Library Space Transformed

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Introduction

Brigham Young University is an ARL library with around 30,000 FTE. We undertook a project to assess our science collections when our library IT department planned to expand into the current space. This involved reviewing materials on 2,654 single-facing units (7 shelves per unit). The primary focus was on strengthening collections for our patrons with a secondary goal of making enough room for the IT expansion.

Data Analysis Tools

Our starting point for data analysis was GreenGlass, however, GreenGlass alone could not meet all the needs for a project of this scope. Problems of relying solely on GreenGlass included bad data (due to problematic cataloging and not GreenGlass itself) and GreenGlass excluding serials data. In addition to GreenGlass, we also used custom reports from our LIS, BlueCloud Analytics (a tool from our LIS vendor), Excel, and R. We also created a geo-encoded map and Google Doc to track progress of the project.

Who Was Involved

This project involved representatives from collection development, science librarians, library IT, cataloging, book repair/conservation, serials staff, auxiliary storage staff, stacks management, physical facilities management and library administration. We also worked closely with our accounting controller to make sure we had all the resources required to complete the project in the allotted timeframe (personnel, equipment, space, etc.).

Before we started the project, we created a task force to identify all of the people involved, outline the processes, and assign resources that would be

required to complete the project. Without this task force the project would have taken far longer and created many more problems with existing workflows. Besides the pre-planning assignment, this task force was also charged with and is in the process of writing a report that estimates the time and money spent so that library administration will have a better idea of how much a project such as this truly costs.

Criteria used to analyze and evaluate collection

This varied from librarian to librarian. Some librarians weighted usage heavily while others did not. Overlap with other institutions was an important factor in deciding whether or not to discard something. Age of material, duplication of material in our own collections, and the historical and monetary values were also considered. Representation of the subject in existing electronic resources was another serious consideration.

Communicating with Campus

We did not use data to communicate with stakeholders. Our IT staff created a "virtual review shelf" that allowed stakeholders to review materials marked for potential withdraw and, if desired, make a recommendation that the materials stay in the collection. They were not necessarily told the criteria used to decide how an item ended up in the potential withdraw pile. Most trusted the subject librarians to know the subject matter and make a wise decision.

What We Learned

Many librarians were surprised by how interdisciplinary the collection was, discovered holes in the collection, cataloging errors (especially with serials), books on the shelf but not in the catalog, and inconsistent usage information. They were also surprised by how large of an impact poorly cataloged materials had on usage of the material.

New Space

With the space that was freed up from the collection evaluation, we will create more office space for IT, new offices for some of the science librarians, and new study spaces that better utilize natural light for students.

What We Would Do Differently

We would not change much. The assessment planning task force was critical in making this successful. We did find that even with the pre-planning, the process was not linear and we had to be flexible and adapt our plan as we moved through the project. Knowing upfront that the process was iterative was crucial. Communication is one area in which we could always do better. Improving some of the communication we had, both internally and externally, could have alleviated some unnecessary stress by teaching faculty and librarians not directly involved in the process about what was happening.