**How to Build a High-Quality Library Collection in a Multi-Format Environment:
Centralized Selection at University of Wyoming Libraries**

Sandra Barstow, David Macaulay, and Shannon Tharp

Abstract: In recent decades, the composition of academic library collections has shifted toward electronic formats, resulting in a more complicated publication landscape to be navigated by selectors. Additionally, the workload of public services librarians has become more weighted toward instruction and research support, putting more pressure on the time of liaison librarians tasked with collection development responsibilities. These shifts have prompted academic institutions, including University of Wyoming Libraries, to consider a restructuring of collection development responsibilities. This article describes the evolution and implementation of a centralized model of selection at UW Libraries.

Keywords: academic libraries, centralized selection, collection development, collection management, electronic resources management, job descriptions, library administration, library management, library reorganization

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How to Build a High-Quality Library Collection in a Multi-Format Environment: Centralized Selection at University of Wyoming Libraries

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, the traditional model of collection building in academic libraries has relied largely on the work of multiple subject bibliographers, whose responsibility for selecting materials in specific areas of study has typically been "tacked on" to their primary duties. In recent decades, the composition of academic library collections has shifted toward electronic formats, resulting in a vastly more complicated publication landscape to be navigated by selectors; at the same time, the workload of public services librarians has become more heavily weighted toward instruction and research support, putting considerably more pressure on the time of liaison librarians tasked with collection development duties. This shift has prompted numerous institutions, including University of Wyoming (UW) Libraries, to consider reorganizing collection development responsibilities according to a more centralized model, with the intention of focusing and streamlining the work of selecting library materials as well as better integrating these tasks with ongoing processes of collection management. This article discusses the evolution of thinking about organization of selection work and electronic resources management (ERM) in academic libraries and describes the implementation of a centralized model of selection at the University of Wyoming.

Literature Review

Nearly a century ago, Bascom (1922) wrote that selection "...should be accepted as a regular part of the day's work, not considered an added burden to be postponed until necessity forces it into the schedule, to the detriment of other duties" (p. 11). At the time, Bascom was talking about selection as it related to public libraries. In 2015, we're still trying to articulate selection's evolving role in libraries, especially academic libraries. Where centralized selection is

concerned, there's a limited amount of scholarly work on the topic as it relates to academic libraries. A good deal of existing scholarship focuses on the ways in which public libraries have put centralized selection to use. For instance, Sullivan (2004) discussed the Phoenix Public Library system's implementation of a centralized model. She noted, "Ultimately, we have found that centralized selection promotes diversity of materials because the selectors have the funds, the perspective, and the responsibility to serve the entire community. It does not involve a cookie-cutter or one-size-fits-all mentality" (p. 45).

In order to address the evolution of centralized selection in academic libraries, we consulted a range of research that offers practical perspectives on the model, its history, and possibilities for its future. We also reviewed research on the selection, acquisition, and management of electronic resources.

The Evolution of Selection Models

Both Morrison (1968) and Mosher (1979) addressed the transfer of selection duties—which began in the 1950s—from the hands of faculty to the hands of librarians. At that time, librarians began to play a larger role in selection, and approval plans grew as a tool for efficiently acquiring books (Morrison, 1968). This transfer served as a catalyst for more concentrated attention to collection development and led to rapid growth in acquisition programs. Approval plans were seen as a possible solution to workload issues, though one problem Morrison mentioned as a "subtle objection" in 1968 has become a major concern in 2015: the loss of a link in communication between faculty and the library due to less involvement by faculty in the selection process (1968, p. 138). Another significant challenge posed by librarians' increasing role in selection: how to develop plans that allowed for growth and continuing quality of collections (Mosher, 1979).

By the 1970s, scholars began to note that relying on librarians for selection carried some of the same issues as relying on faculty for selection. Massman and Olson (1971) concluded that centralized selection on a national level would ensure that all participating small academic libraries would have copies of a core collection of materials. Those copies would come at a lower cost and with less effort than if each library selected materials independently. This thinking carried over into the 1980s—a period that saw attempts to not only identify core functions related to selection and acquisition of library resources but also to find effective organizational structures that supported the performance of core functions.

