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!

```perl
#!/usr/bin/perl

# Checks OCLC holdings by OCLC number using WorldCat Search API
# Counts total number of libraries up to API limit of 100
# Created by Sarah Johnston, Last Updated: 3/7/2016

use LWP::Simple;
use JSON qw( decode_json );
use Encode qw( encode decode );
use JSON::Parse 'valid_json';

# Open text file of OCLC numbers you want to check holdings for. Each OCLC number should be on its own line.
open (FILE, "C:/weeding/oclcNos.txt") or die("unable to open file");

# Create file for library counts
my $filename = "C:/weeding/oclcNos_response.txt";
open my $fh, ">>", $filename or die("could not open file. $!");

while (my $line = <FILE>) {
    chomp($line);
    my $oclcNum = $line;
    # OCLC WorldCat Search API. Enter your zip code and w5Key where placeholders are.
    my $url = 'http://www.worldcat.org/webservices/catalog/content/libraries/\'. $oclcNum . ' ?format=json&location=[zip code]&maximumLibraries=100&w5key=[your oclc web services key]';
    my $content = get $url;
    my $json_bytes = encode('UTF-8', $content);
    die "Couldnt get $url" unless defined $content;

    # Parse the JSON file from the API response
    # Total number of libraries (up to 100) with holdings will be logged
    if (valid_json($json_bytes)) {
        my $decoded = decode_json($json_bytes);
        print $fh $oclcNum, "\t";
        print $fh scalar @{$decoded->{library}};
        my @libraries = @{$decoded->{library}};
        print $fh scalar @libraries, "\n";
    }
}
```

Close $fh;
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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