

Bambi meets Mozilla: The Impact of Digital Collections on Technical Services

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1. Bambi Meets Mozilla

- Not too long ago, library workflows were relatively stable and collections had well-defined boundaries.
- The advent of digital collections has been a significant catalyst for change in technical services.

2. Wake Up and Smell the Coffee

Brutal reality:

- Explosion of Information Resources and Formats (more work to do)
- Shrinking resources :
 - \$\$ as well as staff
- Doing More with Less
- Hope that technology would help us to work Faster, Harder, Smarter

3. In Other Words....

- We have finally reached the point where doing more with less is no longer a viable option. We can't match the pace of change, and backlogs are unjustifiable.

4. A Whole Nother Candy Bar

Some interesting resources to ponder:

- [OCLC Pattern Recognition Study \(2003\)](#)
- [University of California Libraries. Bibliographic Services Task Force. Final Report \(2005\). Rethinking how we provide bibliographic services for the University of California.](#)
- Marcum, Deanna. 2006. The future of cataloging. *Library Resources and Technical Services* 50 (1): 5-9.
- Calhoun, Karen. 2006. [The changing nature of the catalog and its integration with other discover tools : prepared for the Library of Congress.](#)

5. Tempting Nibbles

- “Being collection-centric is old-fashioned; content is no longer king—context is. ”
- “Context means adding intellectual value to content. ”
- “There must be more linkages among content types—people should be able to find all relevant material regardless of what content quadrant it belongs in. ”
(OCLC Pattern Recognition Study)

6. Key Ingredients in the Mix

•**Accountability:** there are increased expectations everywhere for more efficient use of resources.

–Within TS, workflow analysis is crucial to identify areas where workflows can be streamlined so that the work that is most important to us can be accomplished.

•**Assessment of ROI**

–We are in the process of identifying those areas where we can add the most value.

–Staff is perhaps our most valuable resource. To realize the greatest return on our investment,

–re-skilling,

–cross-training and

–skills transfer are important.

–What level of staff is appropriate for what level of task?

–Where can existing skills be transferred to new kinds of work?

–Where do productivity gains translate to faster and better service to users?

•**Metrics.**

–As our collections become increasingly digital, how will we measure our effectiveness?

7. What's At the Center: Nut or Cream?

None of this is exactly news, but to expose what's at the center of all of this rhetoric:

• **First, an increased focus on the expectations of users. We know that Users, especially those born in the digital era, expect resource discovery tools to be**

–easy to use

- flexible
- intuitive
- seamless
- customizable, and
- collaborative.
- I think what I have just described bears little resemblance to the traditional catalog.
- This gives us creative license to construct user-friendly tools that float above our traditional catalogs– which now serve more as authoritative data repositories than as finding aids– and to link them to other resource discovery tools such as databases, indexes, and journal lists.
- Greater collaboration across TS units
 - The reduction of original cataloging and minimization of manual processing places a greater reliance on technology...
 - In the form of batch loads and processes.
 - So we must work more collaboratively than ever with colleagues in TS to create new workflows, and our colleagues in IT to get the most out of the tools at our disposal (such as reports and API).
- Making our unique resources discoverable
 - Prioritization is key.
 - E.g.: For access, where do we add the most value?
 - Where should time be spent– on resources that already have some metadata, or on creating access to those resources that are unique to our institutions?

8. The SWEET, YET SALTY Paradox

- Investment in making unique resources discoverable
VS.
- Diminishing economies of copy cataloging
 - We're creating less original metadata but as digitization efforts increase, the materials we describe are increasingly unique. Therefore, metadata creation is becoming more, not less, expensive.

9. Beneath the Frosting: Ask the Hard Questions

Since we can't do everything, it's important that we ask the hard questions. The questions, and the answers, will be different for every institution, because we are all unique and the communities we serve are unique.

E.g.:

- What are our shared values?
- What products and services are fundamental to our mission?
- What can we STOP DOING and still fulfill that mission?

10. It's Time to Shut Down the Production Line

•WHAT we do is still meaningful and useful

–Selecting, acquiring, managing, preserving and promoting discovery of resources are fundamental to our mission.

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•HOW we do it has changed radically

–E.g.: In the digital environment, the distinction between formats and even functions are becoming increasingly blurred. Cataloging on receipt: is it cataloging or is it acquisitions?

–New work and new workflows create new opportunities to collaborate with new partners and to add value. We have a lot of expertise to offer.

–SO when my peanut butter meets your chocolate– that makes users very happy!

11. Recipe for Success

• Create CONTEXT

–When we know WHY we do a task, it becomes more meaningful.

–Understanding the context in which our users operate helps us to meet their evolving needs

–An effective staff understands the context for the changing philosophies, workflows, roles, and institutional priorities that they encounter in daily work.

•Facilitate connections

•Manage and Embrace Change