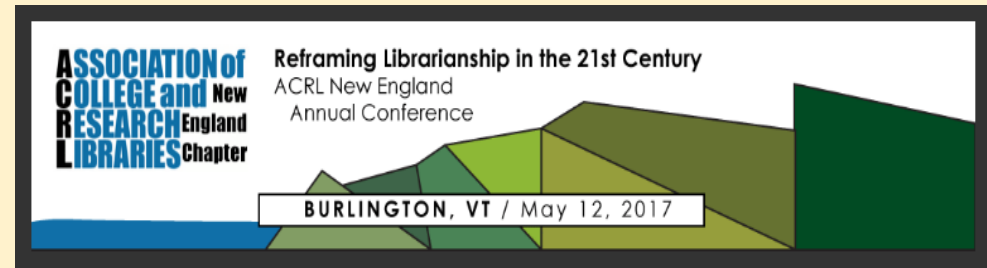# Sturdy Bones: Reframing the Small Academic Library

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ASSOCIATION of COLLEGE and RESEARCH LIBRARIES New England Chapter
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UNE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND Library Services

Beginning the conversation

In July 2014, a small group of UNE Libraries staff was created to reframe the academic library for the 21st century, including internal structure, positions, services, and cross-departmental collaborations. The new model had to work within the existing skeleton of the library with no changes in budget or number of staff positions. The UNE Libraries staff have been working toward creating a structure that is flattened, forward-thinking and student centered. The library's main goals have continued to be to foster inquiry and independent learning, optimize access to high-quality resources and provide welcoming spaces. A group of librarians appointed by the Dean of Library Services began by reading available literature on new library models and discussing what a path forward might be.

Next steps

Librarians pulled together survey data from faculty and students and conducted a survey of Library staff to gather information about current library services and ideas for future services and projects. To discuss the collected information and talk about change, a facilitator was brought in for an all staff off- campus retreat day. The preliminary information was distributed and discussed at the retreat. A SWAT analysis was conducted along with facilitated discussion, brainstorming and team building activities.
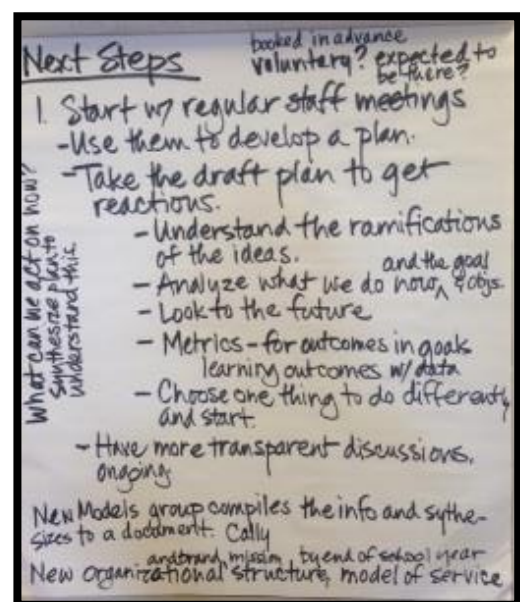
Posters from staff-wide retreat brainstorming session.
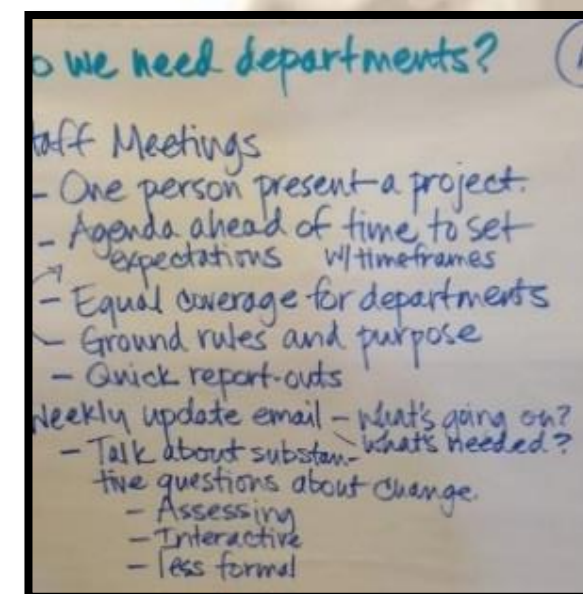
Data gathered at the retreat was collected and interpreted into themes, including:

