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TAKING AIM AT AN OLD PROBLEM:

SERIALS MANAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARIES

AKA

JOURNAL MANAGEMENT IN THE CROSS-HAIRS

CAN WE BREAK THE CYCLE OF

BEG
SPEND
CUT
?

THE CHALLENGE

- SCHOLARLY JOURNALS AND DATABASES (SJ&DS) ARE INTENDED TO GO ON INDEFINITELY
- SCHOLARS COME TO DEPEND ON SJ&DS
- SJ&DS RISE TO PROMINENCE AND BUILD REPUTATIONS
- SJ&DS REQUIRE EXTENSIVE TRACKING OVER THE COURSE OF THEIR LIFESPANS
- ASKING FACULTY TO PARTICIPATE IN A PROCESS THAT ULTIMATELY DEPRIVES THEM OF THE SJ&DS THAT THEY REQUIRE FOR TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP IS DISTASTEFUL

OUCH!

ACTIVISM IN THE AREA OF SERIALS MANAGEMENT

PRO-ACTIVE APPROACH TO MANAGING SJ&DS:

- TREAT FUNDS DEVOTED SJ&D SUBSCRIPTIONS AS A FIXED ALLOCATION
- ADDRESS HIGH INFLATING TITLES ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS
- TIMELY PROVISION OF THE DATA NEEDED TO MAKE RETENTION DECISIONS THROUGHOUT THE FISCAL YEAR
- SJ&DS THAT ARE SEEN TO BE INFLATING OVER PROJECTIONS WILL BE FLAGGED FOR REVIEW

COVERING THE COST:

- CANCEL
- TRANSFER DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

FUND STRUCTURE

OLD METHOD

- 1-LINE: MONOGRAPHS
- 2-LINE: SUBSCRIPTIONS: SERIALS/DATABASES
- 3-LINE: NEW SERIALS
- 4-LINE: STANDING ORDERS
- 5-LINE: APPROVAL PLAN, IF APPLICABLE

NEW METHOD

- 1-LINE: DISCRETIONARY
- 2-LINE: RECURRING OBLIGATIONS
- 4-LINE: STANDING ORDERS
- 5-LINE: APPROVAL PLAN, IF APPLICABLE

TO SUMMARIZE:

- SUBJECT SPECIALISTS ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGING INFLATIONARY INCREASES
- INFLATIONARY INCREASES OVER THE AMOUNT GIVEN TO THE LIBRARY FOR COVERING GENERAL INFLATION WILL BE COVERED THROUGH CANCELLATION OR MOVING 1-LINE FUNDS; THIS WILL BE A CHOICE LEFT TO THE SUBJECT SPECIALIST
- INFLATION ON TITLES LOCKED INTO PACKAGE DEALS (BUNDLED TITLES FROM A PUBLISHER WITH A MULTI-YEAR PROVISION AND KNOWN INFLATION RATES) WILL BE COVERED CENTRALLY AS THE AMOUNT SHOULD BE KNOWN AHEAD OF TIME

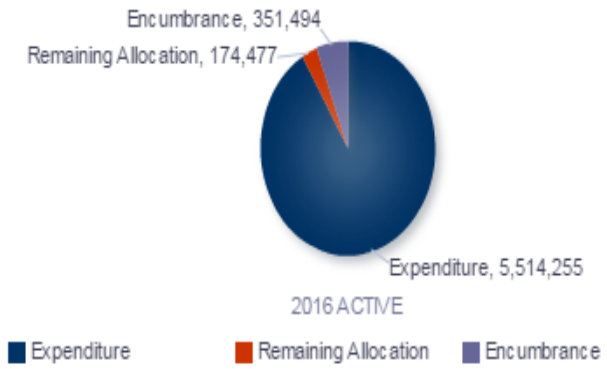
ALMA COLLECTIONS DASHBOARD

Annual Trends | Acquisitions by Classification | Material Type | Fund and Ledger Expenditure Status | Detailed Expenditures by Fund | Serial Expenditures | Circulation by Fund | Item Circulation by Call Number | Items not circulating

Fiscal Year --Select Value--

Apply Reset

General Fund Expenditures for Current Fiscal Year



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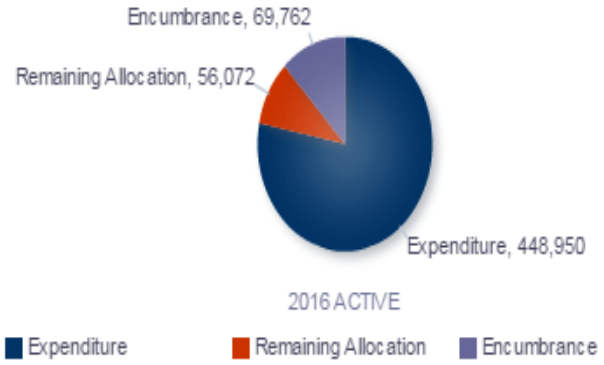
Gift/Endowment Expenditures for Current Fiscal Year



