Notes on Operations
A Large-Scale Collection Review with Faculty Collaboration

A Comprehensive View

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Villanova University's Falvey Memorial Library developed a multiyear comprehensive and strategic collection review of print monographs. In this paper, the authors focus on the operational components of the project, such as generating potential deselection lists with GreenGlass, convening working groups to plan the project, developing strategies for faculty outreach and faculty collection review, and analyzing deselection and retention data. The authors share decision-making processes as well as lessons learned that were involved in the project design and implementation phases throughout the extensive collection review project.

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Villanova University is known for its prestigious program of teaching and learning. In recent years, the University has increased its offering of doctoral programs and research activities, positioning itself to become a dynamic research university. In support of the University's strategic plan for research, Falvey Memorial Library, as the University's main library, launched a large-scale collection review at the beginning of 2017. The Library recognized the importance of a systematic process for collection review, including a deselection process to keep the library collections healthy and relevant.

The project targeted print monographs, excluding government documents and any other non-book monographs such as DVDs since they comprise the majority of Falvey's physical collections. Regular review and deselection of physical collections are vital to keeping those collections current. This activity removes outdated texts and makes space for more current scholarship.

The University Librarian (UL) chose GreenGlass as the collection analysis tool for this project. GreenGlass is a product of OCLC's Sustainable Collection Services (SCS) division. It reviewed over 500,000 monographic volumes based on the Library's deselection criteria, described in the Project Implementation section below. The tool helped to generate several review files, using Library of Congress Classification (LCC). These files were then assigned to the appropriate subject librarians for further review for collection retention. After the subject librarians completed their review, the files were posted for faculty review on the project website. Involving faculty in the collection review posed various challenges, such as significant delays in the deselection process and faculty resistance toward the deselection project in general. Nonetheless, the Library strongly believed that collection review should be a collaborative process between librarians and faculty, and involving faculty feedback in the project was important. This paper explores the extensive processes that went into executing this large-scale collection review project in detail, ranging from data extraction to forming working groups, to faculty outreach, and to designing the monthly schedule of faculty review. It heavily focuses upon the planning and designing of the project and various operational components that were required to manage it effectively and efficiently.

Literature Review

Many papers addressing collection review analyze projects performed by the authors' respective academic libraries. These papers generally provide the reason for the review, the process the authors followed to deselect titles, and lessons learned from the experience. A common example of this type of literature is Murphy's "Assessing University Library Print Book Collections and Deselection: A Case Study of the National University of Ireland Maynooth."[1] This paper describes the review process, how the library began reviewing the hard sciences, how the author attempted to earn approval from the faculty, and concluded with a discussion of the advantages of assuring transparency during the process.

Zanin-Yost and Ginanni discuss a similar project at Western Carolina University's Fine Arts Library.[2] After reviewing the deselection process, the authors stress the importance of deselection practice as part of collection management strategies to maintain a well-used library collection. They also emphasize the significance of collaboration among librarians and staff in technical services, liaison department, and circulation in addition to faculty.

Some papers offer suggestions regarding how to approach a deselection project. A common approach is to divide the overall review into smaller projects targeting specific subject areas and/or formats. In "High-Yield, Low-Risk Deselection in an Academic Library," Giffin describes the weeding project at Concordia University (Montreal), concentrating on deselecting multiple copies, government documents, microforms, and print materials duplicated by e-books.[3] Olivia describes a project at Adelphi University that included actively replacing discarded titles with their electronic equivalents.[4] Griffin and Olivia both stress that librarians should ensure that their collections need a title before replacing a book with its electronic equivalent.