In the late 1980s, Cogswell published his evaluation of collection management models, a groundbreaking work as relevant today as it was upon its publication (Cogswell, 1987). His six organizational models illustrated a range from highly centralized to decentralized collection management operations. In Cogswell's assessment, more centralized models were more effective in supporting core functions. Around the same time, Atkinson (1989) suggested that there were still many improvements to be made in the realm of collection development.

Atkinson wrote, "Much has been achieved...since the assumption of selection responsibilities by the library began almost thirty years ago. ...But it remains equally clear that more must now be done, more responsibility assumed, more control sought, more boundaries spanned, if the success of collection development is to be sustained" (1989, p. 514). He recommended that departments subdivide subjects according to function, reach a consensual designation of core sources, and refine their policies (Atkinson, 1989). At the heart of Atkinson's suggestions for collection development: rigor and precision.

As selection evolved to encompass electronic resources, Harloe and Budd (1994) argued for a new language to discuss the practice of collection development in a networked environment.

Foreshadowing conversations that continue in today's academic libraries, Harloe and Budd suggested that decisions about whether to own or to provide access to materials should be based first on the needs of the community in question. Then, the content required to meet those needs should be addressed. Finally, only after those steps have occurred, should the content's form be considered.

Echoing Cogswell's 1987 analysis of collection development administration models, Kenselaar's (1996) research found many of the same problems described in earlier scholarly work exhibited by institutions that did not employ full-time selectors, particularly when part-time selectors had a variety of other priorities. Meanwhile, Rowley and Black (1996) published research that examined the evolution of collection development into the mid-1990s. Of particular relevance to the current situation at UW Libraries was Rowley and Black's comment that relying on part-time selectors in narrowly-defined subject areas resulted in "segmented perspectives" (p. 25). Though each selector might be a strong advocate for his or her own specialized subject, the broad view of the library collection as supporting the mission of the university could be lost in the details (Rowley & Black, 1996).

Miller (2000) presented a synopsis of electronic resources' evolution in academic libraries. A review of a wide selection of scholarly writing on electronic resources in academic libraries, the examination lends itself well to thinking about collection development librarians' current and future roles in academic libraries. Miller noted that understanding the evolution of electronic resources enables academic librarians to see what has been accomplished in a relatively short period. Consider, for instance, this passage from Miller: "The essence of the profession is not books or printed documents but the provision of information" (2000, p. 666). This statement leads us to wonder how academic collection development librarians might continue providing

information under a centralized selection model without sacrificing the integrity of their collections.

As discussed by Dilevko (2008), integrity and quality of collections were of great concern to James Danky, whose rejection of increasingly mechanical and generic ways to develop library collections prompted the focus of Dilevko's article. In a key passage, Dilevko offered, "Once the fundamental task of book selection was outsourced to others, Danky felt that librarians 'doom[ed] themselves to a subservient position, one where they deny their abilities [and] their power to affect their own professional world and the community around them'" (2008, p. 687). Danky viewed subject expertise as being critical to collection development, and he argued against the "give 'em what they want" model of selection. He favored what Dilevko calls inclusionary practices, especially non-outsourced selection activities that encompass hard-to-find materials (2008). The thinking behind Danky's talk of inclusionary practices was that the selection of obscure materials leads to a dynamic collection.

In considering whether liaison librarians should be expected to take on selection responsibilities, it is intriguing that the Reference and User Services Association's "Guidelines for Liaison Work in Managing Collections and Services" indicate a dual focus on collection development activities and interactions with library clientele, yet these guidelines provide little detail about who performs which functions or how to organize for effectively fulfilling a library's goals (Anonymous, 2010). Nabe (2010) observed the need to look for a new model for collection management when he addressed recent trends of budget constraints and the rapid evolution of electronic resources. An interesting question that has come up in recent years is the need for (or superfluity of) liaisons participating in collection development because so much of a library's collection analysis is done at a much higher level rather than focusing on a particular

subject area (Nabe, 2010). Nabe's article described the shortcomings of the traditional liaison model in useful detail, and the experience of the library described in the article is similar to the frustrations that the Collection Development Office at UW Libraries grappled with prior to adopting a centralized selection model.

