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Ready or Not: Two Libraries' Approaches to Making Collections Budget Reductions During a Pandemic & What We Can Learn from it

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Assistant Professor and
Collection Management Librarian

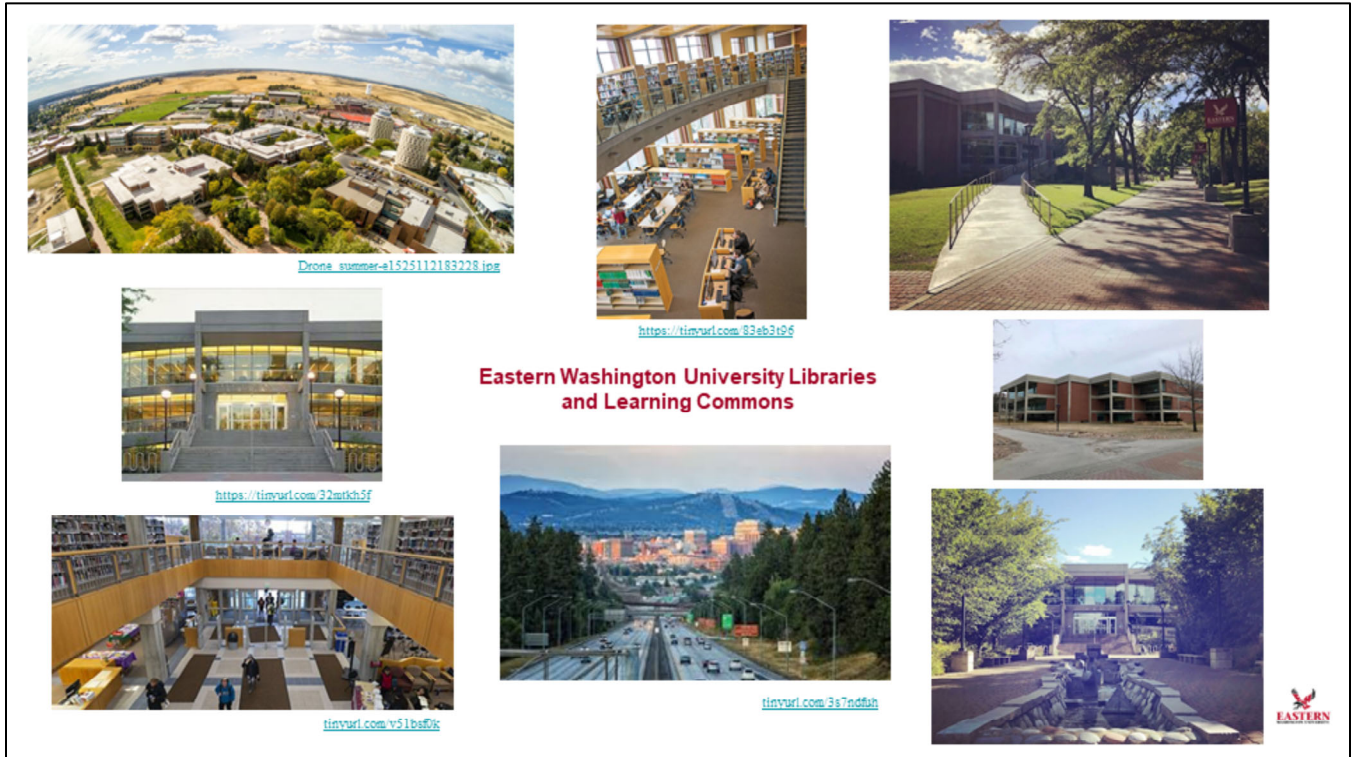**Maria Savova**
Director of Collections and Technical Services
/ Interim Co-Director of User Services and
Resource Sharing

ER&L
Electronic Resources and Libraries

8 March 2021

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THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES LIBRARY

Eastern Washington University Libraries and Learning Commons

My name is Jaclyn Parrott and I am an Assistant Professor and Collection Management Librarian at Eastern Washington University Libraries and Learning Commons in Cheney, Washington, which is not too far away from Spokane, WA.

We also share Spokane Academic Library with Washington State University serving our downtown Spokane campus programs.

In fall of 2020, our enrollment consisted of 12,328 students and over 150 areas of study.

Our library provides access to 1.1 million physical items, 550,000 eBooks, 150,000 eJournals and 216 electronic databases (299 before recent cuts).

Currently, the library employs 34 library personnel, including one library dean, one library faculty chair, and 13 faculty librarians.

Most of our services were adapted to an online space over the course of the pandemic.

Context: Global Pandemic = Purchasing Freeze and Budget Cuts

"Effective immediately, all non-essential purchasing is frozen by the university regardless of the funding source or index."
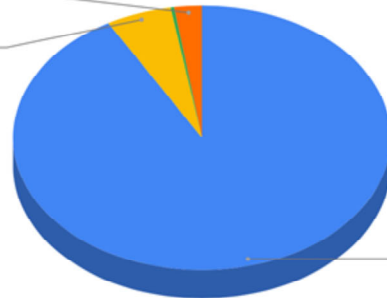
Library Collections Budget

Endowment Funds
2.4%

Distance Learning Fund
5.6%

Collections Fund
91.7%

We have all been affected by COVID-19 in one way or another. On March 16, 2020, our staff started teleworking, classes went online, and soon after a purchasing freeze was implemented at our university. Enrollment was already starting to decline, so this did not help matters.

As someone who manages the collections budget for our library, I received this message from the powers that be: *"Effective immediately, all non-essential purchasing is frozen by the university regardless of the funding source or index."*

As you can see here, the collections budget I manage consists of state funded operations money (our college is currently 50% state supported), endowments, replacements, and distance learning funds.

· Our main collections fund is used for our subscriptions, one-time purchases and maintenance fees. It also includes our bindery cost, service charges, shipping, and tax. This index fund became the target of our cuts.
· Our endowment funds include various grant foundation monies with various stipulations for what we can spend the donated money on. For example, one is for literary titles, another is for engineering, and others are

broader in nature.

