Adventures in Librarianship -- Datamaze Reviews

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showing the signs of a meltdown in managing the workload. When you have libraries that once processed and managed 1,500 subscription titles now faced with access and management of the 20,000 titles that their library now has access to, one should not be surprised to see the workload of that unit increase beyond manageable portions.

This is where the extreme makeover comes in. Libraries have to face the shift to electronic formats and embrace the impact on the infrastructure and the library’s staffing. While almost every library has added an electronic resources librarian as a specialist to manage the e-resources, there is insufficient manpower to meet the needs of the digital library.

When considering best practices for technical services, the best practice of all is to revolutionize the organizational structure. Every library that I visit has a similar problem: the library has shifted the acquisitions budget to cover the electronic resources cost with upwards of 70% of the journal acquisitions funds going to the electronic collection, but the library is still organized to support a print model. In effect, you have 90% of the technical services staff still devoted to the print collection when the collection is shifting rapidly to the electronic world. I would not be surprised to see the e-resources librarians going out on strike, as they have been left with this demanding workload and pressure from the users to have access immediately!

Folks, this system of e-resources support is not working. The e-resources librarians are drowning in work as other staff in the library continues to support print. In former days, print collection management issues included funds, missing/damaged issues and collection assessment. Unlike print, e-resources bring the challenges of trial use, evaluation, ordering, payment, renewal, IP addresses, proxy support, authentication, URL maintenance, user IDs, admin information, access restrictions, hardware needs, usage statistics and license terms.

From what I see, libraries must reorganize to take care of e-content. The old print-based library organization built on silos must be dismantled. What is the future of traditional cataloging? What is the impact of library or Web 2.0? What happens to the library when the majority of the staff is still print centric and the library needs e-centric? Ty Pennington may as well be standing in the front yard saying, “Move that bus!”

Will the future librarian or information worker be an MLS or an information services professional? Are we creating feral professionals? Are we surprised that many of the new hires in libraries are not librarians but computer-skilled or Web knowledge-based individuals and they are coming in at a higher salary than the librarians? I have talked to a number of the feral professionals and they are not happy being treated as second class citizens and “not professionals,” but yet saddled with a huge responsibility.

While there is adjustment all across the board, it is the library that is facing the great-