Throughout the 2000s, budget constraints have forced academic libraries to make challenging decisions about reorganization. In doing so, certain higher education institutions have begun to realize the need to reinvest in their libraries. Case in point: the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill. In 2012, Michalak detailed the transformation of the library system at UNC and wrote of the conditions that characterized the library after its reorganization. In this instance, "...reference and collection development merged, eliminating a formerly rigid organizational line between the two" (Michalak, 2012, p. 415). The position of "bibliographer" no longer exists at UNC. Now, the Research and Instructional Services librarians are tasked with selection responsibilities, and a team of librarians manages five fund groups that represent "broad disciplinary areas such as social sciences, humanities and so on" (Michalak, 2012, p. 415). Though individual departments still perform collection development functions and reference functions at UW Libraries, the centralized model under which we work allows for budgetary decision making and improved communication similar to UNC's. In fact, UW Libraries experimented with a model much like UNC's before arriving at UW's current model.

Most recently, Morris and Currie (2014) provided a case study of the centralized selection model in use at the University of Kansas (KU), and they arrived at conclusions much like those of this article's authors about the effectiveness of the traditional model of selection. KU's new Content Development Department, which takes the place of its old Collection Development

Department, has more autonomy to make decisions and is able to make those decisions more quickly (Morris & Currie, 2014).

Electronic Resources and Collection Development

Demas, McDonald, and Lawrence (1995) advanced early arguments for mainstreaming the selection of electronic resources. They observed that collection development librarians sometimes chose to focus solely on print, presumably because of unfamiliarity with or skepticism about electronic formats, leaving the selection of electronic publications to public services or systems librarians. The authors advised collection development librarians instead to "adapt the principles and practices of collection development to the world of Internet resources" with the aim of "integrat[ing] network-accessible resources into qualitatively selected collections" (Demas, McDonald & Lawrence, 1995, pp. 275-276).

While the traditional qualitative criteria for resource selection would apply to content, selecting electronic resources would also involve the challenge of choosing wisely between the various formats that might be available. Jakubs (2000) also argued for the incorporation of electronic resource selection into the mainstream of collection development work, rejecting the assumption that "the format takes precedence over the content of a database or internet resource" (p. 77). Mainstreaming of electronic resource selection work does appear to have become standard practice in academic libraries after the mid-1990s; in a 1996 survey of 15 academic collection development librarians, the majority of respondents had integrated selection of electronic resources into their collection development programs and indicated they based collection development decisions on traditional selection criteria as well as a number of "emergent criteria," such as hardware compatibility and license restrictions (Norman, 1997). A progressive conceptual assimilation of electronic resources into the general library collection is well

illustrated by the differences between editions of Johnson's text on collection development.

While the first edition (2004) devoted an entire chapter to a review of electronic resources as a special case, in subsequent editions (2009; 2014) treatment of these topics was integrated into the chapters covering the various functional areas of collection development.

Demas, McDonald, and Lawrence (1995); Jakubs (2000); Johnson (2004); and Geller (2006) all emphasized that selection of electronic resources involves special considerations of usability, technological compatibility with library systems, licensing restrictions, broad multidisciplinary, and elevated pricing that are not usually an issue with print material. Collection development librarians often need to collaborate closely with other selectors and with colleagues in other departments such as public services, technical services, and systems in selecting high-quality resources that are suitable for their institution—contrasting with the relative individualism considered to be typical of the traditional print selection activity of subject bibliographers (Lougee, 1995).

Electronic Resources Management and the Electronic Resource Librarian

As the importance of electronic resources in academic library collections grew, questions related to staffing for performance of the specialized, complex, and variable tasks involved in the acquisition and ongoing management of such resources became increasingly prominent in the library literature. Geller (2006) provided a comprehensive overview of the various roles and responsibilities that electronic resources impose on librarians; while she considered evaluation of content, establishment of trials, and choice of platform to be the responsibility of collection development librarians, she saw the majority of ERM tasks as requiring collaborative partnerships between a range of groups in the library, including collection development, IT specialists, acquisitions, access services, cataloging, and public services, in addition to IT staff in

the library's parent organization and representatives of resource publishers and vendors. Boss and Schmidt (2007) summed up this perspective: "More than ever before, librarians view the selection, acquisition, description, and delivery of [electronic resources] as a process made up of a number of interrelated functions that are contributed by employees from various units in the library organization" (p. 121).