- · Our replacements fund is used for any books needing to be replaced due to loss or damage.
- · We use our distance learning fund to pay for our streaming media and shared consortia eBooks.

Usually, this budget is set and we work with in the parameters we are given. So, when I received this message, I was confused since libraries carry varied subscription models, licenses, timelines, and complexities.

But, each purchase request has had to be approved by the President's office regardless of whether we had a multi-year license or commitment already in place for the purchase.

Working from home all of a sudden became a lot more stressful and demanding than going into the office.

Project Timeline

Purchasing Freeze
March 2020

Project Conception
May 2020

Collecting Statistics
June and July 2020

Seeking Approval
Fiscal Year 2021

Communicating Decisions
Fiscal Year 2021

COVID-19 Chaos
April and May 2020

Project Design
June 2020

Collecting Subject Liaison Feedback
July and August 2020

Implementing Decisions
Fiscal Year 2021

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Here you can see what our timeline for this project looked like. We were all taken by surprise in March, and adapted as quickly as we could in April and May.

Everything turned a bit chaotic:
- Teaching faculty scrambled to adapt their classes to an online format
- The library building closed to the public
- We stopped all print shipments, which included placing our journal and newspaper subscriptions on hold, as well as our Government Documents, since we are a Federal Depository Library.
- We stopped resource sharing, borrowing and lending.
- We cancelled our standing orders.
- We only approved eBook requests that came directly from faculty and no print requests were accepted.
- Any year-end money set aside for one-time purchases or new subscriptions was swept back.

We soon realized we needed a more objective plan for cutting the collection budget sooner than later.
- We conceived it in May and designed it in June.

·   We coordinated updating our resource statistics in June and July.

·   By July were able to start collecting librarian feedback, which extended into August. Basically, we got most feedback needed for all renewals over the summer, with specific follow-up necessary based on the tiered ranking system we came up with.

Each purchase had to be justified and proactively submitted before the renewal terms had to be agreed upon with vendors.

Personnel Cuts

Fiscal Year 2018 (Flourishing), Fiscal Year 2021 (Current) and Fiscal Year 2022 (Future)
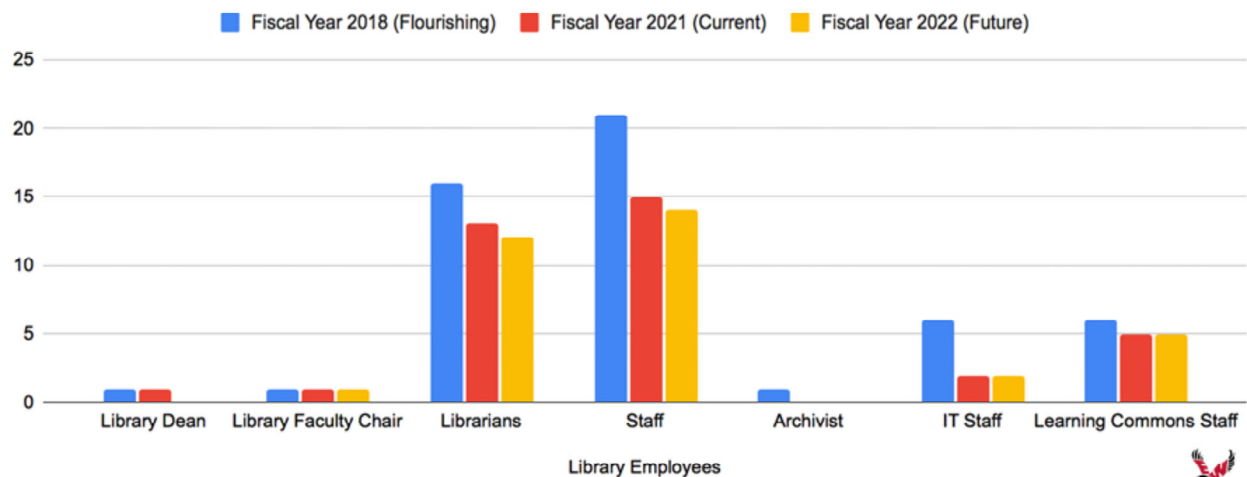
The collections budget was the main target for budget cuts this year, since we have already lost many personnel. You can see the changes from when we were flourishing in 2018 to current status this fiscal year to our future status come July.

Before we get into the details of how we went about cutting our collections budget, I would just like to add that many changes have been occurring which include the library being restructured from being a self-directed college to a non-autonomous one. In July 2021, the university's seven colleges will be restructured into four. The Library & Learning Commons will become the School of Libraries organized under the College of Professional Studies with four other unique schools and an additional department reporting to one dean, whose expertise is in psychology.

This was already being planned before the pandemic hit. And, change has already been stressful.

The interim university provost became interim president after the previous president resigned due to a vote of no confidence from the teaching and library faculty.

Since I started in 2018, the library has had three deans as a result of a resignation,

death and one serving in the interim.

We've lost ten other library employees due to retirements, resignations, and another death in this timeframe.
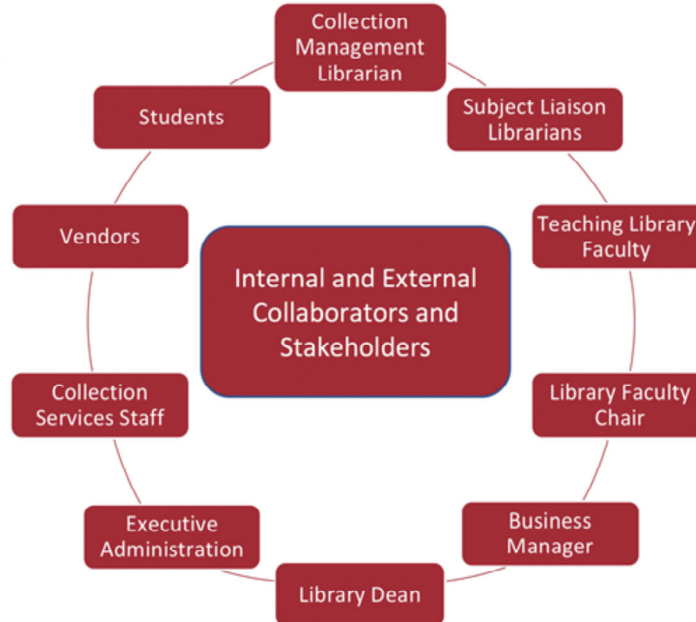
I absorbed one colleagues job that most likely will not be filled again any time soon.