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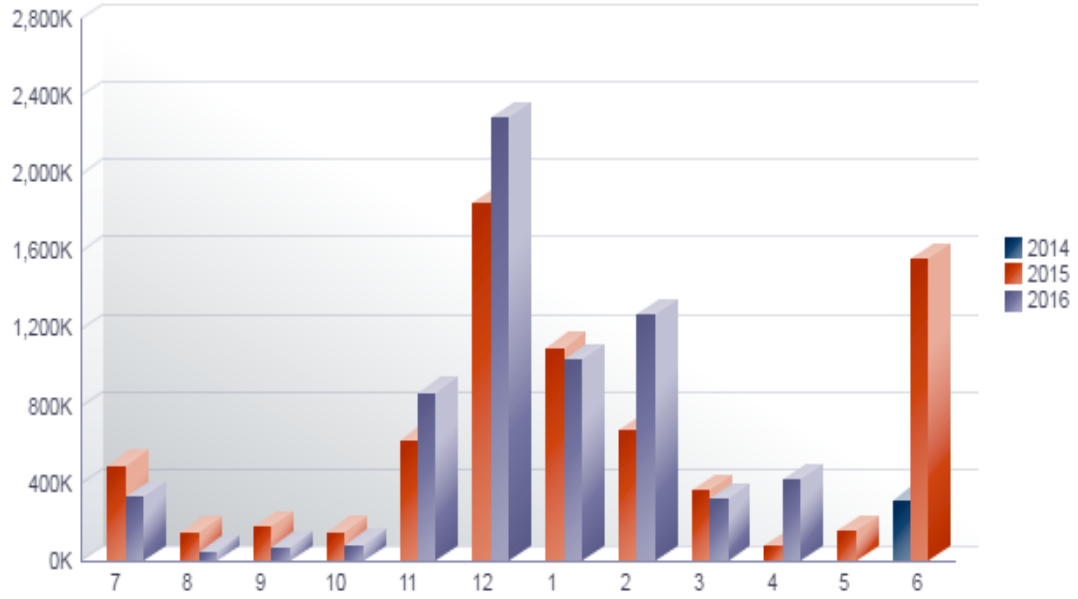
Expenditure by Month



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AEM Serial Expenditures percent change

PO Line Reference	Title	FY 2015	FY 2016	% Change	Cancellation Restriction
o11217236	Energy and buildings.	$2,637.10	$3,014.02	14%	Yes
o11357563	Building research and information : the international journal of research, development and demonstration.	$2,190.43	$2,484.60	13%	No
o10073115	BuildingGreenSuite		$995.00		No
o9662169	Open house international.	$654.95	$634.59	-3%	No
o9647077	Journal of architectural and planning research.	$593.30	$622.18	5%	No
o9648513	Built environment.	$563.42	$576.81	2%	No
o11374743	Architectural design : A.D.	$473.42	$492.35	4%	Yes
o275650x	Werk, Bauen + Wohnen.		$422.09		No
o2225955	El Croquis.	$526.00	$420.50	-20%	No
o7612436	Journal of architectural engineering.	$404.20	$406.76	1%	No
o9645354	The Architects' journal.	$406.72	$391.89	-4%	No
o2584517	Kenchiku to toshi = Architecture and urbanism : A + U.	$347.40	$328.50	-5%	No
o9648264	Blueprint.	$315.70	$315.70	0%	No
o9663770	RIBA journal.	$235.93	$301.12	28%	No
o715513x	AV monografías = AV monographs.	$268.00	$300.00	12%	No
o7155177	Detail : Zeitschrift für Architektur & Baudetail & Einrichtung.	$275.23	$257.41	-6%	No
o7395942	Casabella.	$256.92	$237.88	-7%	No
o2191180	GA houses.	$173.70	$220.95	27%	No
o2775554	Der Baumeister.	$200.92	$207.81	3%	No
o11300383	Membership	$207.00	$207.00	0%	No
o7418309	Lotus international.		$181.14		No
o9645408	The Architectural review.	$338.26	$169.13	-50%	No
o6065132	Arkitektur.	$175.11	$157.15	-10%	No
o9646450	Membership	$135.30	$141.54	5%	No
o7375104	Ark : Arkkitehti arkitekten = Finnish architectural review.	$132.43	$125.47	-5%	No
o9267645	The Canadian architect.	$120.90	$123.97	3%	No
o7062199	Arquitectura COAM.	$138.50	$114.00	-18%	No
o2584864	The Japan architect.	$119.70	$109.80	-8%	No
o9645391	Architectural record.	$74.83	$77.90	4%	No
o2490134	Architectura.		$71.75		No
o9643345	AA files : annals of the Architectural Association School of Architecture.	$64.26	$65.21	1%	No

A FEW CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- FY 17 PRESENTS A WORST CASE SCENARIO FOR THE UO LIBRARIES
- WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE DISCRETIONARY MONEY RUNS OUT?
- CAN PACKAGE DEALS BE SUSTAINED?
- WILL THIS WORK?

