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Biz of Acq--How Closing a Media Service Point Led to Opening the DVD Collection and Increased DVD Circulation

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Biz of Acq — How Closing a Media Service Point Led to Opening the DVD Collection and Increased DVD Circulation

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Sonoma State University's Library is located in **The Jean and Charles Schulz Information Center**. The Information Center opened in August 2000 and houses the University Library, Information Technology, the Center for Distributed Learning, the Writing Center, the Faculty Center, the Center for Community Engagement, and Charlie Brown's Café. The University Library is 215,000 feet in size, consists of three floors with two wings on each floor, and has multiple entrances for easy access. The University Library also has five acres of floor space and 50,000 linear feet of shelving.

An expansive library with multiple entrances is a great benefit to patrons as **Sonoma State's** former library was outdated and approximately 100,000 square feet smaller. But, with a bigger building came more service points and the need to stretch the same number of staff to cover more areas. After much debate and thought it was decided the media desk would be closed as a service point. The media desk serviced a closed stack and employees retrieved all requests for DVDs, VHS tapes, LPs, audiocassettes, Laser Discs, and CDs. Near the media desk are several viewing rooms, audio stations, and the library's collection of microfiche and microfilm. The media desk assisted patrons who had questions about media and who needed assistance with the various forms of equipment.

Once it was decided the desk would be closed, a decision had to be made about the closed stacks: all of the media could be moved to the automated retrieval storage (ARS) system; part of the media collection could be moved to elsewhere in the library and part stored in the ARS; or all of the collection could be moved to a different area. Since the main circulation desk was not large enough to accommodate the media collection it was not feasible to move the collection to a closed-stack behind the circulation desk. The library's DVD collection includes both educational and popular DVDs, and every year DVD circulation numbers increase. The idea was presented to have DVDs become an open collection and to display them in an easily accessible area of the library.

Where would we set up a browsing collection of DVDs without adding an extra service point? Across from the circulation desk there was an alcove which was home to the Writing Center. The Writing Center moved to a larger area in the library which freed up this space.

The space was directly across from a service desk, was the right size to house the current DVD collection, and still had room for future growth. In early summer of 2012 the new DVD location "DVD Central" was re-configured; a partial wall was built to meet the fire code, and shelves were built and installed.

In addition to a location, a decision had to be made about securing the DVDs and what kind of security system would be cost effective and easy to maintain. Displaying the DVD cases in DVD Central and housing the discs behind the circulation desk was not an option due to space issues. It was therefore decided to house the entire DVD in DVD Central. It was also decided to use cases that could accommodate cover art and were lockable. The cases cost approximately $115 for a box of 100 single tray cases. Cases that would accommodate two or more DVDs also had to be ordered. Three decouplers, to lock and unlock the cases, were purchased at approximately $200 each. It was decided that tattle tape would be inserted into each of the cases and whenever possible the original packaging with the title and credit information would be preserved. Often times the original packaging would not fit into the locked cases as the packaging was made of cardboard and too thick to allow proper closure. Whenever this was an issue, paper sleeves were printed and inserted into the case.

The DVD collection had previously been shelved by accession number, which would not be practical in an open-stack environment. A DVD does not have a lot of room on the spine for extended call numbers, so it was determined a truncated version would have to work. General guidelines initially developed included:

1) non-fiction films would be classed in their traditional subject areas using broad class numbers, up to the first decimal place;

2) all feature films would be classed together in PN 1997 and not further subdivided by time period (PN 1997.2 for example);

3) all television broadcasts (fictional) would be classed together in PN 1992;

4) the cutter would be determined by the first word in the title, ignoring initial articles or non-filing characters (HV 636 FEMA for example);

5) when needed, the year of the piece would be added to help create a unique call number (for example PN 1997 Twelfth 2005); and

6) when determining a cutter by title the language of the DVD would be used.

Did problems arise? Heck yeah. But, we learned to adapt and be flexible with our guidelines. Several times patrons were not able to find a movie in a foreign language when they associated the title of the film with the English translation. Remakes of feature films were often confusing, and exactly what is a feature film versus a non-feature film? What about plays that are feature films? What about films that were later shown on television? Since we had to set up our guidelines in a short period of time we learned to be flexible with our "rules." For example, if a film was a dramatic feature film or "based on real life," this did not qualify as a documentary. For a DVD to be classified as such it had to be promoted as a documentary. More specifically, we turned to Wikipedia for a basic definition of a documentary: "a nonfictional motion picture intended to document some aspect of reality, primarily for the purposes of instruction or maintaining a historical record."

At the end of June 2012 the library owned a total of 4,788 DVDs which were checked out a total of 6,670 times from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012. During the time period of July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014 the number of DVDs owned by the library increased by 9%, and the number of checkouts soared by 76%. Granted, the library added more popular DVDs and feature films over the two-year period, but an increase in circulation of 76% on only a 9% increase in the number of items owned is impressive. An informal study of students unanimously showed students like to wander through DVD Central, pull out the DVDs, read the information on the covers, and peruse the titles on the shelves.