Our archivist position was frozen.

And, we will lose three more team members come July in the re-org, including our business manager, a librarian, and our interim dean.

So, based on this context, let's talk about how we went about cutting our collections budget.

Any project involves many people. Communicating via email with librarians or having group discussions at meetings were no longer effective mediums to make decisions.

We had to come up with an orderly plan that would involve everyone listed here, but in a way that was strategic and effective.

As Collection Management Librarian, I had to coordinate with our Subject Liaison Librarians, who were also consulting Teaching Faculty Members.

Then, once we had decided to cut or keep a resource based on the criteria we followed, I communicated with this with our Faculty Chair, Business Manager, and Library Dean, who then sought approval through Executive Administration, which has included the budget officer, vice provost, provost and president in our approval process.

Then, these decisions clearly affect the workload for our Collection Services staff, students, teaching faculty, and vendors.

Identifying: Tiered Ranking System for Collection Assessment

Tier 1	A resource we cannot cut if we intend to keep operating as a university
Tier 2	A resource we could only cut in an absolute worst-case scenario, since it could affect department accreditation or require that a program stop offering certain classes which cannot substitute for this resource
Tier 3	A resource which is highly useful, but which we could bear to cut – doing so might require adjustments to curriculum and student assignments, but that's feasible
Tier 4	A resource which has some value, but which would be easiest to cut right now, since doing so would likely not require faculty to make any curricular changes

Tier 3: A resource which is highly useful, but which we could bear to cut – doing so might require adjustments to curriculum and student assignments but that's feasible

IM

IM

KE
JR

IM

JR, KE; JP
JR

LED, KE
LD, JR, SM, MH, LED, KE, PV

KE, PV
LED, QS
LED, QS
LED

Subject liaisons were instructed to place their initials under the appropriate Tier column they thought the resources they represent fall under, based on criteria and methods employed to evaluate the resources.

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So, to be fair and consistent, we needed a plan that would include making cuts across all departments and subject areas. The plan we came up with (inspired by our Library Faculty Chair) was to rank our continuing resources by four tiers, which are outlined and explained here. Each librarian would rely on the quantitative and qualitative data available before ranking the resource that fell within their subject area accordingly.

Since we have had many librarians take on new subject areas due to turnover, I made sure to create a spreadsheet listing all our eResources under each subject area first, before dividing them into their renewal months by tabs.

If an interdisciplinary resource needed to be ranked, all librarians would place their initials under the tier rating they felt they could justify. Here is an example of multiple rows of different resources being rated by librarians. As you can see, some resources applied to only one librarian, and others multiple librarians needed to speak to.

Most Tier 1 and 2 rated resources were renewed, as long as the data aligned meaningfully. Tier 1 resources were considered essential to operations, Tier 2

should only be cut if absolutely necessary, Tier 3 resources were scrutinized further, while almost all Tier 4 rated resources were cancelled, since they were considered nice to have, but not crucial to curriculum.

For instance, if someone rated a resource Tier 3, but did not justify it in the appropriate column provided for this, we needed to follow-up. This was a very time-consuming approach, but was also collaboration at its finest. We implemented decisions once we received approval for them, and communicated them accordingly.

Collaborating

Quantitative Methods	Qualitative Methods
Usage statistics	Dean and Librarian feedback based on program needs
Cost per Use	Teaching faculty and departmental feedback
Survey Monkey Poll Results	Program/curricular needs
Duplicate titles	Institutional politics and mission
Overlap with other subscribed full-text aggregators	Collection Development Policy
Open access holdings	Accreditation standards
Peer library holdings	Group discussion

Before ranking a resource in Tier 1, 2, 3, or 4:

Certain quantitative factors were considered:

· A librarian was expected to review usage statistics for a resource, if available, as well as its Cost Per Use.

o Cost Per Use couldn't always be the determining factor, although this was certainly consequential. Libraries vary in what their thresholds are, and on what metrics they base the number on. We chose to scrutinize any over $15, but cancelled those that would cost more than an InterLibrary Loan would, which tends to be $35 or more, depending on how many copies have already been cleared.

o One of our goals was to rely more on Interlibrary Loan, so we decided to subscribe to a new service called Rapid ILL through our consortia.

· If it was a database or aggregator, overlap was considered. Did another platform carry comparable content or duplicate titles?

· If it was a print journal, did we have a print journal available online through another resource? Our goal was to convert any print periodicals to E format if possible, however sometimes they would come bundled as print +

online, but the online version did not support IP or proxied authentication, so then print was kept in some of these cases

· Often, an embargo was discovered for eJournals, but if it was a year or less, this would usually be slated for cancellation.

· Did other peer libraries have similar holdings?

· Were there open access holdings?

Certain qualitative factors were considered:

o Does it support our programs and curriculum? What did teaching faculty and their departments have to say about this?

o What did subject liaisons have to say based on their expertise? For specialized resources we relied on their individual reasoning and feedback. For some group decisions, I utilized Survey Monkey to poll librarians on certain cross-disciplinary resources that needed keep or cancel decisions. While group discussions were had, not everyone always feels comfortable speaking up in a shared meeting space. Giving an opportunity to vote when feasible has proven helpful.

o Our university library, mission, and politics were also taken into consideration.

o We do have a collection development policy to guide us, and one item in it is make sure we consider the buying power of the consortia we are part of if we have not already. We also kept certain regional journals due to our special collections policy.

o Were there accreditation standards requiring the resource to continue?

o Was it a key subscription for a field?

o Certain priorities, like diversity were also factored in.

