

TS-SIS Program: Redefining Work Roles in Response to Changing Collection Environments

Tuesday, July 28, 2009

Opening Statement (Ajaye Bloomstone, LSU)

Good afternoon.

My name is Ajaye Bloomstone and I am the acquisitions librarian at the LSU Law Center Library in Baton Rouge.

Welcome to "Redesigning work roles in response to changing collection environments." Eric Parker, acquisitions librarian at Northwestern University School of Law Library will be our primary speaker today, and was originally scheduled as our only speaker, but events late last year in Louisiana prompted me to ask for a few moments of time. After Eric and I present our two scenarios, the intent of this program is to turn it into a discussion forum so that we might all share ideas. This session may well segue into the TS Management Issues Roundtable so we do have meeting space until 4 pm.

For several years in AALL acquisitions meetings, I have been hearing from my colleagues about their budget cuts when at LSU Law, we were barely affected at all due to the increasing prices of oil and gas. As the economy quickly declined late last year, we too now claim membership in this group.

Following hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, LSU Law had been fairly immune to budget cuts. The prices of oil and gas remained high and Louisiana's energy-based economy remained strong. With the decline of the US and global economy however, the trickle down effect has finally reached us. Higher education and health are the only parts of our state budget without dedicated funding, and we began to hear hints of budget cuts beginning in mid 2008.

In January of 2009, we were told to expect and plan for the rare occurrence of mid-year cuts of 10 to 15%, up to what might approximate 30%. With the potential of fiscal year 2009/2010 additional cuts and the possibility of staff and faculty furloughs, we began canceling materials of a duplicative nature. Professors were consulted about titles in their research areas, online access was preferred over print for many of those continuing titles we chose to keep, nearly all law reviews, professional journals, and many looseleaves in print were cancelled, binding was all but discontinued, and for several months, all I did was cancel serial and continuing titles in all formats. In January of 2009 it was determined that the library would lose all but a few student workers -- those retained would remain at circulation with one for stack maintenance, and by July we would additionally lose two full time staff members in tech services along with our 2 grad assistants who assisted library-wide. Several vacant professional positions would remain unfilled.

Granted that this was a great opportunity to take a good look at what we had in the collection, what we wanted to retain, and that we'd have a chance to do a serious amount of database clean-up, something no one ever has the time for. After spending 8 hours a day for a couple months doing little more than canceling, determining that the projected savings due to non-renewals probably came close to several hundred thousand dollars, my first thought going into work was "I'm closing down a library. How do I deal with this one more day?" The psychological effect on staff was devastating -- we were all doing our usual tasks and at least half of another's job due to the loss of our two staff members and most all of our student hours while trying to maintain optimum levels of service.

The feeling of closing down the library was like a great white elephant in the room -- everyone felt it but no one wanted to acknowledge it until someone finally let it out one day, and we all admitted to thinking the same thing. It seemed that working hard to maintain a positive outlook was as much a part and challenge of each of our jobs as was any other task.

The Northwestern experience (so far) (Eric Parker, Northwestern)

Background

Fall 2008 ABA statistics

about 771,000 total volumes and equivalents (16th highest count)

about 5,000 active subscriptions

Serve a population of 771 JD students, 168 faculty (incl. adjuncts)

Past year - significant changes to collecting patterns

less print (active title count, June 2009, about 11% lower than in June, 2008)

fewer monographs purchased (about ½ as many, in \$, in FY09 compared with FY08)

Decline in traditional print-based work; not enough to eliminate most functions entirely; apportion times of people in different ways

Overview of TS:

2 check-in assistants

one accounting assistant

one serials manager

one bindery assistant

one monographs assistant (ordering, payment, copy cataloging)

one processing assistant

one catalog librarian (professional)

one acquisitions librarian

one bibliographic services librarian

associate director

No student workers

Staff and librarians not unionized

No reductions in staff to date – hope to keep it that way

Experiences with Workflow Redesign

R2 presentation to CARLI (Consortium of Academic Research Libraries in Illinois), Sep. 10, 2008, in Champaign, IL – ½ day presentation/slide show by Rick Lugg and associates

3 follow-up meetings with NU librarians:

Rules-based decision making

Jane Ouderkirk's drift-down theory

Hubs

Mainstreaming

Meanwhile, what are we looking to do at Pritzker (Law Library)?

Still very much a work in progress

Workflow redesign not just for technical services, but for library staff in general

Meetings in Jan.-Feb. to identify key activities: JM, EV, SJ, AH, EP

Flowchart activities in different functional areas of library – ones were done for: (1) monograph acquisitions process, (2) serials/continuations acquisitions process, (3) monograph cataloging, (4) ILL borrowing, (5) ILL lending, (6) SSRN submission

So far, the baby steps (small changes)

New TS hires expected to work at least 1 hour per day at circulation desk

More work with journals – copyright clearance, assisting with financials

Uploading documents to SSRN (more public services staff)

Assisting with ILL/document delivery – pulling materials from shelves

Staff assisting more with HeinOnline updates (URI creation)

Coming steps (bigger changes)

1. Stop doing some things:

Stop binding print journals (with a few exceptions) – this will require workflow shifts both within technical services and beyond

May stop serials claiming – is ROI worth it?

2. Continue to do some things, but more efficiently:

Need to streamline check-in – exceptions and need to eliminate

Rely more heavily on approval plan for monographic purchases (right now our plan is slips only)

Look closely at how tasks are done. Are we taking full advantage of LMS and other technologies?

3. Some newer things we would like to be involved in:

Besides baby steps already mentioned

IR-related efforts (whenever that comes on board)

Assist with Google book scanning when the time comes for that to be done

Assist with moving materials to off-site storage (coming)

Shift peoples' time to work with e-resources – connectivity – making sure we have access where we should (spot checking, the equivalent of check-in, troubleshooting reported problems (first pass))

More time devoted to conservation activities

Sharing more staff time with circulation?

What is your situation?

Activities you might drop?

Activities you're working on doing more efficiently?

What things would your library like to do, but cannot do now (with staff configured as it currently is)?

Anyone worked with R2 or another consultant? Experiences?