

## Against the Grain

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### Let's Get Technical – Adding a New Dimension to Education: Creating a Curriculum Materials Center Collection

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# Let's Get Technical — Adding a New Dimension to Education: Creating a Curriculum Materials Center

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**Column Editor Note:** *In this month's column, we feature the experience of using a grant to build a curriculum materials collection. Dawn Harris, Acquisitions and Cataloging Librarian at Texas A&M University-Central Texas, explains the success she and her staff had with building and promoting a new curriculum materials center. — SM & AM*

## Introduction

In 2016 the University Library at Texas A&M University-Central Texas was awarded a Special Project grant from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) to provide library programming for multiple intelligences. The grant was targeted to benefit children with disabilities, with a goal of purchasing resources that would support various methods of learning. Twenty thousand dollars was allotted for this collection of resources.

Prior to the grant, A&M-Central Texas did not have a significant or intentional collection of curriculum materials (manipulatives). Simultaneously, an education faculty member had asked about just such a collection after seeing one at a neighboring university.

## Selection and Acquisitions

As stipulated in the grant documentation, the educational materials (non-book) portion of the grant was broken down into 11 categories: flip charts, games, literacy manipulatives, math manipulatives, science manipulatives, social science manipulatives, toys/puppets, puzzles, tabletop charts, writing lapboards, and technology items (iPads, etc.). A spreadsheet was used to track the purchases in the various categories.

Several librarians and staff worked as a team to select and purchase items to fit within the categories. This team included the Education Librarian, the Outreach and Instruction Librarian, the Acquisitions and Cataloging Librarian, and the Business Coordinator. Items were primarily purchased from a local teacher supply store and Amazon using a designated credit card.

## Cataloging, Processing, Housing and Shelving the Collection

Once items began arriving, the purchasing team and the Technical Services team began discussing various classification strategies. After discussing the pros and cons of several strategies, the team decided upon creating the following nine numerical categories:

1001-1999	Manipulative, reading
2001-2999	Manipulative, math
3001-3999	Manipulative, science
4001-4999	Manipulative, social science
5001-5999	Games
6001-6999	Puzzles
7001-7999	Flip charts/Tabletop charts
8001-8999	Writing lapboards/Miscellaneous
9001-9999	Puppets

Within each classification range, items were added in an accession-style manner with numbers increasing sequentially. An example of a call number is ERC 2002.

After the classification strategy was decided, the Acquisitions and Cataloging Librarian was able to begin cataloging. A new collection, Education Resource Collection (ERC), was created in the library's ILS, **Innovative's** Sierra. While bibliographic records were in **OCLC** for many of the educational items, many were not. In these cases, an original record was created, or a modified record was derived from

a similar product. Due to the large amount of materials needing to be created in a relatively short amount of time, original bibliographic records were usually cataloged at a minimal level. Order records denoting the fund, location, vendor, price, order date, and receipt date were attached. Often the item had many pieces, so detailed check-in notes were necessary so that library personnel could verify that all pieces were accounted for during check in.

While some materials arrived ready to go in a sturdy box, there were many instances where staff had to purchase or devise some type of container so that the item could be circulated. In many cases, varying-sized lidded plastic storage boxes were used. Clear plastic zippered bags in several sizes and snap-top plastic hanging bags filled the need in other cases. These types of enclosures allowed for barcodes and location labels to be utilized. The grant funding required that a label acknowledging the funding source be placed on the item, and these types of enclosures allowed for this.

Other items — such as hand puppets, stuffed toys, and child-sized headphones — were a little more problematic. After discussing several possibilities, staff decided to utilize luggage tags. The hanging tags allowed space for a barcode and label and could be attached to the puppets and headphones with a strap.

The next challenge was where to store the growing collection of odd-sized items. After much shifting and decluttering, a storage room adjacent to the circulation desk was repurposed as the ERC Room. The library owned several sections of utility shelving from a former archive space, and these shelves proved a perfect fit for the myriad array of shapes and sizes of the materials. Items in boxes were easily stacked on the shelves, but items in bags required bins and hanging racks for storage. Unfortunately, the overall size of the room is small, leading to many items being stacked on top of each other; however, they are arranged by category according to the call number scheme. The space constraint is an ongoing concern for staff as the collection continues to grow.

## Promoting and Circulating the Collection

Before ERC items could be circulated, staff needed to draw up guidelines and procedures specific to the unique properties of the collection. These guidelines were determined in consultation with the circulation staff, particularly the Circulation Supervisor. Because the collection was small, it was decided that a check-out period of a week with two renewals was warranted. Patrons are limited to ten ERC items at any given time and overdue fines are \$1.00 per day with no grace period. Since one of the targeted audiences was homeschooling parents, the collection was made available to individuals outside of the university community via TexShare and Alumni accounts.

A library collection is only as good as its usage statistics. Even though each item was cataloged and could be found using the online public catalog, staff decided to create an illustrated public guide using LibGuides for easier identification and browsing. The library uses the LibGuides platform for its entire web presence, so patrons were already familiar with the site and layout. The page for the collection was added to the WarriorKids LibGuide and was broken down into eight categories: Reading (Literacy), Math, Science, Social Science, Puppets/Plush Toys, Flip Charts/Table Top Charts, Writing Lapboards/Misc, Puzzles, and Games. Within each category, pictures of the items were added. The title of the item, directly under the picture, is a hyperlink to the item in Sierra, where the patron can read a description of the item and see its availability.