One thing we did not analyze in detail, except for certain a la carte journal packages, was how a journal's impact factor ranked, or how often a faculty member published in one. This is partially because we are not a Research Institution. Something that should be noted, is that we only offer one applied PhD. In other words, we focus primarily on supporting student success and retention, and not as heavily on faculty research and support. This influenced our decision-making as well.

Library Resources Tiered Librarian Feedback Spreadsheet Categories

Column A: Vendor Payment

Column B: Description of Expense

Column C: Expense or Range of Expenses

Column D: Date Access Ends/Contract Ends

Column E: Added to Collections LibGuide (Y/N)

Column F: Describe Why Expense is Essential

Column G: Cost Per Use Spreadsheet (Google Sheets URL)

Column H: Tier 1: A resource we cannot cut if we intend to keep operating as a university

Column I: Tier 2: A resource we could only cut in an absolute worst-case scenario, since it could affect department accreditation or require that a program stop offering certain classes which cannot substitute for this resource

Column J: Tier 3: A resource which is highly useful, but which we could bear to cut – doing so might require adjustments to curriculum and student assignments but that's feasible

Column K: Tier 4: A resource which has some value, but which would be easiest to cut right now, since doing so would likely not require faculty to make any curricular changes

Column G CPU Example:

Metric_Type	Reporting_Period_Total 2019-2020	FY20 Cost	Cost Per Use 19/20
Searches_Regular	12126	$2,202.00	$0.18
Total_Item_Investigations	402	$2,202.00	$5.48
Unique_Item_Investigations	327	$2,202.00	$6.73

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These are the categories we placed on our main shared project Google spreadsheet. Originally, we had a spreadsheet on the shared network drive, but this proved to be too cumbersome. We needed something that could be accessed and edited simultaneously.

However, this also meant some data got skewed along the way. At least revision history is available, so it worked out fine. I also maintained a master spreadsheet as well as multiple variants for tracking purposes.

We linked all of our usage statistics and cost per use data to each resource and made tabs for each month, that way we could make decisions more readily in real time.

Here you can see an example of our Cost per Use data. This has also been complicated by some vendors using COUNTER 4 still, while others have completely moved to COUNTER 5, which is shown here.

Since most of our renewals come due in July and January, we have already made the bulk of our decisions this year. Since last March, more than 130 subscription

collections and packages have been processed. We have already made decisions on the few that remain.

Implementing

- Feedback collected from faculty librarians based on methods and criteria utilized
- Collection Management Librarian communicated feedback to Library Dean and Business Manager
- Library Dean solicited approval from executive administration and communicated approval back to Collection Management Librarian
- Collection Management Librarian processed renewals and cancellations, informed vendors and communicated decisions to Collection Services Unit
- Database A-Z, Alma, and Primo records updated
- Collection Management Librarian updated tracking spreadsheets and Research Guide
- Faculty feedback on cancellations are being tracked
- A wish list is being maintained for new resources
- Cost sharing considered

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Implementing decisions was a lengthier process than average since we had to solicit approval from executive administration. Normally, as I said before, Collections is given a set budget amount annually, and we determine what needs to be cut or what can be spent according to this, always needing to account for eResource inflation as well.

But, in March 2020 we had sent out a survey to librarians for them to vote on what they wanted us to spend one-time money on as well as what new subscription we should get based on the money we had set aside for this purpose. This was all swept and it's doubtful we will spend any remaining funds this year on one-time purchases.

In fact, we had all collection development on hold for monographs until February of this year. We were only purchasing eBooks that had been requested directly from faculty, and adding print books to wish lists. In the end, we reduced our monograph budget by ~10k so we could use this money to ship books to and from students who were not able to access them on-campus during the closure.

We are currently tracking faculty feedback we receive in a separate spreadsheet, so

we can understand how our decisions have impacted curricular support.

- There was really only one package I disagreed with the Library Dean on cutting, and this did result in us adding two smaller collections within it back.
- And, a few faculty have been upset about one database cancellation, but as a group, we felt our decision was valid.

We are also continuing to keep a wish list for new resources, whether they are one-time purchases or subscriptions, on case funds do become available in the future.

We also advocated departments splitting the cost of a resource with the library, or funding it fully if they have the funds available. For instance, one department is fully funding a new resource they determined was needed after the pandemic hit.

We also re-evaluate Endowment funds quarterly to determine what we can or should spend these funds on. For instance, this year we did split the cost with one department for a resource and used one of these funds to pay for it since it was needed due to some of our cancellation decisions. We are trying to get as creative as we can in these tough times.

Summary of Cuts

Collections Budget Percentage Change Fiscal Years 2015-2021
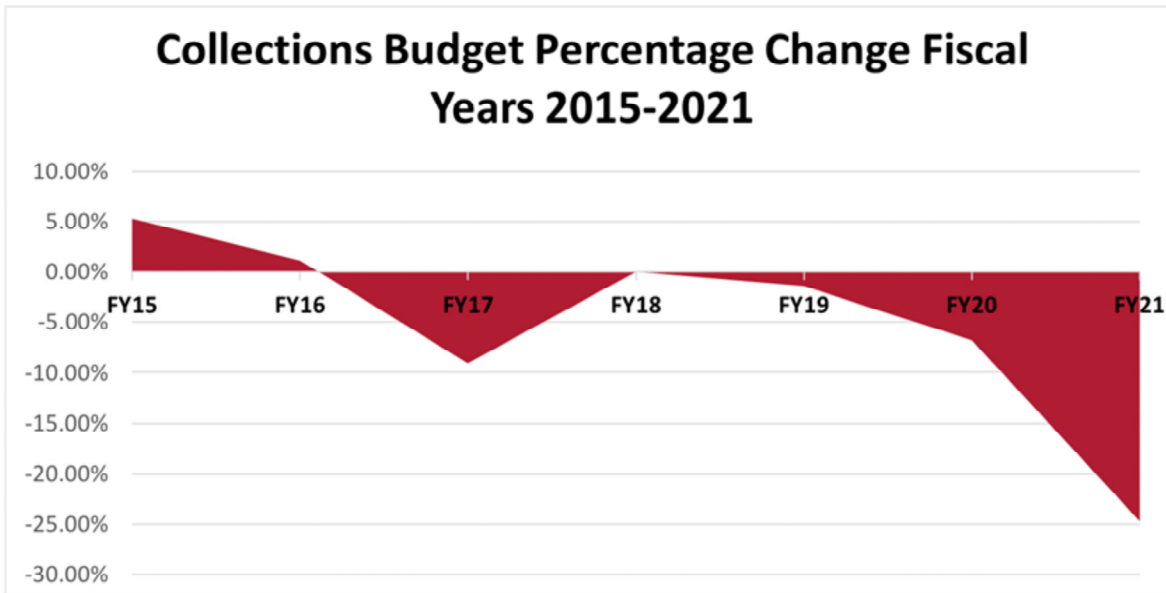
Countless spreadsheets, statistics, and meetings later, we have permanently cut 25% of our collections budget. You can see the change to our budget over time in this graph. It has remained flat or decreased for some years now.

