

From Workflow to Information Flow: Collaborating for Effective Collection Development

Julie Gilbert, Systems Librarian
Anna Hulseberg, E-resources Librarian
Gustavus Adolphus College

The Future of Collection Development at a Small Liberal Arts College Library

Our collection development discussions address perennial issues:

- Evolving formats** in a workflow environment created for print
- Tightening budgets** and rising journal, database and print costs
- Pressures on staff workflow** to react swiftly to evolving formats

This poster outlines **two projects** we undertook to explore how we could better support developing our book, journal and e-resource collections

Weeding: The library's book collection has exceeded capacity and is outdated in many areas – **developing a sustainable weeding program has become a priority**

E-resources: The e-resources librarian and serials manager saw an urgent need to **collaborate more closely** and **tear down artificial walls** built on an outdated notion of journals management as completely separate from e-resources management

Step 1: Parallel Workflow Analyses (January 2009)

Goal: Analyze workflows to find opportunities for improved efficiencies

Staff: Collection development librarian, collection manager, e-resources librarian, serials manager, systems librarian

Workflow Analysis Process

- **Weeding:** Reviewed previous weeding efforts and discussed a variety of procedures and guidelines used by staff in the past
- **E-resources:** Completed task worksheets for e-resources and journals management, ranging from managing individual subscriptions, to maintaining internal systems such as a spreadsheet of proxied URLs, to managing external systems such as the proxy server and LibData

Weeding Workflow Analysis Findings

- A **lack of time** has been the biggest barrier to weeding in the past
- **Circulation reports** generated by the integrated library system (ILS) will help librarians make weeding decisions
- We need **procedures for processing discarded items**

E-resources Workflow Analysis Findings

- We must **integrate our workflows** for e-journals and print journals
- A more sophisticated **electronic resource management (ERM)** system would help centralize our program and make it more efficient
- We should **explore new opportunities for collaboration** among the e-resources librarian, serials manager, and other staff

Step 2: Parallel Pilot Projects (Spring 2009)

Goal: Test our workflow analysis findings in the context of "real life" scenarios

- **Weeding:** The systems and collection development librarians each spent an average of one hour a week weeding a congested area. All librarians reviewed discarded items. The collection manager revised procedures for processing discarded items
- **E-resources and Serials Review:** We worked with all academic departments to review book allocations, e-resource subscriptions, and journal subscriptions. A budgetary crisis required us to quickly gather, organize, and format data such as pricing, journal format, and print and e-usage statistics

Step 3: Assessment

Assessment Methods

- **Solicited feedback from librarians** via e-mail about pilot projects
- **Compared results** of pilot projects with original workflow analysis findings
- **Surveyed classroom faculty** about e-resources review process

Weeding Pilot Program Findings

- **Yes, we can!** Although time will always be a factor, we can weed the general collection in 3 years if each librarian weeds for 1 hour a week
- Our **new procedures** for processing withdrawn books are effective
- **Check it out!** Our ILS provides sufficient **circulation reports** for weeding

E-resources and Serials Review Pilot Project Findings

- **SOS! We need an ERM lifeline!** Gathering data for the review was a cumbersome process, particularly for usage statistics
- **Usage statistics are perplexing!** While **44%** of classroom faculty found usage statistics helpful, over **63%** reported that they were confusing
- **Tell us more!** Classroom faculty members want a **holistic picture of journal access** -- they want a list not only of journals we subscribe to on a title-by-title basis but also any journals to which we have access in their disciplines

Next Steps

Weeding

- Conduct a **full scale weeding program** beginning in 2009-2010
- **Assess weeding procedures** and refine as necessary, working especially with the collection manager to monitor how her workflow changes
- Provide a format for **ongoing conversations** among librarians to discuss weeding criteria and processes
- Develop strategies to **involve classroom faculty** from other departments in weeding and other collection development activities

E-resources

- **Implement ERMes** (open source ERM from UW-LaCrosse)
- Pursue **new opportunities for collaborating** with other staff and moving away from a print- and ILS-centered workflow:
 - E-resources librarian, serials manager, and acquisitions manager will share ERM
 - Catalogers and acquisitions manager will catalog e-resources in ILS and may help manage bibliographic information in LibData
- Adapt changes for **future e-resources and serials reviews:**
 - Provide additional explanation of usage statistics parameters
 - Explore ways to provide a more holistic picture of the journals to which we have access in each discipline

Collaborative Workflow Analysis

- Conduct **interlibrary loan** workflow analysis to explore the intersections of ILL and collection development

The Future Is Now

Above all, our related projects suggest **three key elements** for meeting the challenges of collection development in the midst of ever-changing formats, evolving workflows, shrinking budgets, and rising costs:

- **Flexibility:** We must remain flexible and unattached to our procedures. Constantly changing formats call for adaptable and evolving practices
- **Collaboration:** Working across traditional library boundaries energizes our staff and facilitates new approaches to collection development
 - **Initiative:** These projects have motivated us to look critically at what we do, ask why we do it, and revise as necessary