For many writers in the 2000s, the main concern with regard to staffing for such tasks is whether they are added to the responsibilities of existing roles, or assigned to one or more positions focused exclusively on electronic resources, leaving other formats to be managed by those who had previously taken care of them (Collins, 2008; Duranceau & Hepfer, 2002; Stachokas, 2009). In the literature, Stachokas was the lone voice advocating the creation of an Electronic Resources Unit staffed with librarians and paraprofessionals dedicated solely to electronic resources management. More usually, discussions of ERM processes described a distribution of tasks, integrated into the workflow of existing personnel in various departments, with the addition of a specialist librarian who would be responsible for coordinating these activities – a mainstreaming approach exemplified as early as 1996 in Gerhard's description of the Electronic Resource Coordinator position established at Iowa State University (1998).

The electronic resources librarian (ERL) is usually identified as the main contact point for communication between the library and resource vendors and between the various players in the process of managing electronic resources within the library. In fact, Stachokas (2009) cited the need for continuous communication with vendors in the processes of electronic resource acquisition and maintenance as the primary reason for establishment of a separate electronic resources department. Boss and Schmidt (2007) and Collins (2008) also clearly associated the

position with coordination work, and with the facilitation of communication among departments to enable the ERM process.

As many discussions of the role of the ERL have indicated (Albitz, 2002; Albitz & Shelburne, 2007; Engel & Robbins, 2008), the specific responsibilities associated with such positions have changed over time, in response to developments in technology and the changing needs of libraries. Early analyses of published announcements of position openings in the field (Albitz, 2002; Beile & Adams, 2000; Croneis & Henderson, 2002; Fisher, 2003; Heimer, 2002) showed a clear focus on responsibility for public services functions; studies of more recent postings (Albitz & Shelburne, 2007; Collins, 2008; Cuesta, 2005) found a greater emphasis on acquisitions and technical work. This evolution reflects a diminished need for a specialist public services position as electronic resources became more common and computer/internet skills became more widespread. Though users and other librarians no longer required as much special assistance in accessing electronic resources, these resources became an increasingly large component of library collections that required correspondingly greater effort to acquire and manage. Albitz and Shelburne's survey results (2007) and Hartnett's recent analysis of job announcements over the period 2000-2012 (2014) showed that responsibilities outside of the core constellation of licensing, acquisition, access management (including link resolvers, knowledgebases, and discovery systems), troubleshooting, and usage reporting have tended to be sheared off from the typical ERL job description.

ERL positions have become a normal feature of academic libraries in North America, and a range of associated responsibilities is becoming standardized. The NASIG professional organization, originally a group of serials librarians but now closely identified with the electronic resources specialization, developed a set of core competencies for ERLs (Sutton, Beh, Black,

Chamberlain, Davis, Ginanni, Lamoureux, Mann, Porter, & Resnick, 2013) based on Sutton's analysis of job postings (2011). However, Hartnett's (2014) updated analysis—published not long after the appearance of the NASIG document—indicated that a number of the areas it covers, such as organization of information, bibliographic utilities, hardware, database design and website management, have declined significantly in prominence in job descriptions over recent years. Both Sutton's and Hartnett's analyses show that the “required” competencies most frequently listed in announcements for ERL positions tend overwhelmingly to focus on “general, professional abilities like customer service, communication, and ... problem solving” (Sutton, 2011, p. 91) rather than on ERM-related technical knowledge and experience, which are more likely to be included as “preferred” qualifications. As Cox and Corral (2013) point out, this suggests that the technical abilities associated with electronic resource librarianship are considered by employers to be relatively easy to learn by professionals with the requisite personal qualities, indicating that the increasingly standardized spectrum of tasks associated with the position may not necessarily require a deep level of specialization on the part of the librarian who performs them.

Though far from a comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to collection development models, this sampling—a dual approach to the literature of selection and electronic resources librarianship—demonstrates the evolution of such models and supports our belief that UW Libraries needed to alter the collection development path it had followed for 25 years.

A Brief Chronology of Collection Development Reorganization at UW Libraries

When the UW Libraries' current Head of Collection Development assumed her role in 2010, she met with each subject bibliographer to learn of their priorities and preferences. In doing so, she learned that some subject bibliographers had little or no interest in selection, and even those who

were very enthusiastic devoted relatively little time to selection activities. This situation resulted in activity spikes at critical points in the fiscal year, which in turn caused stress for the UW Libraries' Acquisitions Department. At the time, the Head of Collection Development had little or no control over the work of the subject bibliographers, as she did not supervise them.