Changes to resources for this Fiscal Year 2021

- 27% of continuing resources cut this year
- Increased spend on new subscriptions by 4%

- 2% planned new subscription cuts brings us back to the 25% permanent reduction

- 70% of print journals cut
- 12% of monograph budget cut
- 100% of journal binding cut
- 100% of year-end/one-time purchases cut (not counting monograph spend)

- 100% of standing orders cut

- 40% less on one streaming media plan by mediating requests

Communicating:
https://research.ewu.edu/collectionservices

Libraries / Research Guides / Subscription Renewals, Cancellations, and Additions / Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Subscription Renewals, Cancellations, and Additions

This guide's purpose is to provide information on our response to the budget climate.

Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Statement

Renewals (as of February 23, 2021)

Cancellations (As of February 23, 2021)

Additions and Resource Changes

Statement

As a responsible steward of our financial resources, EWU Libraries is actively engaged in implementing the university's directive to limit spending to essential expenditures in fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021). As part of this effort, librarians are scrutinizing each resource the library purchases, from individual books to electronic databases. The librarians recognize the importance of electronically-accessible resources for EWU students in the "online first" environment, and are prioritizing renewal and purchase of resources that directly support student learning. Librarians are also cognizant of the need to support disciplines as equitably as possible, and are striving to spread reductions over all areas.

EWU Libraries leverages the buying power of the Orbis Cascade Alliance (OCA) consortium of Pacific Northwest academic libraries in order to obtain lower-cost subscriptions to electronic resources. Additionally, EWU Libraries takes advantage of free resources offered by vendors during the COVID-19 crisis (see Extended Access to Existing EWU Library Subscriptions and Temporary Library Access to New Resources for links to these resources). EWU Libraries' interlibrary loan requesting service and the OCA's Summit borrowing service support students and faculty in obtaining resources the Libraries does not directly own or access through a subscription.

If you don't see a resource you are looking for listed on this page or would like suggestions on alternative resources, please contact your subject librarian to inquire about the status of the resource or alternatives. This page will be updated as decisions are made regarding renewal or cancellation of resources.

For the sake of transparency, we created a Research Guide communicating to the university faculty (and whomever was interested) what subscriptions we had renewed, cancelled, or acquired for this fiscal year.

We hid last fiscal year's but had this information on hand, just on case, since we had cut 3% of our library budget last year, which included about 6% of the collections budget. This guide lists access dates as well as a total amount of savings realized. The link is provided if you want to see further detail.

Communicating: https://research.ewu.edu/COVID19

Libraries / Research Guides / Academic Resources Available During COVID-19 / Extended Access to Existing EWU Library Subscriptions

Academic Resources Available During COVID-19

During COVID-19, vendors have extended access to more online content. Please note, some of these resources are available only for a limited time.

Enter Guide Keywords | Go

- Conducting Library Research
- Extended Access to Existing EWU Library Subscriptions
- Temporary Library Access to New Resources
- Resources Available to the Public
- Open Educational Resources (OERs)
- Open Access eBook Collections (+Permanent)
- Resources About COVID-19

Vendor Love in the Time of COVID-19

aka Vendor COVID-19 Related Donations and Pro Bono Access

ADMINISTRATIVE INFO

Please share the read-only version: Vendor Covid-19 Related Donations and Pro Bono Access available at https://tinyurl.com/vendorsupportedaccess

Librarians & Researchers: Please copy this content as needed for your local guides. Citation as appropriate should be to:
University Information Policy Officers, *Vendor Love in the Time of COVID-19*, © 2020, available at https://tinyurl.com/vendorsupportedaccess .

Some bright spots of this past year included vendors providing expanded or temporary free access to their resources as well as most offering flat renewal rates. I created a research guide highlighting these options and our staff worked hard to activate and deactivate these collections being offered. We highlighted OERs and our eBooks.

We also added some new resources, like upgrading a subscription to get broader coverage, changed print to eFormats, found cheaper alternatives, took advantage of trials that were partially subsidized, re-joined some consortia deals, or invested in more stable streaming media options.

Due to eliminating student worker staffing at the library this summer, since it was closed, we were also able to use a summer index fund for a percentage of our collections costs that normally would not be available to us.

I think this past year and this project highlights how important eResources are. We would not have still had the library resources to offer without them or without the technology that gives us a chance to work together to serve our stakeholders. Hence, this is why we cut a lot of print journals knowing they simply aren't as

accessible or utilized as heavily as their E counterparts. We really only kept print ones that were bundled with E availability or if we were not able IP authenticate them. So, yay for EContent!

Reflections

- Maintaining historical database statistics proved helpful
  - Still had to coordinate collecting updated data
- Improved system for library and teaching faculty feedback needed
  - Ensure all quantitative and qualitative methods are considered before tiered ranking assigned
  - Employ more formal surveys
- Longer term plan
  - Form Continuing Resources Committee
    - Conduct ongoing resource evaluation
    - Consider citation and impact factors in more detail
    - Work on data visualization
    - *Pending staff and workload constraints*
- Tracking impact of cancellations
  - Created faculty feedback spreadsheet
  - ILL

Reflecting on the project as a whole, we did what needed to be done. Was it a perfect undertaking? No, we are still humans trying to get our home Internet to be stable, our kids or pets to stop being disruptive, and to remain level headed during what has been a very trying year for some and still an exhausting one for others.