Since library weeding projects are rarely popular with users—especially faculty— some papers made suggestions on how to prepare for that reaction. Zanin-Yost and Ginanni advise creating a collection policy document before starting a deselection project.[5] Demas and Miller strongly encourage libraries to establish a collection policy and laud the benefits of having such a policy for both libraries and their various stakeholders. They state, "A policy should both present a clear argument to campus constituents and invite their participation in the planning process."[6] Similarly, before starting a series of targeted weeding projects at Concordia University (Minnesota), a policy was developed to help facilitate and guide faculty participation.[7]

Other papers address how to handle faculty reactions after a weeding project commences. Trail encourages presenting changes and decisions based on logic and data when communicating with users, but warns, "Having objective facts and figures does not always preclude protest from anxious faculty."[8] Some faculty will oppose the removal of any books on principle, obstinately adhering to the "just-in-case" approach to library collection development. In his blog post entitled "Amber," Seeber responds to common combative faculty complaints about library weeding he has heard.[9] DeMars, Roll, and Phillips describe their library's experience with including faculty in a deselection project at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).[10] Their library provided circulation data to faculty and permitted them to contest some weeding decisions. After the initial pilot project in which faculty retained 1,716 books out of 1,744 (over 98 percent retention), the library modified the faculty review process to mandate providing a reason for retention requests. This process allowed librarians to differentiate between the needs of the academic department and the needs of individual professors regarding book retention.

GreenGlass has become an increasingly popular tool for collection reviews. DeMars, Roll, and Phillips note that CSUF used GreenGlass for their deselection project, discovering that the vast majority of their library holdings were published between 1960 and 1980. They comment, "This analysis revealed what many in the library already knew: much of the print collection was out of date and had not circulated in some time."[11] CSU, Stanislaus also used GreenGlass for the trial project for the political science collection, as described in Held's "Curating, Not Weeding."[12] The library used GreenGlass to generate review files, and librarians physically reviewed every title on the list afterwards to decide what to withdraw. In her paper, Snyder describes how Rollins College used GreenGlass to review its engineering collection. She claims that GreenGlass data "forced us to determine and quantify the attributes of books we wanted to consider for withdrawal."[13] A total of 97.5 percent of the books that GreenGlass data identified as withdrawal candidates were approved by subject librarians.

There are more general resources available for libraries regarding collection reviews that do not concentrate on a specific institution's actions, but rather speak to collection review more broadly. Lugg and Fischer provide strong arguments on the need for collection review projects, especially in regard to library space.[14] They assert, "Not only are library users being crowded out by reading material, they are being crowded out by unwanted reading material!"[15] McAllister and Scherlen argue for librarians to be cautious when removing older, unused monographs, particularly those of interest to the humanities, which may use such resources in their research.[16] After briefly describing their own deselection project at LaGuardia Community College Library, McHale et al. conclude that although objective criteria for withdrawals are necessary for speed, librarians' professional judgment and even physically reviewing bookstacks will still benefit the final outcome.[17] Ward's
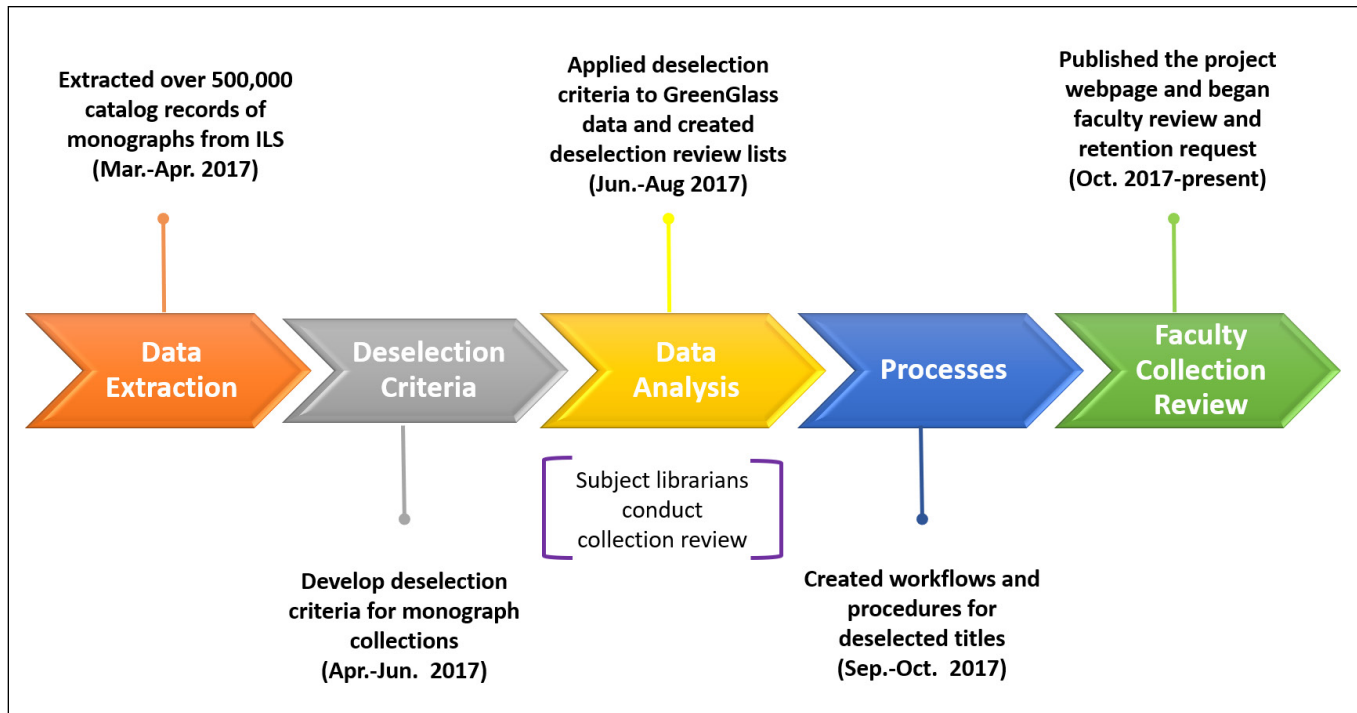
Figure 1. Collection Review Project Implementation Process

