Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater: Reducing your print-collections footprint
(or) Reshaping Collections & Library Space in Rolvaag Memorial Library

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context

- Four-year undergraduate college
- Liberal arts with growing programs in sciences
- 3,000 students and 300 full-time faculty
- Mission to support the curriculum
- Three libraries: Rolvaag Memorial Library, Halvorson Music Library, Hustad Science Library
- Three related archive/libraries on campus (NAHA, College Archives, and Kierkegaard Library)
motivations

• A belief that ongoing de-selection is part of good collection management and stewardship that will make the general collection “leaner”, “cleaner”, more useful.

• A belief that the Library best serves our community by becoming a shared, collaborative and innovative research space.
  • Leveraging institutional funds
    – funds for spaces for humans rather than storage

• A strong desire to preserve, and increase discoverability of culturally important materials
  • Strengthening
    – all collections (heritage/special collections and general collection offerings)
    – relationships between campus institutions
    – discovery and intersections between collections and materials
    – opportunities for innovation
underlying assumptions

– Given our mission, de-selection should be an ongoing part of the library’s ecological life-cycle.
– Once we complete what is essentially a retrospective project, we should aim for a sustainable, relatively static physical collection size.
– With careful planning and preparation, the majority of the day-to-day work can be performed by student employees.
initial research, groundwork & pilots

• Vault-valuation project (2009/2010): established baseline special collections + relationship with consultant

• WorldCat Collection Analyst: assessment of the general collections
  – General historical capture (to best of our ability)
  – Areas of strength and gaps
  – Comparisons with 16 Oberlin Libraries (benchmarks and aspirational benchmarks) + National Library of Norway

• “Rare” books project pull
  – OCLC unique & < 10 libraries hold pre-1800
  – OCLC unique & < 10 holds through 1940
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• 10,000+ NAHA items in the general collection
  – Historically inconsistent coding of NAHA items + resolution
  – 1,500+ are Nordic-American Imprints that have not been coded and segregated

• Worked with ARM/TS to normalize codes
• Used Google Refine to normalize publishers and place of publication for NAIs
• Relocated those items to special collections

Thanks, Sarah Beth Weeks!
“Rolvaag Big Weed”

• Began establishing criteria for the candidacy in the “big weed”
  – Monographs in Rolvaag’s general collection (Science & Music excluded)
  – Not part of the collection designated for heritage protection & not owned by NAHA
  – Not published before 1940, or after 1996 (15 years)
  – No current order records in the ILS
  – Shows no use for life of ILS
  – Held by fewer than 100 other libraries in OCLC
  – Not captured to date in Hathi Trust
script for checking # of holding libraries in OCLC

Thanks, Sarah Johnston!
Stakeholder buy-in

• NAHA, College Archives & Kierkegaard
  – Co-researched documented historical agreements
  – Sharing discovery of practices in place, and of intentions
  – Consensus-driven creation of new documentation

• Multiple meetings of all concerned parties (including a rare-materials consultant)
  – Reporting on progress
  – Gather feedback
  – Solicit recommendations for next steps
  – Creation of Heritage Advisory Group
Stakeholder buy-in (continued)

- Approximately 6 months of education of LFC
- Conversations and education surrounding de-selection always included preservation aspect & simultaneous communication of preservation discoveries and plans
- De-selection policy approved by LFC 2011
- Decision on part of the LFC that all monograph de-selection activities would be restricted to the decisions and actions of library staff.
- De-selection work began in earnest.
Outcomes

• 50,000 monographs withdrawn (no one has noticed)
• 12,000 heritage items moved to special collections
• Helped create low-impact/no-impact plans for the withdrawal of print journals, VHS, reference materials, etc.
• Created available space for IT’s staff of 30, student group study rooms, multi-function meeting rooms, and the new DiSCO.
• Creating available space to integrate a portion of the Science Library Collection
• Enhanced relationships with other Special Collections on campus and has created new opportunities for us to collaborate.
• Creating new space for a physically unified Special Collections Hub that will include NAHA, College Archives, Kierkegaard, and Rolvaag collections, and a shared, climate-controlled vault.
• Better collections!
Impact to date

• SPACE GAIN
  – 50,000 items withdrawn
  – Remove 10-15K monographs annually for the next 10 years
Fram, fram ... librarians

- Know
  - institution’s deep history & personality
  - Mission (but be flexible in your adherence to mission if you discover treasure!)
  - Contents of your collection (don’t be afraid to work with consultants)
  - Your goals (short term? Long term?)
- Engage your stakeholder’s most appropriate representatives
  - BUT DON’T engage EVERY stakeholder!
  - Communicate “just enough” (trust your key stakeholders to help determine how much is enough)
- Decide what “valuable” means to you in different contexts.
- Don’t be afraid to engage students in the process, and to make mistakes
- Think big. Think outside the box. Believe you’ll make things better and achieve something amazing and perhaps, unexpected).
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