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The Surprising Truth about Faculty Perception and Use of Collection Development Opportunities: One Library’s Case Study

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William Madison Randall Library provides informational resources and services for the University of North Carolina at Wilmington community. UNC Wilmington is a comprehensive university that enrolls approximately 11,000 students, including more than 950 graduate students, and there are over 600 faculty. The university was ranked sixth in the 2004 U.S. News and World Report listing of the top public regional undergraduate universities in the south. Library collections include 3,600 current serial subscriptions, approximately 517,000 bound volumes, 800,000 microforms, 40,000 audiovisuals, 25,000 curricular materials and 650,000 United States and North Carolina documents. The annual materials budget is $1,871,000. There are approximately 21,200 Interlibrary Loan transactions a year, 12,500 borrowing and 8,700 lending.

During the summer of 2002, the Associate University Librarian for Technical and Collection Services and the Assistant University Librarian, Access & Delivery Services met to discuss how collaboration between Interlibrary Loan and Collection Development activities could enhance library services. The assumption was that ILL book requests represented patron needs, and therefore should be in the collection. A review of recent ILL book requests revealed that most were very relevant to UNC Wilmington’s curriculum, and would be good candidates for a collection development project. Since recent changes in the book trade enables libraries to purchase materials very quickly using Internet vendors and credit cards, it was decided to initiate a project using ILL book requests as the “trigger” for acquiring materials for the library’s collection. It was assumed that these books would swiftly circulate to other users after the Interlibrary Loan requestor had used the material.

A review of the literature revealed two similar projects. At Bucknell University, Perdue and Van Fleet (1999) describe a project that was designed to enhance the collection and reduce the ILL workload. The main goal at UNC Wilmington was to obtain ILL materials quickly and to enhance the collection, rather than to reduce the ILL workload. Ward, Wray, and Debus-Lopez (2003) report on collection development projects at University of Wisconsin - Madison and Purdue University. The goal of the University of Wisconsin - Madison was to obtain ILL materials rapidly that were not filled by the first five libraries asked to furnish the item. Purdue University’s project was similar to the UNC Wilmington project in that the focus was on collection development and purchasing materials that would circulate.

A draft of procedures was written for this project and it was reviewed several times until all known issues were addressed. All ILL book requests that met the following parameters would be purchased:

- Not already in the collection or on order
- Books published in 2000 or later
- Available from a vendor promising 24-48 hour shipping (Our Interlibrary Loan turn around time for books is nine days and it was important to ensure delivery to our patrons within that same time frame or faster.)

The project was implemented at the beginning of Fall Semester 2002. Funding came from the library’s special project fund and $2,500 was allocated since most special projects were assigned between $1,000 and $3,000. It was hard to predict how many books would be ordered and at what cost, so the 2000 publication date was selected to restrict the number of books purchased. It was also assumed that newer books might be more readily available from Internet vendors. Each library staff member involved in this project was trained to accomplish his or her part of this process.

The following steps describe the process

Randall Library used for acquiring items from vendors versus borrowing them through Interlibrary Loan. Potential requests were automatically routed to a special custom queue in the ILLiad Interlibrary Loan system. Staff were trained to look at queues before attempting to order books. After training, the library had fewer requests in the “Awaiting Acquisition” queue. Most eligible requests were queued in this manner but requests without publicly

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