Ten years earlier, a previous Head of Collection Development had proposed a "super-bibliographer" model, but UW Libraries was unable to fund a position for a full-time selector who would report to the Head of Collection Development. In 2010, the UW Libraries' Associate Dean and the new Head of Collection Development took another look at the super-bibliographer model and talked about how the UW Libraries could build on it to implement centralized selection, particularly for monographs. Some welcome increases to the collections budget over the previous few years had made it possible for the Collection Development Office (CDO) to expand the UW Libraries' approval plan dramatically, thus reducing the amount of individual monograph selection needed. Having a cadre of selectors in CDO would enable the department to focus on locating the more esoteric materials UW's faculty requested.

In mid-2012, after undergoing a major reduction in staffing over the previous 3 years, each department in the UW Libraries looked at staffing for essential functions. For CDO, core functions included selecting in a variety of formats.

Several library faculty workload discussions were held in the fall of 2012. Subject bibliographers, over half of whom were reference librarians, were concerned about how to distribute the facets of their work—selection, instruction, and liaison work—so that they could devote more of their energy to the liaison role. Defining this role occupied a good deal of time in the discussions, while selection seemed to be an afterthought. The group talked about having

teams of selectors working with teams of liaisons, but they concluded that implementing this structure would make the functions involved less efficient.

In January 2013, at the suggestion of the Associate Dean, the Head of Collection Development arranged a town-hall meeting about building and maintaining collections. Librarians and staff from public services, technical services, and collection development attended this meeting. The roles of subject bibliographers were addressed as they related to technical services workflows, time constraints on public services librarians, and functions that could feasibly be assigned to CDO. Recalling that subject bibliographers had relinquished control over journal reviews several years earlier with no ill effect, it was believed that the CDO role could be expanded to cover other activities related to collections and free up time for public services librarians to increase their liaison role with teaching faculty.

By the summer of 2013, CDO was moving toward a centralized selection model, primarily for monographs. At the time, the department comprised two ERLs, one collection development librarian, the department head, an administrative assistant, and a staff electronic resource specialist. The Associate Dean then transferred a long-time reference librarian to CDO. That individual had always been extremely interested in selection and was delighted to transition from his reference and instruction role to selection. It was expected that the two collection development librarians would handle most of the selection, with the two ERLs focusing primarily on e-journal packages, databases, and e-books. The former reference librarian was assigned all social sciences and humanities, while the senior collection development librarian was responsible for the remaining subject areas, as well as assisting the head of collection development in monitoring the budget.

The two collection development librarians had several meetings with the Head of Collection Development to work on details of communicating with liaisons. Discussion centered on making sure that an orderly transition from the old model to the new model took place. In the old model, faculty in academic departments sent requests to library subject bibliographers, but in the new model each collection development librarian would be responsible for interacting with a number of liaisons and communicating directly with departmental faculty on collection building. The CDO selectors made every effort to be respectful of academic departmental traditions for requesting materials from the UW Libraries, and CDO initially attempted to arrange the workload so that a liaison would need to interact with only one selector. In an effort to introduce the other members of the department to the centralized selection model, CDO's department head and the two ERLs were each made responsible for one or two areas of study.

In the fall of 2013, CDO was given permission to launch a search to replace one of the ERLs, who had been promoted to head of another department in the UW Libraries. By the time CDO was ready to recommend a candidate for that vacancy, the senior collection development librarian announced her retirement, and CDO was able to acquire the top two candidates from the ERL search pool. The tradeoff was that selector roles would be fully distributed among all librarians in CDO, including the department head and the two new hires, who were made aware of the change in job duties prior to accepting offers of employment. The model has been in place since Spring of 2014.

UW Libraries' Centralized Selection Model in Action

Currently, the five librarians in CDO select resources for 76 areas of study. Responsibilities are divided among selectors by preference and areas of expertise. In early discussions among CDO librarians, selectors agreed that dividing responsibilities by college rather than by area of study

would make for an unwieldy process. For example, departments housed in UW's College of Arts & Sciences include astronomy, English, environment and natural resources, geology/geophysics, and psychology. Within these five departments are several areas of study. Given the size of the UW Libraries' collection, if one selector had been charged with responsibility for the entire College of Arts & Sciences—a mix of humanities, social sciences, and hard sciences—overwork and confusion would have ensued.