Rightsizing the Academic Library Collection examines the entire process for a collection review project, including the reasons to conduct a review, how to determine titles for deselection, and processes to remove and dispose of those titles.[18]

Methodology

Project Design

The Associate University Librarian (AUL) for Collections and Stewardship at the authors' library led the collection review project. She was responsible for designing the overall project, monitoring progress, and coordinating operations. In consultation with various library staff, the AUL identified three working groups at the initial phase: the GreenGlass Data Extraction Working Group (GDEWG), the Collection Review Working Group (CRWG), and the GreenGlass Data Analysis Working Group (GDAWG).

As illustrated in figure 1, the project began with extracting cataloging data from the integrated library system (ILS) for GreenGlass analysis in March 2017. The Library created three working groups and one implementation team to address various tasks and processes to advance the project. The first working group was the GDEWG (March–April 2017), which cooperated with SCS staff to provide the information required for extracting monographic bibliographic data from the local ILS and to identify the comparator list (e.g., consortium partners, ILL partners, peer institutions, etc.).

In the interim, the CRWG (April–June 2017) reviewed existing deselection guidelines and procedures, conducted a literature review of collection review practices, and proposed best practices for the Library's collection review. After receiving GreenGlass data from SCS, the Library created the GDAWG (June–August 2017). This group focused on identifying collection review criteria to apply uniformly across all disciplines, built upon CRWG's work. Deselecting librarians used the following baseline criteria:

- Books that were purchased prior to 2006;
- AND have not been circulated for more than ten years;
- AND are widely available at other libraries (forty+ holdings in the US, four+ holdings in the home state) and can be obtained through interlibrary loan if needed;
- OR are freely available as digital copies in public domain.

These criteria were considered as a starting point for all subject disciplines. Each subject librarian was instructed to apply additional discipline specific criteria if necessary.

Furthermore, the GDAWG proposed a communication plan with talking points for faculty and students regarding the collection assessment effort and processes for faculty involvement in collection review.[19]

Lastly, the Collection Review Implementation Team (CRIT) (September 2017–present) created procedures and workflows for the collection review, including the removal of deselected books from the stacks, maintenance of bibliographic records in the ILS, data management of faculty retention request forms, and disposal of deselected books. Since there were many changes with this project, the process of forming working groups and articulating deliverables was organic and sequential.

Faculty Collection Review and Outreach

The role of subject librarians as ambassadors to their respective departments was vital to the successful implementation of the collection review project. Subject librarians communicated the library's plan for deselection with their individual departments in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, attending department meetings, speaking one-on-one with faculty and department heads, and via email. Various talking points developed by the GDAWG were useful for subject librarians' faculty outreach. Subject librarians endeavored to ensure that their departments understood how the process would work and responded to questions and concerns as they arose.