- **Cross-training** for customer service and knowledge of roles
- Staff meetings/ **improved internal communication**
- **New roles** based on an examination of current and future patron needs
- **Website** (highly functional, attractive, interactive, and responsive)
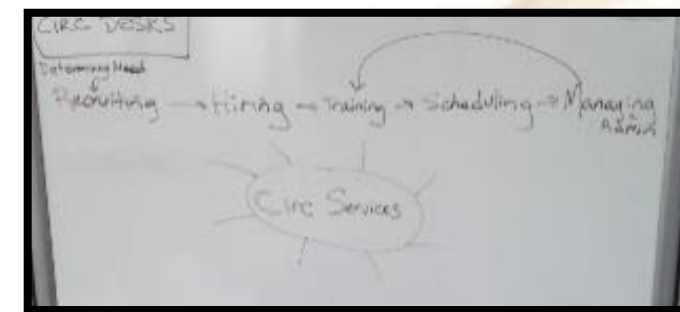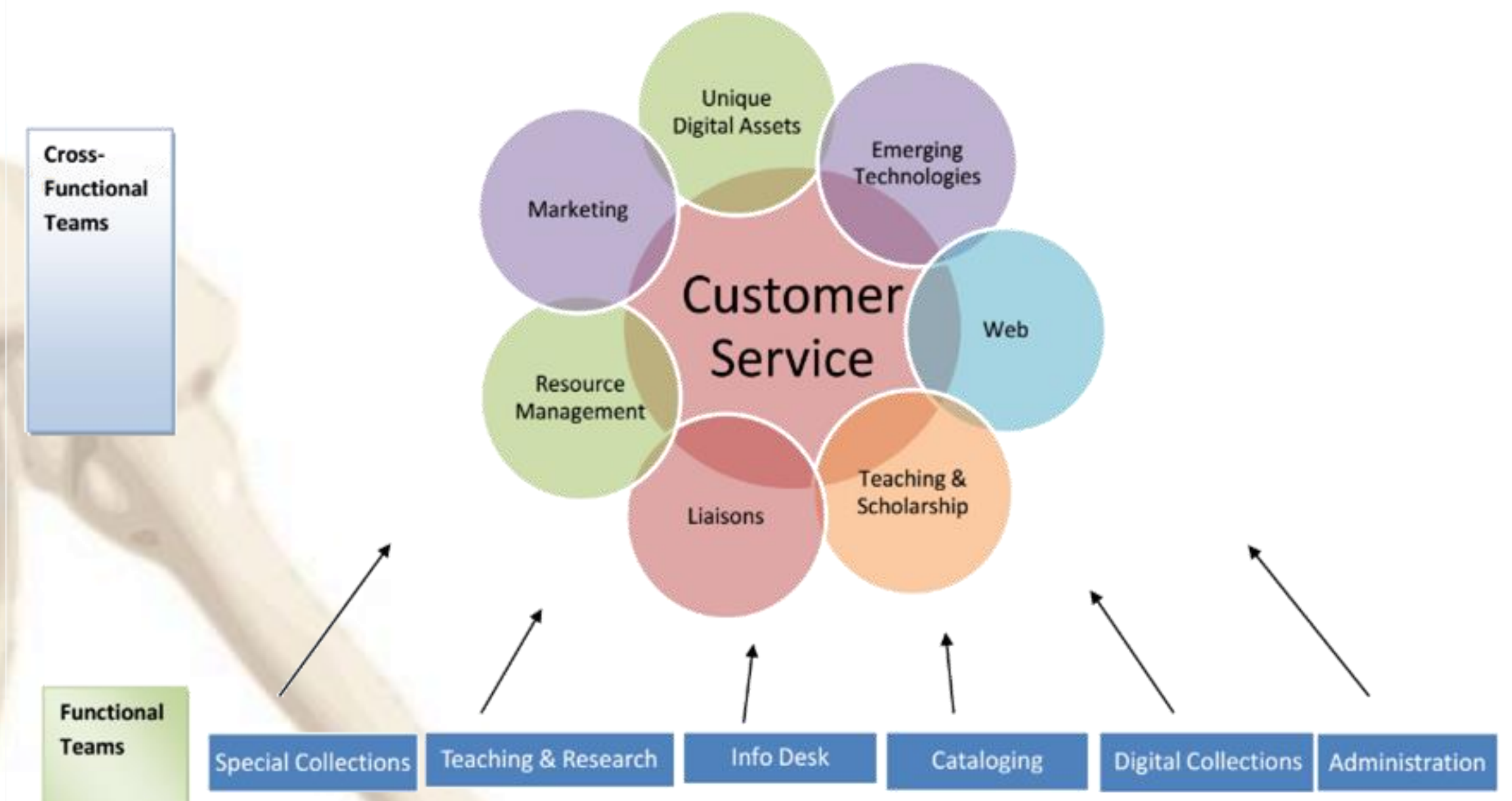
A job duties post-it visualization

