

# Chapter V

## Sharing the Albatross of E-Resources Management Workflow

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Management of electronic resources is a time-consuming and, at times, a difficult process. Although the management of electronic resources is often seen as a strictly technical services endeavor, it should be considered a multifaceted process requiring all areas of the library. This chapter will provide a detailed account of how one library handles the electronic resources management workflow in a collaborative effort. It will be especially helpful for libraries working with a limited staff and resources and libraries trying to foster a more collaborative relationship between technical services and public services. The objective and mission of the chapter is to present successful library electronic resources workflow concepts in a straightforward and realistic approach. It aims to provide useful information on current workflow applications, procedures, and ideas from practicing library professionals at Jacksonville State University (JSU) that will contribute to the literature and area of electronic resources management. This chapter will provide considerations for workflow enhancements and detail the advantages of centralized workflows and collaboration between units.*

## INTRODUCTION

“Water, water every where  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water every where,  
Nor any drop to drink” (Coleridge, 1798).

Nowhere in the library world do these famous words from “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” ring through clearer than in the management of electronic resources. As more and more of our resources move to an electronic environment, the deeper we get into trying to manage them. They are indeed all around us, and a lot of the time, we even begin to drown in them. However, if a library uses a collaborative effort, these resources will not take over the staff.

Fundamental changes in workflows for library technical services procedures were set in motion with the introduction of integrated library systems in the 1980's. At that time, a rethinking of traditional workflows was needed in order to take advantage of the tracking mechanisms offered by automation. For instance, moving tasks traditionally assigned to the cataloging and processing units such as the identification of bibliographic records, to the initial site of order in the acquisitions department allowed for better tracking. In a 1994 survey, Bevis and McAbee found that, “Sixty-nine percent of the responding libraries stated that there had been or was a planned reorganization of nonprofessional staff because of . . . integration, and 81% reported that there had been a shift in nonprofessional tasks” (p. 36).

As workflows and process analysis evolved to accommodate new technologies, the resources that these technologies were tracking were also evolving. E-resources, which in the not so distant past were anomalies are now commonplace purchases, and have easily been incorporated into established workflow procedures. Moreover, the increasing number of resources moving to an electronic format, whether completely or partially forced librarianship to create an entirely new job:

the electronic resources librarian. JSU is aware of the need to fill this position, which can be seen in the fact that two of the authors of this chapter have electronic resources in their titles. The two electronic resources positions at JSU are classified in technical services due to other elements of the job. However, according to Fisher (2003), a majority of electronic resources librarian job descriptions include public service characteristics. Fisher (2003) conducted a study of job postings for electronic resources librarians which appeared in *American Libraries* during a 17 year period. The main component centered on reference services, instead of management. Of the 23 most cited characteristics, management/coordination was ninth on the list. However, Bednarek-Michalska (2002) developed a job description for electronic resources librarians that calls for this position to be located in the acquisitions department and notes the responsibilities of acquiring and managing electronic resources. The varying job descriptions and requirements attest that managing electronic resources should be more of a collaborative effort between technical services and public services librarians.

The time requirements for managing electronic resources forces workflow changes. Some of the tasks involved in the process may very well be the responsibility of the paraprofessional staff. Duranceau and Hepfer (2002) discovered this trend in their survey related to staffing issues and electronic resource management. JSU's Houston Cole Library (HCL) distributes some of the managerial tasks to the paraprofessional staff as well. This frees up the time for the librarians to complete other requirements in the process.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

While there are a number of articles available regarding managing electronic resources, the majority of these articles deal with specific maintenance procedures for databases, e-jour-

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