Adventures in Librarianship -- A Difficult Birth

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Analytical Skills for Collection
from page 36

nearly 700 titles for a total savings of approximately $145,000. Fortunately, Collection Development did not need to make as many cancellations as were offered, but it was very useful to have that feedback for the future. Faculty also recommended new titles that were suitable for emerging curriculum and research needs.

In general, faculty and liaisons responded positively to the process and were pleased to see title lists. Only one academic department did not respond to our request for recommendations and two departments grew defensive, but eventually came around.

There were many other outcomes beyond the immediate title recommendations. We achieved transparency in reporting and decision-making by producing complete lists of journals that served specific subject areas. We showed how much the titles cost over time and how much they were used. We adjusted internal workflows to produce the information needed to support the decision-making process. Librarians were cross-trained in serials management and most important, we designed a review process that is repeatable and that can be conducted for the entire collection or subsets of it at any time.

Another welcome, though unintended, outcome of the process was to prepare the library organizationally (in cross-functional teams) and technically for the serials portion of an Electronic Resource Management System. By analyzing our serials management functions, we captured technical and decision-support data in our systems in such a way that it could be easily migrated to an ERM system.

Conclusion

The serials review process could not have been put in place without a team effort across serials management functions, facilitated by a skilled business analyst. In the latest OCLC Environmental Scan, Chuck Henry aptly summarized this need for collaboration in the future,

"I see a great opportunity in the next five years for a more rigorous and pragmatic partnership between librarians, IT professionals and scholars. While that may sound obvious, it really has not been done!"

The collaboration he refers to may not be getting done, in part, because librarians are not equipped with the analytical skills to facilitate such partnerships. A team of librarians skilled in Business Systems, Requirements and Information Systems Analysis, could successfully engage faculty and IT staff to develop any number of strategic goals into workable, repeatable library programs.

Further Reading

Consider reading the "Functional Requirements" for an Electronic Resource Management System produced by the Digital Library Federation. Who do you need to interview in your library to prioritize the ERM requirements for your local business functions? Once prioritized, what are the gaps between your current processes and the DLF’s processes? Then what? An analyst can help.


The following Websites describe analytical skills in more detail. This is not an endorsement of the quality of training or services these organizations offer.


Endnotes