The GDAWG also proposed that the UL and subject librarians hold face-to-face meetings with faculty to introduce the project and to provide information regarding how books would be identified for deselection and what role faculty would play in the process. Following the initial introduction of the project, the group proposed that notifications be included in the university's daily email announcements. Furthermore, subject librarians continued to communicate with their departments regarding the overall process, notifying faculty monthly as new lists became available for review. Additionally, a website was created to provide information about the project including:

- links to review files with clear time stamps on start and end dates for faculty review;
- links to a form for faculty to request the retention of or the personal procurement of books identified for removal;
- contact information for faculty to share questions or concerns;
- frequently asked questions and answers.[20]

Meanwhile, the SCS-generated deselection lists were distributed among subject librarians, as determined by the LC call numbers relevant to their subject areas. Subject librarians reviewed the deselection lists and removed the titles they wanted to retain. This was the first qualitative review in the process that ensured that subject librarians applied additional criteria before the faculty review. There was no prescribed method for subject librarians' review. This was in part because all of the books in the Green-Glass deselection lists met the baseline criteria. It was also because each subject librarian knew best how to approach the review of books in their respective areas of subject expertise.

Project Implementation

As indicated in figure 1, the Library started posting review files for faculty on the project website, beginning in October 2017. New review files for faculty were posted on the first business day of each month. Faculty were given one month to review the deselected titles. They could request any titles for library retention, and faculty could claim titles for their personal collection if the Library did not retain them. CRIT designed the procedures and workflows to manage the monthly schedule of faculty review (see figure 2). The UL actively reached out to faculty and explained the project's scope and purpose, hosting town hall meetings for various campus communities. Individual subject librarians shared information about this project with their faculty on a regular basis.

When designing the project, the UL and AUL were extremely cautious about faculty perception. By nature, collection review projects are unpopular and could be an emotional process. Considering the magnitude of the project, the Library needed to ensure that the review process was thorough and thoughtful to gain faculty buy-in. Figure 3 summarizes the steps the Library took to generate deselection files for faculty review.

As mentioned above, the Library used GreenGlass to apply the baseline criteria (see step 1, figure 3). This first step quickly identified over 200,000 titles as possible candidates for deselection. Using the GreenGlass Query Builder, staff generated deselection lists by LCC. In this second step, subject librarians used subject-specific criteria, in addition to the baseline criteria, to further refine deselection lists prior to faculty review. After librarian review was complete, staff removed any other items that were not in the scope of this project or otherwise erroneously included, such as non-book monographs and special collections materials. This was the final step in figure 3 before faculty review started. The Library took extra steps to ensure that it was providing quality data for faculty review. The steps in figure 2 were repeated each month, beginning with the subject librarians' qualitative review to remove additional titles from deselection lists. These steps could be onerous, but the library was committed to building a process, driven by both

data and expertise, to guarantee exhaustive collection review.

Data Processing

The library created a web form for faculty to submit book retention requests. The form (see figure 4) asked for the faculty member's name, department, and on-campus address. The faculty could make retention requests by submitting a book's barcode number, title, and destination, which was either to keep the book in the Library or send it to faculty for their personal collection. There was no limit to how many books could be requested, but each book had to be added individually. This process resulted in thousands of retention requests for books from multiple faculty members. The data were analyzed on a monthly basis using a suite of Python scripts developed by one of the Library's software developers who was assigned as the project technology developer.[21]

If a book was requested by multiple faculty members, the Library applied the following criteria to resolve these conflicts:

1. A request to retain a book in the Library would overrule a personal collection request; and
2. The earliest personal collection request placed would receive the book.

At the end of each month, the project technology developer parsed all the previous month's requests into a list. The developer validated the data and corrected any invalid information. For example, faculty requests often provided a call number instead of a barcode, or listed the same barcode for two different books. The developer was able in every case to use the submitted information to correct the errors. Three monthly reports were then generated by the developer: a master list of books cleared for deselection, a list of books to be shipped to faculty for personal collection, and a list of books the faculty requested for retention in the Library. Additionally, several progress reports were generated to help analyze the project overall. These cumulative reports were organized by call number to easily associate them with the subject librarian overseeing that section of the collection. The project technology developer often created data visualizations to assist with the evaluation of progress. This paper does not include the detailed statistical analaysis of the project because it is still ongoing at the point of submission.

