Bridging the Divide: Collaborating Across Departments to Improve Communication and Collections

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“At the start of the 21st Century, budget crisis, structural change, and technological advances have created a veritable stew of cultures among librarians. The bureaucratic legacy persists -- in silos divided along departmental and divisional lines such that one does not know what the other one is doing.”

MODELS OF COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Bibliographer model used at many ARLs in past (larger schools) e.g., Princeton (few reference or teaching duties)
- Liaison model with limited collection responsibility (no budget or REF budget only) e.g., UVM
- Liaison model (subject specialist) with full collection responsibility (budget) e.g., common at smaller colleges
- “While historically rooted in collection development, today’s liaison programs have expanded and specialized in scope.” Henry, Jo (2012)
Evolving Role of Liaison Librarians

MOVING FROM A COLLECTIONS-CENTERED TO ENGAGEMENT-FOCUSED MODEL

• Brought about by transformations in higher education and academic libraries
• Full engagement in the lifecycle of teaching/learning and research
• “No liaison is an island”

Incentive Based Budgeting/RCM

• Campus-wide planning began FY2015
• Dual models FY16 (hold harmless year)
• Actual implementation FY17
• Responsibility Centers (RC) = revenue generators (academic schools and colleges) vs Cost Centers (library, IT, HR) services
• Cost Centers (CC) are a tax on RC - have their own algorithms (FTE and/or head count)
• Cost Centers must demonstrate value to each RC
COLLECTIONS CULTURE

- Collection Management Services: Collection Development and Acquisitions historical relationship: librarians co-coordinated early approval plan and faculty requests, negotiated big deals, limited hand selection
- Budget info not shared until Collections Team (CT) was created in 2008 (shortly after the liaison program)
- Inherent overlap between collection responsibilities of CMS librarians and liaisons. UVM liaison model involved limited selection (REF) and limited collection budget awareness
LIBRARY LIAISON PROGRAM

- Introduced in 2007 to support research and learning and increase the use of library resources and services
- Shift from reference librarian to a liaison role
- Library liaisons consisted of librarians and professional staff and expanded beyond the Information & Instruction Services Department
Accomplishments

COLLECTIONS TEAM

- Created in 2008 to foster:
  - Interdepartmental collaboration
  - Collaborative decision-making
  - Awareness of budgetary constraints
- Evaluates resources above $500 - all formats
- Monthly meetings to restructure team processes
- Major effort to establish criteria for new requests and renewals, share budget info, promotion of new or endangered resources, raise collection awareness
Accomplishments

SHARING RENEWAL INFORMATION

- Goal: Increase collection awareness and knowledge of collection costs to assist in evaluation of resources
- Method: Encourage review of renewal price quotes (EBSCO annual renewal) and lists of other print REF titles due for renewal (Direct and YBP Standing Orders)
- Outcome: liaisons periodically review all continuing REF print renewals rather than auto-renew
- Renewals require decisions regarding retention: latest ed. only, transfer one previous ed., transfer all vols.
Accomplishments

ONGOING MONTHLY INTERACTIONS

• Collections Librarian and Acquisitions Librarian visit Information & Instruction Department meetings
• Informal setting to share updates on the budget and weeding projects
• “Safe” space for tough discussions
Accomplishments

SURVEY OF LIAISONS ON DATABASES

- Viewed NASIG (U. of North Texas) webinar on downsizing collections to meet budget cuts. CD Librarian developed similar ranking scale. Conducted database ranking survey with liaisons in summer.

- Used database rankings to inform renewal process throughout the fiscal year. Level 1 - 3

- Repeat database ranking survey; adjust as necessary to make criteria more targeted: “Not essential for my disciplines” vs faculty rank this title in top 30 percentile.
COLLABORATIVE OUTREACH TO FACULTY

- Mathematics and Statistics faculty needs assessment
- Survey of Life Sciences faculty e-resource usage
- Outcomes support data-driven decision making and identify areas for liaison outreach
Accomplishments

ASSESSMENT OF STATISTICAL RESOURCES

- Cross-departmental task force formed to review statistical resources
- Members individually assessed 15 electronic resources
- Resulted in data-informed recommendations to the Collection Team
Accomplishments

TIGHTENING CRITERIA FOR FACULTY REQUESTS

• Revised online request forms for new materials to require interaction with faculty
  ● How does this resource support your research or teaching needs?
  ● What other depts might this resource support?
  ● Journal requests are held until end of FY
• Currently revising criteria for renewals and new purchase requests
• Check ILL and turn aways; impact factors, prior purchase
Accomplishments

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNICATING WITH FACULTY

- Talking points on flat budgets and inflation rates
- Details and rationale for weeding projects
- Support for their role as messengers, not decision-makers
COLLABORATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF PROCESSES FOR COMMUNICATING DESELECTION PROJECTS

- JSTOR deselection issues - concerns about another “shredding project”
- Crafted communication plan for deselection projects (monographs, gov docs, serials) - CMS, I&IS and PR
- Created talking points for liaisons to share with academic depts
- Met with concerned faculty as a team to describe project
- Recycle to Better World Books, CRL, Linda Hall Library
Successes

SILOS ARE BEGINNING TO BREAK DOWN

- Mutual respect of colleagues across departments
- Working collaboratively rather than unilaterally
- Recognition of interdependence of departments
- Raising budget awareness
WE’RE NOT QUITE THERE YET

- Breaking down silos
- Changing institutional culture
- Moving past legacy issues that are no more
- Liaisons think outside Reference box; collection development tap liaison expertise
- Share responsibility for collection awareness - work together to communicate with academic depts. on collection decisions, weeding, and value of library
**Work Still to be Done**

**COLLECTIONS TEAM**

- Creating a membership position for a liaison in the STEM disciplines
- Rotating membership of liaison librarians
- Identify strategies to meet pending budget reductions
- “Teamwork and collaboration are foundational to most areas of research today. How should our acquisition fund structure and budget allocation respond to this discourse of cross-fertilization?” T. Horava (2010)
- Promotion of resources - dissemination
Work Still to be Done

STEWARDSHIP

Who has responsibility for ...

- Collections - fundamental tension/intersection between departments regarding decision-making (partial vs complete)
- Space requirements for each collection - transfers
- Setting priorities for preservation - core vs noncore titles
- Revise CD policies for REF collection and main collection
- Print retention - partnering beyond UVM
Discussion Question #1

What methods have you used to facilitate interdepartmental communications between subject liaisons and collection management?
Discussion Question #2

Can you share examples of interdepartmental decision-making for collection-related decisions?
Wrap-up

CLOSING THE LOOP

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