It is hard to say what the future holds for library budgets and collections, let alone higher education.

A library is only as good its resources and services, which means it needs good funding for personnel and collections. All we can do as professionals is to continue to adapt to these changing times, whether we are ready to or not.

Overall, this collaboration exhibited the library's ability to maintain responsible fiscal stewardship in challenging and uncertain times.

In the future, it would be helpful to:
- Have even more formalized assessment – basically ensuring all librarians did their homework before ranking a resource
- Have a Continuing Resources Committee so ongoing evaluation could

take place.

· We also need to conduct a more thorough program and enrollment review once colleges are all restructured, and adjust our fund codes accordingly.

· And, improved real time data visualization would be useful.

Of course, we don't know completely what the future impact will be due to these cancellation decisions we made. So, this is why we are tracking feedback and monitoring ILL requests. In some ways, this was an opportunity to trim the extra fat off of what I would consider was a once robust library.

My name is Maria Sávova and I am the Director of Collections and Technical Services at The Claremont Colleges Library seen here from the eye of our library drone :-)

A bit about who we are:

- Single academic library serving 7 contiguously located academic institutions, including 5 residential liberal arts colleges and 2 graduate universities, with a combined FTE around 7500 students
    - The library is centrally located in the middle of the campuses
- We are (normally) a high touch environment with personalized services and high usage of the building and the physical collection, research support, study spaces, programs & events.
- The collection is rich in e-resources, but also includes ~1 million print books and a couple of hundred "library use only" current print periodicals

Background

- Historical percentage change in Collections Budget appropriations:

Chart showing percentage change by fiscal year:
- FY04-FY05: 7.15%
- FY05-FY06: 7.68%
- FY06-FY07: 5.00%
- FY07-FY08: 5.00%
- FY08-FY09: 0.22%
- FY09-FY10: -3.37%
- FY10-FY11: -5.90%
- FY11-FY12: 12.06%
- FY12-FY13: 2.59%
- FY13-FY14: 2.00%
- FY14-FY15: 2.00%
- FY15-FY16: 6.36%
- FY16-FY17: 3.81%
- FY17-FY18: 3.82%
- FY18-19: 1.91%
- FY19-FY20: 2.55%
- FY20-FY21: -25.43%
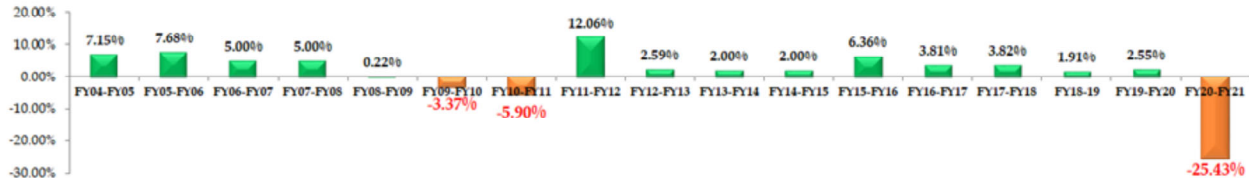
- Increases in funding do not cover inflation on e-resources
- Collection Policy calls for annual Subscription review based on clearly specified criteria
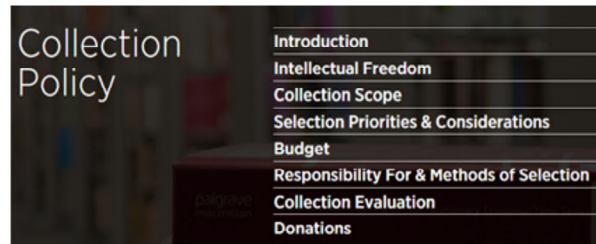
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Some quick background on our collections budget situation: Before the last recession, our collection budget was receiving healthy increases that allowed for sustainable collection management.

When the recession hit in 2008, there was at first one year with a basically flat budget and then 2 years with graduate budget cuts that **allowed for planning and extensive consultation with constituents in performing a large subscription cancellation project**. Then in FY12 there was a restoration back to FY08 level and since then, modest increases, with the occasional one-time bump to pull us back from the edge of the proverbial cliff.

So, the way we were able to maintain the collection was to continue slowly reducing the discretionary portion that is not committed to subscriptions, as well as **continuously review and cancel subscriptions that meet certain criteria**

Cancellation criteria (in a normal year)

- Cost per Use (CPU) higher than the typical cost of ILL - i.e. $15
- Consistently low or zero usage (for a min of 3 consecutive years)
- No longer within the scope of the collection - i.e. supporting a program or research that is no longer current or relevant
- Alternative access - e.g. in aggregator databases or a package
- Unsustainable annual increases
- Funds freed by cancellations will be reallocated to **cover rate increases** of existing subscriptions and acquisition of new subscription resources

Collection Policy

Introduction
Intellectual Freedom
Collection Scope
Selection Priorities & Considerations
Budget
Responsibility For & Methods of Selection
Collection Evaluation
Donations

https://library.claremont.edu/collection-policy

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In a normal year, our collection policy governs an ongoing annual review of subscriptions in order to identify potential candidates for cancellation.

It lists the criteria that we use to **create the review list**, but in no way prescribes definitive rules based just on quantitative measurements. Ultimately, the subject librarian makes a decision based on value to the discipline, accreditation, etc. considerations that might vary from subject to subject.

The policy specifically does not promise that librarians will always consult with faculty, but only as needed.

And last, but not least, we clarify what happens to funds released by cancellation saying that those will be reallocated to **cover rate increases of existing subscriptions** first and foremost, before funds can be reallocated to acquisition of new subscription resources

Context: Not your "Garden variety" recession

- Extent of the financial impact
- Speed with which everything changed
- Disproportionate impact on:
  - Different parts of the user population
  - Different parts of library collections
- Higher levels of insecurity about the immediate future

www.webmd.com

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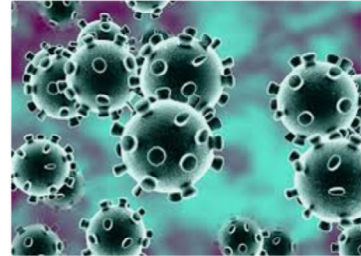
That's what happens in a normal year. And then there was 2020.

