications and other materials the library purchases or otherwise gives access to are subject to and influence practices of knowledge creation and dissemination and the legal and commercial relationships involved in publishing or using published material;
- all of which close a circle back to the home institution as the library is funded and evaluated along all of these dimensions in terms of the ways in which it helps to fulfill the local mission.

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continually to find any real success. Reflecting on this now, it is apparent to me that this process really needs to be on loop to successfully avoid complacency too.

In Summary:

- Know your stakeholders — and areas of research or instruction interests
- Relationship building all around
- Take Stock / know your collection
- Survey the landscape; trials, trials and more trials
- Ask for help, do not be afraid of failure, learn from error

After the student or class has time to mull over everything I have presented, I ask if anyone still wants a copy of the collection development plan/policy. Most times, I get a resounding “no” in answer. I also receive a barrage of other questions like: specific resources to use, how to negotiate a trial, and best ways of building relationships or forming partnerships with faculty. But that is the stuff of future column entries. 🌸