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People Profile: Nancy Slight-Gibney

Editor

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From the time the Libraries stopped receiving targeted augmentations for collections, the C&A budget received the same proportionate increase or decrease as other budget categories. In other words, we decided not to protect collections when the library budget as a whole had to be cut. Some institutions have absorbed budget cuts entirely from salaries and wages. We chose not to go down that road. In past years, with largely flat funding, we were able to preserve our buying power for books by funding serials inflation with serials cancellations. This year we are looking at cutting approximately $300,000 in serials as well as reducing monograph expenditures by roughly 10%, and making significant cuts to the binding budget. These decisions are not unique to the OU, they are being replicated all across the country. We can no longer hold the monographs budget harnessed. We anticipate being able to meet the needs of researchers through the Orbis Cascade Alliance and the Summit union catalog, with holdings of over 22 million items and with patron-initiated borrowing. In practice, what this means is that selectors will take into consideration the overall holdings of the Alliance and will focus on being more selective in their decision-making.

Early in our Library Council budget discussions University Librarian Deborah A. Carver stated that we would not run a deficit, as administratively mandated. Also, we would not lay anyone off, a strongly held shared value of the library leaders, library staff, and indeed a value held throughout the university. Our greatest asset is our people. These two “givens” shaped our decision-making: balancing the budget without laying anyone off. There is nothing like an inescapable budget cut to illuminate what your values truly are.

This past year to accommodate the 3% cut, in addition to the previously noted reductions in C&A, we eliminated seven positions. We did this through attrition. Because of statewide cuts in pension benefits, many long-term employees realized a benefit by retiring sooner rather than later. Of fourteen positions that became vacant during the past year, six were due to early retirements. Seven of the vacancies were filled or are in the process of being filled. Seven positions were eliminated. Vacancies were assumed to result in the elimination of the position unless a strong case could be made that mission critical services could not be preserved in any other way. In some cases, labor was redirected to cover increasing service needs in another library area. Aggressive vacancy management, a state mandated wage freeze, and careful monitoring of every expense brought our budget into balance. In fiscal year 2005 we will likely have to trim another two or three positions through attrition. In addition, there will be further reductions in the number of student workers hired plus instituting other, smaller cost reductions.

**Revenue Enhancement**

The Libraries get substantial benefit from the Educational Technology Fee collected from all students based on the number of credit hours taken. This fee pays over $100,000 annually in...