As the distribution of labor stands, two of the five CDO selectors focus on areas of study in which they have expertise or good working knowledge. For instance, one selector's educational background lies in history and the history of science, as well as library science. He's responsible for a great deal of social sciences selection. Another selector has a background in library science, English, and creative writing. Thus, she's responsible for English and literature selection, along with her other assignments in the humanities. Another selector's background is in anthropology and library science. In addition to his STEM responsibilities, he oversees selection for anthropology. A fourth selector's educational background lies in English literature and library science. Her selection assignments encompass business, philosophy, and religion (to name a few). Finally, the department head ended up with everything nobody else claimed, so although her educational background lies in economics and business administration as well as library science, she's selecting for health sciences and family and consumer sciences. These assignments demonstrate that the UW Libraries' selection model doesn't necessarily require a selector to have an educational background that parallels the areas of study assigned.

University-wide Communication

With this major change in selection responsibilities, communication is crucial. When CDO began its current centralized process, the department informed the UW Libraries' faculty and staff

about selectors and their areas of study. In addition, the department created a selector directory within LibGuides, and a social sciences-humanities selector/liaison group and STEM selector/liaison group were formed. Both groups meet as needed to discuss possible acquisitions, address collaboration with one another and faculty, and think of ways to market new resources to students and faculty.

Selectors work with liaisons to acquire resources that faculty request and suggest, whether those resources are databases, e-books, e-journal packages, or monographs. Liaisons often pass faculty requests and suggestions on to selectors in the appropriate area of study. Other times, faculty members send requests directly to selectors. In order to prevent confusion, selectors and liaisons collaborate on joint communications to faculty about liaisons' responsibilities and selectors' responsibilities. Faculty have been pleased to learn that they have two points of contact for procuring research and teaching materials. They have also been proactive about providing feedback on electronic resource trials.

Another channel that CDO uses to communicate its efforts to the UW community is the department's webpage. There, interested parties can view CDO's current budget, annual journal review wish list, collection development policy, and statistics dashboard.

Intradepartmental Communication

One key advantage of the UW Libraries' centralized model is that it fosters an environment of collaboration that allows for both formal and informal discussions among selectors. Because selectors are in the same office suite for most work days, they're able to easily communicate with each other about how the approval plan is working and whether or not changes need to be made.

The department also holds weekly meetings to discuss resource evaluations, make decisions about materials to acquire, and address budget updates. In particular, these meetings inform selectors of each other's efforts and lend a sense of cohesiveness to their work. Additionally, facets of the electronic resources lifecycle—investigation, evaluation, acquisition, implementation, and review—are addressed in CDO's meetings. Typically, CDO discusses electronic resources once a trial has ended, and selectors share any comments from liaisons, faculty, and students about trialed resources. Selectors also discuss subscription models for resources and make decisions regarding pricing and negotiations. Given that the electronic resources landscape continues to evolve into a complex place, it's not uncommon for CDO to spend an hour or two talking through licensing, discoverability, and usefulness as those topics relate to electronic resources.

The Selection Process

To streamline the selection process where monographs and some e-books are concerned, UW Libraries uses its approval plan. The plan CDO has tailored allows selectors more time to devote to finding resources that fall outside of the plan. It also allows more time for selectors to identify and close gaps in the UW Libraries' collection. Another aspect of CDO's workflow that enables selectors to place orders and acquire resources is communication with the UW Libraries' acquisitions department. When a selector chooses a title via GOBI (YBP's online platform), a library specialist in the acquisitions department submits the order to GOBI. When a title isn't available via GOBI, a selector submits a firm order request to acquisitions to have the title purchased elsewhere.

Electronic Resources Management in UW's Collection Development Office

Unlike many other academic libraries in North America, UW Libraries currently has no specialized ERL position dedicated to the coordination of tasks related to the acquisition and ongoing management of Internet-accessible information resources. While two such positions existed within CDO prior to 2014, these were transformed into collection development librarian positions as part of the reorganization of collection development responsibilities described in this paper.