From a financial point of view, we are dealing with a recession. What is different about the situation we are in now from a "regular" recession is that the Pandemic puts its own mark on how the recession unfolds:

First, the **extent** of the financial impact exceeds anything the institution has experienced in the recent past, if ever.

The **sources** of financial trouble are also different:

Being a consortium of very highly rated private institutions, we have weathered recessions relatively well in the past.

This time, in addition to the impact of the financial markets in the beginning, we did actually have a 10% drop in enrollment.

But the entirely new element that the Pandemic brought to us was the need to send students home and thus the loss of room and board payments that turned out to be a quite significant source of revenue for a residential college - including supporting

part of the academic side.

And of course, all the extra cost of the heightened security measures to ensure social distancing, cleaning, testing, etc.

Next - speed: As much as it might have seemed that recessions came in fast before, the way the Pandemic suddenly turned everything upside down affected our **ability to plan ahead, be able to prepare** and act in the best interests of our users and staff. The suddenness with which we got hit with massive cuts **simply reduced the number of options and mechanisms we could have applied** to remedy the situation and we had to improvise a lot and use options we'd normally not consider.

The need to serve the entire user population **remotely** practically overnight, played a big part in the decisions we made both regarding suspending, altering, or launching services AS WELL AS re-allocating existing funding.

With the same amount of cuts say 2 years ago, some of the decisions I made would have probably been different. What I mean is that the impact on print and physical collections might have been high anyway, but this time it was entirely justified by the fact that the print collections were locked in our inaccessible building and there was no point spending more money on print right at that time. That undeniably impacted disciplines relying more heavily on print - like humanities for example - as well as users that might have had lower level of skills or access to technology.

In addition - we fell back to most basic curricular needs, reducing sharply support for higher level research needs.

The hardest thing about planning in this situation is the lack of any information whatsoever as to what we can expect to happen.

How long will this last? And what would the recovery look like when it comes? No one has those answers!

And you make different decisions when you are simply deferring and know you'd be able to catch up later than when your decisions will have lasting impact and consequences!

Timeline - March 16 - May 2020

- March 16 - campus closure, students sent home, library building closed for everyone, including library staff
- Spring break extended to 2 weeks, after that all classes returned virtually
- Collections priorities urgent switch:
  - Stopped print approval plan and all book shipments to the building
  - Stopped resource sharing borrowing and lending
  - Redirected all existing book funding to e-books and started purchasing e-course readings, e-books, and even Kindles as a gift
  - Jumped on offers for free access and linked to open editions
  - Joined HathiTrust ETAS and Internet Archive Open Library

THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES LIBRARY

The first collections adjustments we made immediately with the stay-at-home orders were to stop all book shipments to the building, including print approval plan, standing orders, and already placed firm orders. We also redirected all existing book funding to e-books and started purchasing e-course readings and linking to open editions.
We also joined HathiTrust ETAS and Internet Archive Open Library.

At that point, **there was no word on budget cuts** and while we knew they'd be coming, we had no idea when and how much.
Our focus was strictly on supporting remote teaching and learning.

Timeline: June - July 2020

- [Feb 2020] - Collections budget increase of 1.82% approved
- [Mar-Apr 2020] Regular cancellations as per Collection policy + adjustments due to [almost] certain loss of approved increase
- First round of cuts in June 2020 (10% overall):
  - The brunt born mostly by salary and Ops (freeze on open positions, layoffs)
  - Collections cut of 4.25%
- Second round of cuts after the start of the FY in July (additional 15% overall):
  - Additional collections cut of 21.18% or total of **25.43%**
  - **Significant amount of subscriptions invoices already paid**

THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES
LIBRARY

Back in Feb, we had our modest materials budget increase for FY21 of 1.82% approved and we were already planning on certain cancellations in order to bridge the gap between this modest indexation and inflation.
By Apr we kind of knew the increase would not come, so when we did our regular Spring cancellation review, we also planned to compensate for that.

When the first cut was announced in June, less than a month before the beginning of the FY and I realized I had to compensate for an additional 4.25% of materials cut, I was able to do that by mostly reducing from print books and one-time e-resources purchasing funds.

And then the second cut came like a freight train.

Budget cuts guiding principles

- Think strategically about the highest impact staff, services, and collections we need to maintain for the immediate future
- Do the least amount of harm to individuals and collectively
- Think about equity and inclusivity when making decisions
- Think about the future - which temporary loses can be remedied relatively fast and easy and which ones can have a ripple effect

THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES
LIBRARY

Since the cuts were imposed on the library budget overall, leadership had to make decisions regarding distributing the loss across salaries, operational expenses, and materials.
Which is why the first cut was mostly met by freezing open lines and cutting on spending that we knew would be least impactful in this environment.
With the second one, there was no more low hanging fruit and the Materials budget ended up bearing a slightly higher proportion after all these considerations were carefully weighed in.