Figure 2. Monthly Schedule of Faculty Collection Review

Physical Processing

To process the final lists of withdrawals, both the Access Services and Description Departments hired and trained additional student employees and temporary staff. LC Easy, a program which drilled users for how books are arranged on shelves with LC call numbers, was used to teach LCC and the layout of the Library. Additional training included how to use the ILS cataloging module and OCLC Connexion.[22] They also learned a few relevant MARC fields, particularly those for the OCLC accession number, the ISBN, and the LCCN.

The student and temporary staff received the final lists of books selected for withdrawal. With a book cart in tow, they took the lists to the stacks and retrieved the deselected books. When removing a book, they compared the title, call number, and barcode number to that on the list to make sure the correct book was retrieved. Full carts were delivered to the Description Department for processing. The exceptions were those books requested by faculty for their personal collections; those were shelved and boxed separately. The staff suppressed a given book's item record, making sure the barcode number in the record matched that of the book in hand, and when necessary, also suppressed the holdings and bibliographic records. Suppressed
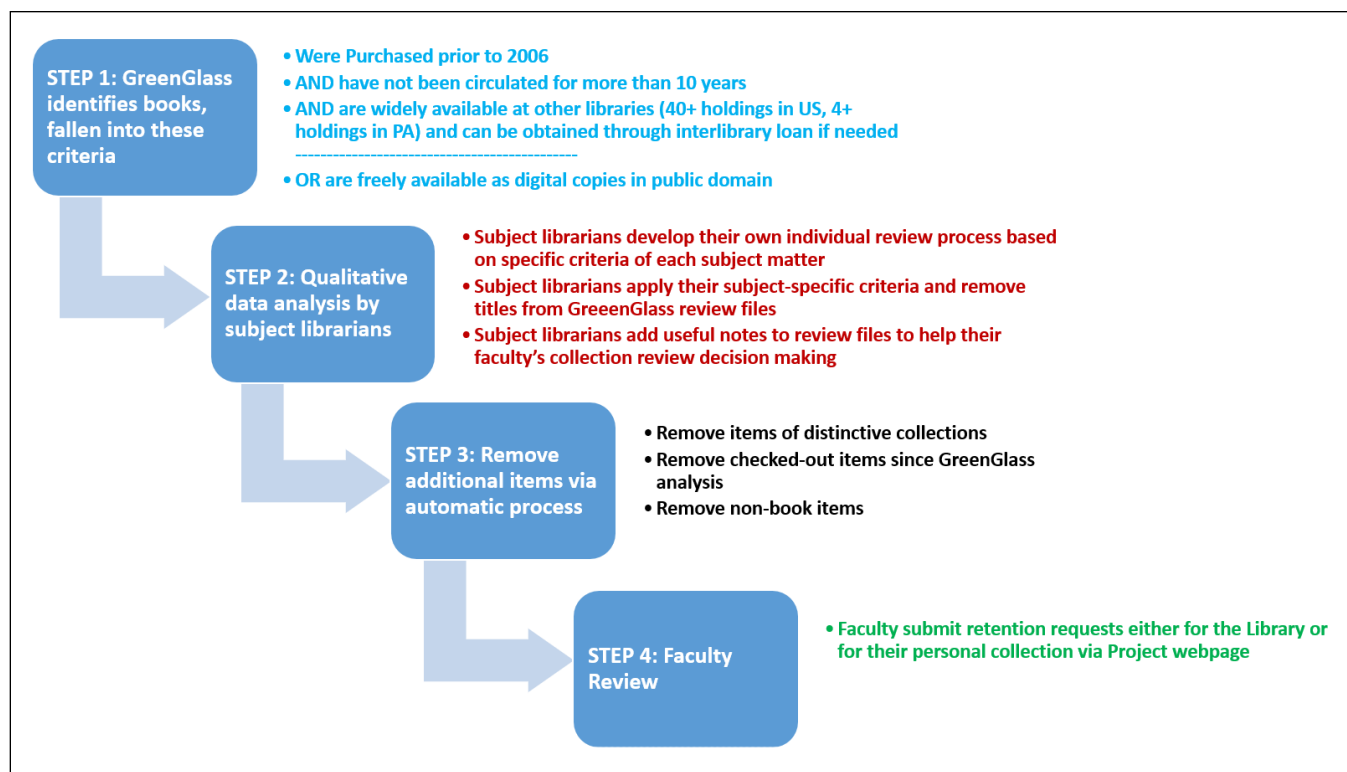
STEP 1: GreenGlass identifies books, fallen into these criteria
- **Were Purchased prior to 2006**
- **AND have not been circulated for more than 10 years**
- **AND are widely available at other libraries (40+ holdings in US, 4+ holdings in PA) and can be obtained through interlibrary loan if needed**