a work flow diagram
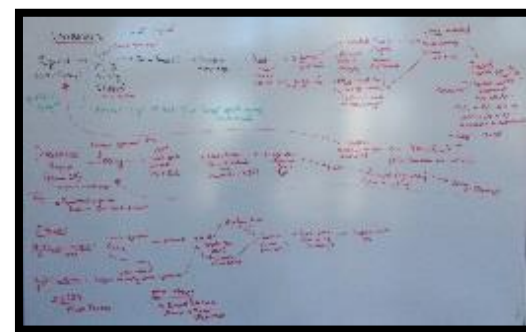
a work flow diagram

The work of reframing

The surveys' data, combined with the literature about future-facing library structure and the themes and ideas from the all staff retreat, allowed librarians to craft a new structure model for the libraries consisting of cross functional and functional teams to promote cross training, open communication and patron-need-centered library services

Cross-Functional Teams

Functional Teams

Customer Service

Marketing · Unique Digital Assets · Emerging Technologies · Web · Teaching & Scholarship · Liaisons · Resource Management

Special Collections | Teaching & Research | Info Desk | Cataloging | Digital Collections | Administration

Components of Cross Functional teams*

Cross-Functional: include members from various library areas and support certain tasks and responsibilities.
Autonomous: teams define their mission, goals, timelines, and activities.
Self-managing: team members decide how they function in terms of leadership and participation.
Shared leadership: teams choose leaders for a specified period of time and leadership rotates.
Shared decision-making: make decisions by consensus, communicate decisions as action items or recommendations to Dean
Integrated communication: All meeting notes/decisions will be included in the internal communication tool, which all staff members are expected to regularly read.
Self-assessment and peer-assessment: team members practice self-assessment and peer-assessment to measure team function and accomplishments; these contribute to annual performance appraisals done by Dean
Core competencies: team members establish a set of core competencies that each team member should achieve.
Cross-training: each team member will be cross-trained on all core competencies as well as at least one other core function, and will perform that function on a regular basis to maintain skills

*This is still an ongoing process. Currently we are in transition to the new model and taking opportunities to work in our cross functional teams as they arise.
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Some descriptions adapted from:
Higa ML et al. Redesigning a Library's Organizational Structure I. *College & Research Libraries* (January 2005): 42-58.
Nutefall, JE and Chadwell, FA. Preparing for the 21st century: Academic Library Realignment. *New Library World* (2012); 113 (3/4): 162-173.