Budget reductions - July-Aug 2020

- Reduced all discretionary lines to a bare minimum, with the exception of e-books:
  - 85% reduction in print book funding. Reliance on endowment funds
  - 95% reduction in funding for primary sources and datasets purchases
  - 55% reduction in streaming media funding
  - 55% reduction in cataloging, preservation, and other collection supplies
  - **No reduction to the Resource Sharing budget**
  - **No reduction to OA funding**
- All print periodicals on the chopping block
- A non-negotiable dollar target to reduce from e-subscriptions

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We started the reallocation of our now almost 25.5% reduced MB by looking at the discretionary lines:
We stripped them to the bone.
Two notable exceptions were no reductions in RS funding or OA commitments

All print periodicals were on the chopping block, since they were inaccessible anyway and we ended up keeping less than 10% of the titles.
And after all that, there was a non-negotiable target left for reduction of e-subscriptions

Expanded cancellation criteria

- Extracted and sorted lists of subscriptions renewing between Nov and Jun
- Subject librarians review:
  - Very high CPU - over $50 - default cancellation, evidence of exception required
  - High CPU - over $15 - default cancellation, evidence of exception required
  - Zero usage - default cancellation, evidence of exception required
  - No usage data - default cancellation, evidence of exception required
  - Every print periodical - default cancellation, evidence of exception required
  - Under $15 CPU - for additional consideration as needed to meet target
  - 2 journal big deals paid out of one-time reserve money with special permission
- Discipline proportions of the cancellation target - set to match close the budget distribution percentages

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The timing of the cut meant that every subscription that had just renewed in July or was about to renew was out of consideration. We could only look at subscriptions for which we still had enough time for the required cancellation notice - typically 90 days, which is why we limited the list to only Nov through Jun renewals.

The thing that was different from regular subscription reviews was that we typically pull a list of titles that qualify for review and we ask librarians to make a determination, but there is no pressure to reduce a specific amount of money and if we are on the fence, we err on the side of keeping the resource.

This time, in addition to lowered bar and expanded criteria, the instructions were the opposite - everything within these expanded parameters was set to go unless the librarian made a **compelling case as to why it should be kept.**

(On the slide - everything in red is part of the expanded and modified criteria)

We also asked them at that time to mark resources to be prioritized for resubscrition once possible. (And not every title got such endorsement.)

Librarians had only 2 weeks to review and enter their recommendations. Final decisions were made by me (as Director of Collections) and my colleague the Director of Research, Teaching, and Learning Services (where the majority of subject librarians report). At the end, we considered a fair discipline distribution

within the target amount as well as potential political implications for specific resources before making the final decisions.

Communication

- Library Governance from all 7 Claremont Colleges: Academic Deans Committee (ADC) - discussion and consultation on higher level buckets where the cuts would come from
- Distribution of both phases' cuts between salaries, operations, and materials
- Pre-approval to use an amount from reserves to curtail the amount of subscription cancellations
- Only after cancellations were finalized - newsletter to all faculty via the ADC:
  - Explanation of situation and the necessity of cuts
  - Explanation of urgency and impossibility to take the time to consult
  - List of resources selected for cancellation, date access ends, and an invitation to prioritize resources for restoration
  - Remediation after the fact with specific subject/disciplines

THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES LIBRARY

I mentioned in the beginning that we serve 7 institutions. That means that our governance is shared among all 7 and our Library Dean is working closely with both the non-academic Services Administration side and a committee comprised by the 7 academic deans and provosts of the 7 institutions (ADC). On their side, that academic committee advocates with the council of 7 presidents who make final budget decisions.
It's a little complicated!

All that means is that through the process of discussing, planning, and implementing the two phases of the cuts, our Dean worked closely with the ADC, who advised, asked questions, and approved the high level plans and proposals. But no faculty had seen a list of titles or been included in the discussions. (with the possible exceptions of individual faculty consulted quickly by their subject librarian on a specific title)

As part of the planning, we presented to ADC the necessity to cut two big deals in order to meet the target. That was met with a significant concern, as expected, and the ADC approved a one-time use of reserve funding to pay for these invoices at this time and forestall the need to lose access to such a large amount of journals.

This is one example of an acton we'd normally not consider under less dire circumstances, because it is not sustainable in the long term to plug ongoing holes with one-time pegs.

Only after the cuts were decided and finalized, was there a letter sent to all faculty on campus - authored by the Library Dean and Leadership, but distributed through the offices of each academic dean, that basically explained the situation that necessitated the cuts, the urgency that prevented us to consult widely, and an attached list of resources that were set to go - including last date of access, and an invitation to prioritize resources for restoration when possible.
We heard back from fewer people than we thought we would.
Couple of disciplines were particularly unhappy and concerned.
For one subject area, we had to go back and put together a list of all remaining subscriptions supporting their area, including individual journals and journals in big deal packages, to show them that really we had not cancelled all of their stuff. That was a very massive and labor intensive project, but a rather good exercise.

Reflections

Having an **established and proven process**, librarians were used to, helped tremendously. We just needed to adjust the criteria slightly and lower the bar to expand the pool of reviewed resources.

Consistently collecting usage data and calculating CPU for EVERY resource on a schedule made it easy to pull additional data on the spot.

Having to explain and discuss cancellations with faculty **after the fact is less than ideal**.

Impacted people focus on their interest areas and **do not look at the larger context.**

Feedback is uneven - people typically don't respond when they don't have complaints.

Being able to provide a **full picture of the resources that support certain subject/discipline** can really facilitate the conversation around cancellations.

Managing expectations regarding timing and extent of any future restorations will be critical.

THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES LIBRARY

The fact that **we had a process** that worked, and that librarians were used to, was a game changer. Yes, we had to adjust a bit, and expand the list, but it didn't feel like we had to start from scratch.

All hail e-resource librarians! Having **consistently collected usage data** and a sheet with a ready calculated CPU for EVERY resource made it easy to pull additional data on the spot.

That was the good stuff. Now to the "**wish it could have been different**" part:

Having to explain and discuss cancellations with faculty **after the fact is less than ideal**. All things equal, people are more receptive to bad news if they can be part of the discussion.

Impacted people focus solely on what you've done **to them** and **do not look at the larger context.**

Feedback is uneven - people typically don't respond when they don't have complaints. Or when they think their complaints will go nowhere. Or for a reasons we'll never know about.

We realized we were ill-prepared to provide a full **picture of the resources that support certain subject/discipline.** And having this information at hand can really help provide context and facilitate the conversation around cancellations.

Managing expectations regarding timing and extent of any future restorations will be critical. We know people do not think about inflation and if and when the budget is restored to a level from a prior year, they'd automatically expect all cancelled subscriptions from that point to come back and that cannot happen. We need to be prepared to explain why in a simple way and manage the process of prioritization.

QUESTIONS?

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