- **OR are freely available as digital copies in public domain**

STEP 2: Qualitative data analysis by subject librarians
- **Subject librarians develop their own individual review process based on specific criteria of each subject matter**
- **Subject librarians apply their subject-specific criteria and remove titles from GreeenGlass review files**
- **Subject librarians add useful notes to review files to help their faculty's collection review decision making**

STEP 3: Remove additional items via automatic process
- **Remove items of distinctive collections**
- **Remove checked-out items since GreenGlass analysis**
- **Remove non-book items**

STEP 4: Faculty Review
- **Faculty submit retention requests either for the Library or for their personal collection via Project webpage**

Figure 3. Steps of Creating Deselection Lists for Faculty Review

records received a note stating that they were withdrawn as part of this project for future reference. Using the OCLC accession number, the ISBN, or the LCCN, the student and temporary staff removed Villanova's holdings from the respective WorldCat record when the bibliographic record was suppressed in the library catalog. After catalog records were updated, staff crossed out labels and other library-related markings in the books. The books were shelved in a holding area and periodically boxed for shipment to the third-party vendor for repurposing.

Discussion

The extensive efforts and preparations that the library staff made prior to launching the collection review project, particularly the faculty review, were vital throughout the project. Because a collection review project can be challenging for both faculty and librarians, the successful completion of this project required meticulous groundwork for operations and effective communication strategies.

As anticipated, the release of the first batch of call numbers for deselection resulted in faculty from several departments contacting their subject librarians with concerns regarding the lists. Concerns came primarily from the humanities and social sciences, while STEM and business expressed less concern. This is not surprising, not only because hard sciences typically rely more on journals and databases and less on books than the humanities and social sciences, but also because their fields of study are much more focused on current research. Thus, they had less reason to be concerned about the deselection of older titles, which in their areas, become outdated quickly. The criticism the Library received after releasing the first batch focused on three primary areas of concern:

1. The fact that deselection was taking place;
2. The time allotted to review lists was not sufficient; and
3. The Faculty Retention Request Form was too tedious and/or difficult to fill out.

Concerns about the project overall were handled in a number of ways by different subject librarians, but the initial approach was to reiterate the criteria for deselection and to remind faculty of the librarian review process. In many cases, reminding faculty of these two steps was adequate. In some cases, this approach was insufficient, and subject librarians scheduled meetings with department chairs to discuss ways that they might adjust reviewing the lists. In other cases, the UL and AUL were asked to participate in meetings with faculty and their respective subject librarians.

Figure 4. Faculty Retention Request Form

The number of books posted for faculty review each month varied, and ranged from a few hundred to a few thousand, depending on circumstance. For example, during busy academic periods such as the beginning of a semester or during final exams, less books were posted in consideration of the faculty's workload. Generally, when faculty expressed that they did not have enough time to review a relevant list in a month, additional time was granted. This was an effective way to improve relations with faculty. Only 18 percent of the books that faculty retained were requested during an extension. Furthermore, faculty reacted very positively to receiving the extra time to review. Although extensions did not significantly increase the number of books that faculty requested for retention, they served to make the faculty feel more comfortable and flexible with the process.

