Going, going, gone ... but not forgotten
Lessons from a journal de-selection project

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Outline

• setting the Cambridge context
• planning the de-selection process
• the de-selection methodology
• lessons learned
Cambridge University Medical Library

- located on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, serving...
  - students & staff of the School of Clinical Medicine
  - students and staff of two National Health Service hospitals
  - staff in Medical Research Council and other research laboratories
  - back-up to other libraries in the NHS regional network
- 8,000 registered users
- 3,200 printed journals (current + non-current) = 80,000 vols
- 2,000 sq.m. on two floors
University of Cambridge libraries

• Medical Library is part of Cambridge University Library

• Cambridge University Library

  • one of five UK legal deposit libraries

  • commitment to a role as an archival library

  • 5 physical buildings (main library, law, biological sciences, maths/physical sciences, medicine)

ALSO

• 132 other autonomous departmental, college, and associated libraries
• the Medical Library’s strategic plan for 2006-11 stated

"[The library] will depend increasingly on electronic resources, maintaining print-based collections on a limited basis where the case for doing so can be explicitly justified.

Disposal of printed stock ... will reduce the need for library shelving, thus releasing space for other facilities and activities."

• specifically, upper floor (= printed journals) to be cleared within 10 years
  • demonstrates changes in service priorities
  • strengthens collaborative links with the Clinical School
  • reduces overheads (staff, space)
Opportunity knocks

• Wolfson Foundation grants programme for major UK research libraries
  • Medical Library submitted 2006 bid for major refurbishment
  • Wolfson Foundation awarded partial grant
  • Clinical School agreed to provide balance of funding
  • in return, library would create some space to be repurposed as required by the School
The de-selection equation

- School wanted space for new IT study room for clinical students
  - to support new computer-based modules and exams
- library agreed to clear 200 sq.m. of space in the journals collection
- this area contained 1,100m of occupied linear shelving (30% of total)
- therefore we needed to remove at least 1,100m of printed journals
- timetable for de-selection project:
  - Wolfson Foundation granted awarded in June 2007
  - building work to start in June 2008
  - 12 months available for journal de-selection project
Basic de-selection principles

• only closed journals (i.e. no longer received) would be considered
• titles received by legal deposit must be retained
• volumes duplicated in other local libraries would be disposed of
• unique volumes would be moved to an off-site store (“dark archive”) for indefinite storage
  • stored volumes would NOT be retrieved on demand
• articles in stored journals would be supplied free to users by document delivery from the British Library
• separate review of journals housed for Medical Research Council labs
Methodology – 3 phases

• Phase 1: identifying journal titles for possible de-selection
  • in-house survey of usage ➔ rank least-used titles ➔ measure linear space occupied by each title ➔ list sufficient titles to release 1,100m of shelving ➔ match against union catalogue to identify unique titles (for storage) and duplicated titles (for disposal)

• Phase 2: consultation with users
  • advice from User Advisory Panel ➔ web-based full user survey

• Phase 3: applying the results
  • lists of titles for de-selection revised to reflect user comments
  • journals removed, and remaining collection completely reshelved
Journal consultation - FAQs

Q. Will the library be able to purchase more e-journals as a result of this project?

Q. How have these titles selected for removal?

Q. Can the journals placed on hold be retrieved for use in the library?

Q. What will happen to backlogs that are being removed and not put into stores?

Q. I'm a member of Cambridge University - will I still be able to get access to copies of journals if they're now held in another library?

Q. Are any current journal subscriptions being cut as part of this process?

Q. Why are journals from the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology being dealt with separately?

Q. What will happen if journals proposed for removal have to be retained following weren't response to this consultation?

Q. Why do we need to provide access to e-journals in the library when they can be accessed from computers elsewhere?

Q. What is the timetable for the journal consultation process?

Q. I'll be revising for exams this summer. Will the removal be noisy?
Web consultation (SurveyMonkey)

In preparation for the planned redevelopment of the Medical Library, we are reviewing our journals holdings. This is the list of journals we plan to place in storage.

Who are you?
Name:

Please complete one of the following pieces of contact information:
email address:
postal address:
library card number:

If you have any comments about the broad principles of the developments planned in the Medical Library please tell us. The opportunity to comment on particular journals involved comes later.

You can scroll through all the pages of journals, or jump to a specific alphabetical group.

If you would like to jump to a particular journal title now is your chance.
- Ab., to Ae.
- Am., to Ang.
- Ann., to Abr.
- Archuv., to Archvo.
- Arcq., to Aus.
- Abo., to Fex.

Otherwise click next to move forward to the first set of titles.
- Immn., to Jdt.
- Journal B., to Journal of End.
- Journal of G., to Journal W.
- Jkt., to Nyc.
- Nag., to Oto.
- Para., to Qua.
Web consultation (SurveyMonkey)

Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Medicin. Vols 1-16 (1902-96)

Acta Biologicae Experimentalis. 1929-69


Acta Gynaecologica Scandinaavia. Vols 1-3iii (1921-24)
Web consultation – the library response

Journal Consultation

Results of Journal Consultation Process (Spring 2008)

Background

At the beginning of 2008 the Medical Library announced that as part of the preparations for our major refit programme we were considering the removal of selected backsets of journals that had either ceased publication or which we no longer required.

The titles in question fell originally into two main lists:

- List 1 - 44 titles for which the Medical Library held the only set in Cambridge, which we proposed to remove to an off-site store (a long-term ‘dark archive’ that was not designed for the routine retrieval of material), with an undertaking that we would instead use our inter-library document delivery service to supply, free of charge, any article required by a reader from one of these journals, and
- List 2 - a further 118 titles that we proposed to dispose of because a copy was also held in at least one other Cambridge library.

A third category of disposal, containing backsets of titles owned by the MRC, (closed subscriptions and current subscriptions) and stored in the Medical Library, was also published for information.

The FAQs that accompanied the survey are available.

To give readers an opportunity to comment on these proposals we ran a web-based survey that ended on 25 March 2008.

Survey results
Results of consultation

- 117 comments received on two lists from 109 different respondents
  - <1.5% of registered users
  - suggested that other users were not particularly concerned
- most comments critical but 5 neutral and 7 supportive
- 51 respondents were historians of science not registered as users
  - objected to non-retrieval of stored items
  - wanted to handle and search long journal runs
  - free document delivery and (where available) digitized versions not regarded as acceptable substitutes
Actions

• Original proposal:
  • 444 unique titles to dark archive, 118 duplicates for disposal

• Post-consultation outcome:
  • 367 unique titles (also available in London) sent to dark archive
  • 77 unique titles (not available in London) relocated to another branch
  • 107 duplicated titles sent for recycling
  • 112 MRC titles also sent for recycling

• Total: 663 titles removed (= 17,971 volumes)
Lessons learned

- consultation with library users is vital (form, timing, and explanation)
- web-based survey format is flexible and effective
- most medical library users support removal of old print journals
- large-scale de-selection of journals is a complex & time-consuming task
- historians of science have different needs requiring different solutions
- large research libraries and their users must balance storage costs against long-term needs of scholarship
- need to co-ordinate current and long-term library roles
- further phases of de-selection will be progressively more difficult
Clearing the shelves
The new IT room
Thanks to:

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