When a search was undertaken to replace one of the ERLs who had been promoted to another position, the listing of responsibilities in the published announcement corresponded closely to the range of ERM tasks usually included in descriptions of ERL positions, focusing on liaison with vendors and consortia, licensing, ERM recordkeeping, technical tasks related to providing access and troubleshooting access problems, and management of vendor-supplied usage data:

- Plays a leadership role in the acquisition, management, and evaluation of licensed electronic resources to ensure consistent and integrated access for UW.
- Working in a collaborative environment, the ERL is primarily responsible for all phases of procurement and management of licensed electronic resources.
- The ERL is the UW Libraries' principal liaison to vendors and consortial partners regarding all issues for acquisition and maintenance of online resources.
- Manages lifecycle processes for electronic resources, including tracking vendor and license information, consortial memberships, renewals and plans for discontinuation of resources or significant interface changes.
- Assists with technical details of electronic resources, such as establishing access and troubleshooting access issues, including off-campus proxy access, and other maintenance.

- Develops and monitors data and statistics to better enable the analysis of electronic resource use and pricing patterns.
- Creates and interprets usage reports and other data to support decision-making.
- Participates in the materials budget planning process.

Within a few months of starting in the ERL position, the two new hires, along with the ERL who had been working in the position for 2 years previously, were redefined as collection development librarians, joining another who had been transferred to this position the previous year from the Research and Instruction Department. They were given new job descriptions, quoted below, that subsumed ERM tasks (indicated in italics) within a more general description of collection development and management responsibilities:

- *Participate in electronic resource lifecycle management activities.*
- Participate in the print resource selection and management activities.
- *Interface with library vendors.*
- *Participate in data analysis and collection analysis activities.*
- Work with liaison librarians to acquire materials requested by faculty and students.
- Share individual subject expertise with students and faculty, in the UW Libraries' teaching program or in individual consultations as appropriate.

CDO's four collection development librarians and the department head now share responsibility for ERM as an integral part of their workload—at least in theory. At the time of writing, the three who were formerly designated as ERLs take care of most of the technical tasks related to ERM, as described below. It is planned that all collection development librarians will eventually participate in all aspects of ERM.

The Division of ERM Labor at UW

Responsibility for ERM has been divided among collection development librarians in a practical and flexible arrangement, based on the areas of study with which each selector is concerned. Each of the five selectors normally takes care of the communications-related tasks associated with electronic resources in their designated areas. Specifically, this includes communication with resource vendors to arrange trials and negotiate pricing and licensing terms; coordinating communication about new resources (including trials) with library faculty, teaching faculty, staff, and students; and acting as the primary contact with vendors for renewals, invoicing, and so on. When communications regarding resources acquired in previous years are received by the former ERL, she will "hand off" the resource to the appropriate colleague by forwarding renewal notices, meeting requests, and so on, while informing vendors about the new point of contact at UW Libraries.

As mentioned above, the three who were formerly designated as ERLs, along with one paraprofessional library specialist, take care of technical ERM tasks, including: configuration of resource platforms (registering IP addresses, configuring OpenURL linking, branding, and so on); updating the A-Z database list for the UW Libraries' website; updating proxy server configuration for remote access; ensuring that the appropriate entries in the knowledgebase and link resolver are activated; coordinating with Technical Services to acquire and load MARC records for individual titles in some e-book collections; and creating and updating records in the ERM system with information about providers, contacts, administrator logins, and so on. Currently, two librarians in CDO—the department head and the librarian who transferred from the Research and Instruction department in 2013—are less involved with technical ERM tasks for resources in their subject areas; these are performed on a volunteer basis by the other three, or by the library specialist, as required.

Electronic resources troubleshooting work is divided in an ad hoc fashion, also on a volunteer basis: incident reports posted by public services personnel to an Electronic Resource Issues discussion forum on the UW Libraries' intranet are "claimed" as they come up by one or another of the collection development librarians or the library specialist, simply by making an initial response to the post.

Some other specialized areas of ERM are currently the responsibility of individual collection development librarians who have expressed interest in them. These include managing electronic resource usage data and managing an e-book collection of popular reading titles. Finally, some tasks, like the tracking of titles in large e-journal packages, and acting as a contact point for communications with consortia, continue to be performed by the librarian who was responsible for them in past years; where possible, this work may be divided up along subject-area lines in the future.