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A requirement of the grant was that the library promote the collection via various methods. While the LibGuide accounted for one method, more direct methods were employed. The Outreach and Instruction Librarian and the Education Librarian visited many school campuses in the Killeen, Copperas Cove, and Lampasas Independent School Districts where they talked with teachers, librarians, and administrators about the ERC collection. They also attended PTO and family reading nights on several school campuses in order to touch base with parents.

### Collection Outcomes and the Future

As a direct result of promotion of the collection, the library has been contacted by many elementary, middle school, and high educators with requests for visits and programs. The requests vary from a classroom full of children to several classrooms. While some requests have been for librarians to visit schools, more have been for schools to bring students to the university campus for presentations and programs. The programs have ranged from a couple hours long single session to a half-day, multi-station visit. Educators often asked for certain topics such as animals, math, and STEM. At times, librarians were scrambling to purchase materials to fulfill these requests.



To better accommodate these requests, a second Special Projects grant request was submitted to TSLAC in 2017 to fund pop-up library programming. The grant was awarded, and this allowed the library to develop a menu of diverse programs on topics that educators can select from. Funds were available to purchase the necessary materials and supplies to conduct the program to a group of children. Programming topics include forensic entomology, computer password security, circuits with electricity and lights, poetry appreciation, rocket science, and the study of rock art in anthropology. Materials and supplies to support each pop-up program were assembled into mobile storage containers and cataloged as a single item in the ERC collection for check-out and use.

Not surprisingly, the entire ERC collection has proven to be popular with all types of patrons, including students, faculty, staff, homeschooling parents, ISD teachers, tutors, and parents of tutored children. The University Library hosts several children's camps — such as STEM and reading enrichment — during the summer, and the ERC items are heavily used as part of the curriculum. During 2017 the collection made up 6.7% of the library's entire circulation. During the first half of 2018, the percentage has gone up to 8.4%. As more items are added to the collection, that statistic is expected to increase.

To see the collection, please visit the Little Warrior webpage and click on Manipulatives: <http://tamuct.libguides.com/c.php?g=482741&p=4218950>. 🐾

## Epistemology — Three Ways of Talking about Sci-Hub

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I was wrong about **Sci-Hub**. Although **Elbakyan** started it in 2011, it wasn't until **Elsevier's** injunction in the fall of 2015 that it started getting wide-spread attention. Then came a flurry of articles in the general and specialty press, claiming either triumphantly or with an incontrovertible sense of doom that it presaged the fall of traditional subscription publishing. I yawned. Pirate sites for subscribed scholarly content are hardly new. I figured this was just the latest. After some hand-wringing and legal skirmishes, that'd be the end of it.

Not so. The arguments over **Sci-Hub** continue unabated, banking across three interlocked themes: that **Sci-Hub** poses a significant, and still largely underappreciated, security risk to the computer systems of institutions of higher education; that **Sci-Hub** surfaces the moral dilemmas and tensions created by a copyright regime that makes it difficult for many individuals to get access to the journal articles that they need to further work that benefits society; and that **Sci-Hub** reveals the

degree to which library systems have utterly failed to provide an acceptable level of user experience for those who have legal access to content that is also available through **Sci-Hub**.

A post by **Andrew Pitts** in the *Scholarly Kitchen* details the security issues. According to **Pitts**, “**Sci-Hub** is not just stealing PDFs. They're phishing, they're spamming, they're hacking, they're password-cracking, and basically doing anything to find personal credentials to get into academic institutions. While illegal access to published content is the most obvious target, this is just the tip of an iceberg concealing underlying efforts to steal multiple streams of personal and research data from the world's academic institutions.”<sup>1</sup> The long and typically unilluminating comment thread reveals how controversial this claim remains.



**Elbakyan's** been vague about how the credentials that she uses are obtained. Some appear to be voluntarily provided by authorized users who support the Pirate Queen's efforts to undermine the big commercial publishers. In response to charges like

**Pitts's** she denies that **Sci-Hub** engages in phishing, but she doesn't deny that phishing attacks might result in credentials that **Sci-Hub** uses.<sup>2</sup>

No matter how the credentials are obtained, the security threat remains. **Elbakyan** claims that whatever credentials she has possession of are used only for the purposes of obtaining articles for **Sci-Hub**, but it's impossible to verify this. Certainly an interested hacker knowing of a trove of university credentials would want to get their hands on them, despite what **Elbakyan** might want.

The ambiguities and evasions provide fertile ground for dark conspiracy theories. There are few institutions anymore where the credentials used to access library resources are only used for that purpose. Universities are typically under constant cyberassault. From credit card info to bank account numbers to research data (some of it highly classified), there is a substantial market for the data that can be scraped from a university's servers. Maybe this is what **Elbakyan** and whoever is enabling her are really after!

The comments to the aforementioned *Scholarly Kitchen* article wade deeper into the conspiracy swamp: **Elbakyan** couldn't possibly operate as she has without at least the tacit approval of the Russian security forces.

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