One aspect that staff were cautious about during the project design phase was how faculty would make retention requests. The interface design for the form was greatly influenced by CSUF's collection review experience with faculty.[23] The Library's process was designed to honor all faculty requests, but project staff wanted to design a retention request form that would not make it too easy for faculty to select a vast number of books for retention. However, the form that was developed may have been overly burdensome. It required a lot of manual data input (see figure 4). As a result, some departments decided to hire students to enter required data on behalf of faculty. In retrospect, it would have been better to design an autocomplete system that used a book's barcode to reduce errors and balance the burdens placed on the faculty and their student employees.

During the faculty review, the project technology developer made several adjustments to the original data processing routine. For example, one project member was tasked with emailing faculty to inform them of which books they should expect to receive for their personal collections. It became apparent that gathering the information for these emails and sending them individually was repetitive and tedious. To address this, the project technology developer added an additional report to the monthly reports that automatically formulates the email from a template based on the data.

Another issue with the original data processing was that project staff had not considered that books could be checked out after the Library sent circulation data to SCS. Because this violated the baseline criterion "books have not circulated for more than 10 years," some faculty brought this to the Library's attention after the initial lists were published to the faculty. The project technology developer created a monthly routine to remove these books from the faculty review files.

Addressing specific data requests became difficult because of the rigid nature of the data storage—plain text files and spreadsheets. The project technology developer developed a new Python script to retrieve data for questions such as "how many requests for retention a given faculty member has made" or "can all titles from a specific publisher be excluded?" To make these questions easier to answer, the project technology developer created a relational database to store all relevant data. Most requests and reports could be generated with SQL queries and exported as spreadsheets. Initially, only the project technology developer could access the back-end data. After developing the relational database, project staff could access the database and generate their own reports, manipulating the data as needed.

An unexpected development arose when preparing shipments of deselected books to send to the third-party

vendor. The holding area filled to capacity considerably faster than anticipated, necessitating students to box books for shipments rather than process withdrawals in the library catalog. Packing the boxes took longer than anticipated. This meant that preparing shipments took a significant amount of time that had been originally allotted to withdrawing books. In response, the Library scheduled more hours for students to work in subsequent semesters.

Managing student employees also posed challenges. Some students were extremely reliable and performed their assignments superbly. Others were less reliable, and that slowed processing at times. Furthermore, because the library building space is well-utilized for diverse academic learning units and services, space for staff and processing is extremely limited, and student employees were located in a room distant from their supervisor, creating communication challenges. The number of books withdrawn dropped considerably during University break periods as student employees left campus, especially around holidays and in the summer. More hours for students to work were scheduled, but filling those hours also proved problematic. In response, the Library hired several part-time temporary employees to perform more of the computer processing. Currently, student employees focus on pulling deselected titles from stacks and boxing shipments, which increases physical processing considerably.

Conclusion

This paper presents the comprehensive collection review project, concentrating on project planning and processing at Villanova University's Falvey Memorial Library. This project marked a significant milestone in the Library's history.

It was the first comprehensive collection review project that involved all subject areas and all library departments. Throughout this multi-year project, library staff displayed high-level collaboration and teamwork, aiming to achieve a shared goal. Second, although the project experienced a degree of faculty resistance and dissatisfaction, faculty inclusion in collection review was generally positive and meaningful. Often, the project strengthened librarian-faculty relationships. Third, the Library's collection has relevant content that aligns well with the University's academic concentration and resulted in providing more physical space in which the collection can grow. As Villanova University focuses on research growth, diverse scholarly resources are crucial to support actively evolving campus academic research activities. After launching the project, the Library placed a great emphasis on acquiring print monographs and e-book packages that support the current academic programs on campus, and the collection budgets were adjusted accordingly. Every subject monograph fund has been increased annually to fill gaps in the book collections, both print and electronic. Lastly, the Library's monographic holdings data have been updated through complete inventory control during the project. Staff identified numerous missing books from the stacks and updated the library catalog.

When this project has been completed, Falvey Memorial Library will celebrate its long and winding journey of collection review and start planning to develop a routine for collection review for the future. Library staff will feel a sense of accomplishment and cherish the collegiality and teamwork that helped to overcome various challenges and difficulties throughout the project. Most of all, the Library successfully laid the groundwork for building a healthy monograph collection for future collection growth.

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