

Chapter 67

Collaborative Weeding Among Public University Libraries Can Lead to Cost Savings for All

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ABSTRACT

All academic libraries strive to have the highest quality collections which their acquisition budgets can support. However, the cost of quality resources continues to regularly increase, typically without corresponding increases in acquisition budgets. Additionally, print resources come with associated storage costs which are less tangible to measure than acquisition costs but which nonetheless have impact on overall library operations and expenditures. Storage and retention costs can have a substantial negative impact on general library usage, relevancy, and budget allocations. This chapter will focus on the management of retaining and weeding print monographs within the medium-sized public academic library and what a group of Michigan public academic libraries are doing to collectively address weeding and retention issues through the preliminary phase of a program called the Michigan Shared Print Initiative (MI-SPI).

INTRODUCTION

A group of public academic libraries in Michigan have embarked on a collaborative print monograph weeding and retention program called the Michigan Shared Print Initiative (MI-SPI). Due to the retention costs of print resources, the increasing need to use library spaces for other purposes than book storage, and the cost-efficiency of sharing resources within a consortium setting, these academic libraries have recognized the advantages in sharing print retention responsibilities among their collections. The MI-SPI program allows for libraries to identify and retain uniquely owned titles and reduce unnecessary duplication among the group. This is the essence of a collaborative weeding program. It allows for unique items or a small number of copies to be retained within a geographic area where resource sharing is facilitated within the consortium environment, while still allowing for the reduction in a surplus of copies.

MI-SPI is being coordinated by the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS), the Michigan-based library consortium which has a long history of providing consortia benefits to participating libraries

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in the state. The program is open to any Michigan state-supported academic library that is a member of the Michigan Council of Library Directors (COLD). Sustainable Collection Services (SCS) is the third party that provided the data sets, the analysis and tools with which to identify the commonly held but little-used print monographs owned by each participating library, and the comparison data among the groups' holdings. This was an essential element of the project since it allowed for retention and withdrawal decisions to move forward. SCS has extensive experience in conducting this kind of data analysis for shared print projects similar to MI-SPI. SCS data allows libraries to analyze the usage of their print collections and their value comparative to other library holdings. SCS has provided data sets for other shared print management projects including those with the Maine consortium of libraries, a central Iowa collaborative academic library group, and groups of academic libraries in Indiana, Ontario, New York, Virginia, and Washington. This chapter outlines the MI-SPI program, its initial activity, the growth of the program, Oakland University (OU)'s participation in the project, some of the complications inherent in the program, and the future direction it has taken. The author will also analyze and review the OU Collection Summary provided by the SCS data sets to demonstrate its intrinsic value. This chapter will illustrate how the MI-SPI program, a data-driven deselection plan, provides the best means with which to participate in a collaborative print monograph weeding project. Through the analysis of Integrated Library System (ILS) generated data, MI-SPI offers a print monograph weeding program and a collection analysis program that provides accurate print collection usage data and sound criteria for weeding decisions. It is in accordance with the underlying principles of print monograph resource sharing.

ACQUISITION COSTS KEEP RISING

Budget Constraints

Over the past ten years for which comparable data is available, from 2002 to 2012, the average price of an academic print book in North America has risen from \$55.90 to \$100.69 (Sullivan, 2004; Tafuri, 2014). \$55.90 in 2002 would have had the same buying power as \$71.34 in 2012 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). This is a far cry from meeting the \$100.69 price tag that libraries would have had to pay in 2012 for an equivalent academic book. Library resource costs have escalated over time while library budgets have remained stagnant or have declined. Particularly, public academic library acquisition budgets have struggled to regularly absorb these pricing increases. Most library acquisition budgets have remained either flat or have decreased over the last fifteen years. Nicholas, Rowlands, Jubb, and Jamali (2010) found that, in 2009, 44% of U.S. university libraries reported budget cuts from the previous year while 42% reported no budget increases from the year prior. Only a fortunate 22% reported a budget increase. The researcher's 2009 survey also revealed that 69.1% of the survey respondents indicated that they expected to spend the same or reduce their information resource expenditures over the following two years. Because of the effect of inflation, even consistent budgets constitute a diminution in the ability to acquire additional quality materials or to even maintain the status quo from the previous year. An initial reaction to the Nicholas et al. study is that 2009 budget cuts were in response to the 2008 recession. However, a survey conducted in 2011, to which academic libraries constituted the largest group of respondents, showed that the majority of library budgets remained either flat or decreased for 2010 to 2011 with the same projections for 2011 to 2012 (Collins, 2012). More recently, a number of North

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