Little Red Herrings — Shifting Sands

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herringm@winthrop.edu>

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains: round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Are we witnessing the shifting sands of a "colossal wreck," or is it just the settling of a foundation that will correct itself in due course? This year, 2015, is one of the banner years for baby boomers reaching the age of 65. Over the next five years, scores of librarians will reach or exceed that threshold. We've known this for some time now. We also know that not as many young librarians are replacing the hoary-headed as rapidly as those hoary heads are leaving.

In other words, library staffs are getting …more and more mature, let us say, because no one is going anywhere. With the exception of deans, directors, and a few department heads, everyone is digging in for the short haul — short, because they are, after all, 65 or thereabouts. This means there is good news and bad news for libraries. How librarianship deals with this maturing will mean the difference between well-functioning libraries and Ozymandias-like disasters.

First, the good news about aging librarians. The good news is that there remains a long institutional memory and/or history at many libraries. Unlike other professions, the temptation to throw the baby out with the bathwater in libraries is minimized because those who remain actually knew the baby as a baby, or even delivered it. The more good news is that there is a rich and broad wellspring of experience. In a more mature staff there will be those who saw the first hint of automation, and perhaps even some who hand-typed card catalog cards. While neither provides much inherent value to be sure, this does provide a sound historical basis on which to build a future. Finally, these gray-haired (or bald-headed, as the case may be) librarians have seen everything. Quite a few of them have probably survived a few deans, several directors, not to mention more than a handful of presidents and/or CEOs. They know how things work in a given place, and how to get things done easily. They can direct any whippersnapper to the right people, places, or procedures, helping said whippersnapper to avoid institutional landmines, roadblocks, curmudgeons, or all of the above.

Now the bad news. There remains that same long, long, long and longer still institutional memory. It cannot be done that way, we have never done it that way, we don't want to do it that way. We love the baby and its bathwater, and we're not about to change it, throw it out or allow it to grow up, not on our watch, buster. Long-termers mean that there will likely not be any money for hiring new staff, so any new

ideas will have to be internally-generated. This isn't impossible, of course, but it is hard for any aging organization to reinvent itself when the will to do so isn't there, no prods exist to make it want to do so, and the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel of their careers is now very clearly in focus. Any new initiatives will have to be undertaken by aging librarians who may not want a new role, may disagree with the new approach, or may dig in against new duties altogether. Again, this is not always the case. But it is sometimes very difficult to initiate easily and well new ideas and new roles in a well-seasoned staff. Telling any 60-something year olds in any profession that he or she must now change what he or she has been doing for the last three decades in order to do something entirely new is not always greeted with, "Thank you for making my job interesting again."

None of us, young or old, are really used to the idea that libraries must fight for every dollar, though we have been doing it all of our careers. We know we must, yet we still find it exhausting. Now we find we must also fight to make the case that libraries are still needed at all. While we have always fought for every dime, we have almost always lived in a halcyon age in which the *principle* that libraries are the cynosure of intellectual activity was taken for granted. Not anymore. If anything, we have to make the case that we aren't obsolete and should not be made the handmaid of some IT department. Instilling that energy with the needed sense of urgency in an aging staff isn't always easy to do.

The next five years will be a most important time for libraries. Can we make the necessary changes that must be made to remain relevant, and can we make those changes with the aging staffs we now have? Frankly, this isn't so much a library issue as it is an issue that every organization must face. We baby-boomers are everywhere, and that means we are retiring in every profession. Because changes in librarianship have been hurling toward us at warp speed, however, the need to make the new with the old becomes more challenging as time goes on. It's that new wine in old wineskins dilemma all over again.

Those libraries that make these changes wisely and well will flourish. Having the will to make them even with retirement in the rearview mirror is one more opportunity for librarians to prove their value once again. Creating the conditions for this to take place is the challenge not just for deans and department heads, but for everyone who works in a library. In academic libraries we serve a clientele that ranges in age from 18 to 70, some young people who have come from highly sophisticated high school libraries, some from very rudimentary ones. We serve veterans, adult learners, and some just taking a few courses every now and again. They all need their library to be the best and brightest it can be.

This means we must be the best and brightest we can be regardless of how old we are. 🐾

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How has this move from a closed-stack to an open-stack environment changed the workload? Per the library's stacks manager: the DVDs are easy to re-shelve, the call number system is working well, and there has not been a big increase in his overall workload. There has been an increase in the workload of the Main Circulation Desk now that the Media Desk has closed. The circulation desk is responsible for all media check out, unlocking the DVDs, and checking the DVDs back into the collection. Also, more DVD circulation

means more time spent answering questions. Non-DVD media items were moved to the ARS, which has also changed the Circulation Desk's workflow.

Even though the media desk has been closed, the area still houses various forms of equipment such as turntables and microfiche and microfilm readers. The library is currently in the process of evaluating the media area as well as the overall library to see how space is currently being used today. When the library was built almost 15 years ago it was anticipated space would be used one way, but over time how the library is being used continues to change. Although there was some initial

skepticism about closing a service point in the library; the current staff is not spread as thin and are better able to assist patrons. The library has also instituted a team of "roving student assistants" who are able to assist patrons with questions they may have about equipment housed in the media area.

The library's decision to close a service point was not an easy one, but one that was necessary without an increase in staffing numbers. The decision to move the DVD collection from behind a desk to an open area turned out to be a benefit to patrons; as evidenced by a 76% increase in usage on an increase in numbers of 9%. 🐾

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