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Something to Think About? -- Winter Musings

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It's winter again and I always recap what's happened for the year and try to get a feel for the projects we will be doing. Having a new job with new responsibilities makes me grin, but it causes me to think seriously too. In January, I will be learning all about the Reference Desk and how we give such fine service to our patrons. This will be the first time it will be a vital part of my job, comprising four hours a week. What a great way for a Serials Librarian to learn the ways people search for things and how we can catalog better for those needs, as well as purchase materials with knowledge of the research being done on campus. I am just completing the beginning Aeronautical Sciences course and find myself wishing it would not end. Attendance in this course is designed to give us a chance to learn vocabulary and specialized principles of flight, as well as possible areas of research, so we can understand the questions that are brought to the Reference Desk.

Did I mention that I am also completing the required interviews with each staff member? For fifteen minutes, a colleague tells me what his/her job is and how they accomplish it. I have found this helpful in learning who will be helping in the future, or what people I can tap for specific skills. It also gives me a chance to hear a little about them personally and how much they value their work here at Embry-Riddle.

As for the summer, we are looking forward to a weeding project in the Periodical stacks. Perhaps some of you have experienced this process, but it is new to me in many ways. We will be looking at ways to retain access to the journal issues while cleaning physical issues off the shelves. There will be much purgation of circulation records for usage, searching microfilm/micropage provider lists for specific volumes at reasonable prices, or perhaps free or inexpensive online access. This will be a very foreign process for me, as I tend to be a pack rat. I abhor the thought of destroying reading materials, but the space is essential. We have a limited amount of room and there will be additional titles bought this year for the collection. We have a number of recreational magazines for the students and believe that we can easily provide microform replacements for those journals without jeopardizing the research aspects. Luckily, we have some new microfilm cabinets in an interesting archway construction, as well as some new microfiche cabinets being procured with gift monies. I thought it might be fun to research how one develops this process and follows through with restricted funds, since we all face this task from time to time. Where would you weed? What criteria would you establish to help clean the shelves? Would you contact faculty for their recommendations? Involved with this project is a Periodicals Holdings List (print), which we edit twice a year, in January and September. Just thinking about the many changes makes my head spin. We will be discussing and exploring the many possibilities in this project. Would be interested in hearing from you on the subject.

Did you ever think about how many projects we create and complete in the library? How many are created by our physical environment? How many are from technological changes? How many are from crises? I think it is interesting to sit back and think about all the ways we create work for ourselves, or are directed by external causes. Try making some lists of these activities and categorize them. Look at the patterns. Are we problem creators, problem solvers, or both? What percentage of time do you spend on these activities?

By the way, what's happening with claims? They seem to be running away from us. What's so difficult about actually getting issues you pay for? Do vendors just make lists and charge money, then become mute? We have a bunch of active reps trying to find out why publishers just don't send things when they are paid. Sure puts a crimp on our ability to provide access to those titles. We try to track claims every two weeks to stay on top, because I am tired of getting notices that we have waited too long to claim. What's too long? Sometimes I feel we need to claim before they are published so we have a 50-50 chance of receiving them. Just kidding, but it does get frustrating! Hmmm? Do online full text sources use this frustration to snatch us from the print world? Are we being manipulated? I hate the thought. I don't remember this much confusion with the old one on one, get it from the source subscription style. Well, it's something to think about anytime.

My other task to complete in January is the Collection Development list for serials. We have a request for new material, the OCLC record, Ulrich's indexing and review information, and a sample issue clumped together in a folder, so that all the librarians can evaluate the material and vote on its worthiness. We route the folders to everyone, then wait for the return package and tallying of the votes. Our patrons eagerly await the results. This year we are looking at a number of good aviation titles, as well as some on terrorism, hearing, engineering physics and a few leisure titles. Should be an interesting and exciting time.

We acquire new materials, make them accessible to patrons, help them find any of the materials they need and then we weed. A year in review, but not without the preservation we do everyday in cleaning, repairing and binding. We are preparing binding at this moment since the classes will be ending in a week. Nothing like seeing paper things in a new dress or binding with clear lettering. It's like starting new again. Have a great year and look forward to your many tasks. They can be new and adventuresome when you see them in a different light. Try it!