Advantages and Challenges

Approaching ERM in the team-based, collaborative manner that has been implemented at UW brings a number of advantages in managing electronic resources. First, the ERM process gains in efficiency, since individual selectors can monitor and manage the entire lifecycle of electronic resources in their subject areas, without extensive back-and-forth with other departments. For example, they can track new developments and enhancements to products, analyze usage data, monitor price increases, and so on, using any relevant information to inform decisions about renewals, upgrades, or cancellations. Second, the process is made more robust by having a team of librarians that can be called on to work on ERM issues; someone is always available to respond when problems arise, and librarians can confer with each other to find solutions when required. The team-based approach also provided support for on-the-job training for individual

librarians who were coming up to speed in certain areas during the early phase of the reorganization of responsibilities. Finally, having a group of librarians working in ERM allows for great flexibility in assignment of work, so that individuals are able to take on projects that coincide with their personal strengths and interests.

The challenges presented by this model of shared responsibility for ERM tasks are, in general, fairly typical of any other kind of collaborative work in an academic library setting. In order to ensure that all the necessary tasks pertaining to a given resource are performed in a timely manner, a way of tracking workflow is needed. At UW, a structured and documented workflow has yet to be implemented, so the department relies heavily on the record-keeping, memories, and communicativeness of the individuals involved in the ERM process. Inevitably, tasks are occasionally delayed or fall through the cracks. To help minimize the opportunity to miss important steps, we have recently started using a simple spreadsheet to track the performance of standard ERM tasks relating to resource acquisition.

A related challenge is the need to manage communications effectively, so that the appropriate people are always informed about developments that are relevant to their work. In particular, e-mail messages with actionable information need to be forwarded consistently to the appropriate selector, when they are received by someone else; consistency in communications with vendors and consortial representatives needs to be maintained so that they are not confused about whom to contact. Attention to workflow and intradepartmental communication can help avoid a further pitfall: duplication of effort. This is an issue mainly where multiple people share responsibility for a task—for example, troubleshooting electronic resource issues reported via the intranet discussion group. Signaling to the group that one is about to begin work on a task is a simple, important step that can save significant wasted effort.

Results

Thus far, the centralized selection model in place at UW Libraries has proved effective in handling the wide variety of resources and formats CDO purchases. Through communication with faculty and library liaisons, CDO librarians have learned that electronic formats are preferred in many subject areas, and this knowledge has resulted in better collection-building decisions. For example, our approval plan has been systematically reviewed by CDO selectors to better tailor it to the needs of the UW community. Under the UW Libraries' old selection model—over 20 subject bibliographers providing input on the planning process—it would have taken much longer to implement approval plan changes.

At the same time, dispersal of ERM responsibilities among CDO librarians has enabled a streamlining of the process of managing UW Libraries' electronic resources collection throughout the electronic resource lifecycle, bolstered coverage of key responsibilities such as troubleshooting, and permitted flexibility in assignment of special projects.

Where CDO's meetings to discuss electronic resource packages are concerned, the expertise of CDO librarians provides invaluable input for librarians who are less well versed in the technical aspects of the electronic resources lifecycle. Including some highly experienced librarians in the group has been a good way for all involved to think about good features of other formats and broaden everyone's knowledge of the world of academic publishing.

From the standpoint of liaisons, who are no longer directly involved in the selection process, the centralized model has been received with mixed feelings. That said, the model does seem to have freed liaisons from worrying about budgets and order deadlines. From a technical services perspective, having fewer librarians to deal with has made it somewhat easier to meet order deadlines without peaks and valleys occurring in the workflow. Some of this efficiency is likely

due to the relative lack of budget constraints in recent years. When the only university in the state of Wyoming faces budget constraints, the selection process will become more painstaking, and selectors will need to be more cautious in deciding how to spend their portions of the collection budget. The team approach developed during these recent large-budget years will serve the UW Libraries well in leaner times, as CDO has evolved a culture of sharing ideas and working together to build a well-rounded research collection.

In the future, CDO hopes to rely even more on its approval plan to cover the output of major academic publishers. In turn, selectors will be able to concentrate more on working with faculty and library liaisons to identify further hard-to-find materials.

Conclusion

As selection in academic libraries has become more complex, the variety of available formats has grown. By centralizing the selection process among a dedicated group of librarians with expertise in collection development and emerging formats, the process of building a comprehensive research collection can be carried out more effectively.

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