THANK YOU!

Taking New Aim at an Old Problem: Serials Management at the University of Oregon Libraries
Acquisitions Institute @ Timberline
Sunday, May 15, 2016

The Problem:

In 1988, then Acting Head of Collection Development at the UO Libraries, Howard Robertson, wrote the following:

> "The University of Oregon Library has made concerted efforts on four separate occasion in the past three decades to grapple with the problem of the cost of serial subscriptions. As a result, we are currently in a situation where there are likely to be very few luxury items, very little 'fat," left to be trimmed from the serials portion of the general library materials budget."

These 4 rounds of cancellations, ranging from the 1960s through early 1980s, taken together with 7 more cutbacks occurring from the early 1990s through the most recent cut that is occurring this spring, indicate that the UO Libraries has reduced recurring expenditures every 5 years on average for the past 56 years. Through several generations of scholars, librarians and university administrators, this pattern has been repeated over and over again without fail in spite of tremendous growth in university and library budgets. For example, the total materials budget in 1980/81 was $1.2 million, approximately $3,673,720 in today's dollars. Since then, the materials budget has nearly doubled now totaling approximately $6,000,000 ($5,995,676.00) in FY 16.

The reasons and factors underlying this pattern of cyclical cutting have been studied extensively and distilled down to what has often been called a crisis in scholarly publishing. The crisis not only reflects cost increases for academic journals that have greatly exceeded the Consumer Price Index as well as augments to library budgets over time, but also refers to the system by which faculty publish their research and obtain tenure. Until recent years and the advent of open access publication options, faculty routinely signed over their copyright to publishers, often commercial for-profit entities that controlled the means of publication and dissemination, and, in turn, sold the scholarship back to university libraries. Outsourcing a process vital to academic reputation, promotion, tenure and the distribution of research for the public good might be a reasonable approach were it not for the well-known fact that the price per subscription of serials rose by 215% over the period from 1986 to 2003.

The escalation in subscription costs and the subsequent pressures on collection budgets have turned libraries into perpetual beggars at the doorstep of university administrations. Faced with the tremendous erosion of buying power, research libraries have always struggled to obtain and then maintain access to the resources needed by faculty for teaching and research. In days past, this dilemma was unfortunately perceived as a "library problem," where university responsiveness to the never ending appeals for additional funds was rewarded by watching large sums of money disappear into the maw of an insatiable black hole that could never be quenched. As the 21st century progresses, there is broader and more general recognition that this is a structural problem whose solution requires changing the very nature of how the academy goes about conducting, disseminating and rewarding the fruits of research and the creation of new knowledge.

If the real changes that need to happen in order to deal with the crisis in scholarly communication must occur at the level of the academy itself and within the scholarly disciplines in which faculty are engaged,

it is reasonable to posit the question of whether the university library can do anything more than what it has always done: ask for more money, use what is provided to offset the effects of inflation for a period time and then manage periodic serial cancellation projects. In other words, is there anything else that the library can do **[slide]** to break the cycle of beg, spend and cut that repeats itself ad infinitum? The Collection Managers at the UO Libraries believe that there is a way to mitigate, if not break, the cycle, and the group is taking steps over a two-year period to put a plan in place to reduce the library's need to request large sums of money each year to fight inflation and to lengthen the period between disruptive cancellation projects.

The Challenge: [slide]

At its heart, and reduced to the simplest terms, the challenge facing the UO Libraries is to get its collective hands a lot more dirty in the work of serials management. When it comes to serials and databases, there are many disincentives to mess around with these resources too much:

- **[slide]** Scholarly journals and databases (SJ&Ds) are intended to go on indefinitely and commitments in the form of subscriptions are valued for the continuity of content that they provide in a given area of teaching and research
- **[slide]** Scholars come to depend on SJ&Ds and consider them to carry the lifeblood of a given discipline
- **[slide]** SJ&Ds rise to prominence and build reputations just like the scholars that depend on and publish in them
- **[slide]** SJ&Ds require extensive tracking over the course of their lifespans and present numerous challenges for library staff in terms of ordering, invoicing, delivery of content, licensing, usage statistics, etc.
- **[slide]** Asking faculty to participate in a process that ultimately deprives them of the SJ&Ds that they require for teaching and scholarship is distasteful, engenders ill will and runs directly counter to the values of service that libraries embody as a core ethos

[slide] For the same reason that no one goes out of the way to hit their thumb with a hammer, so too do research libraries shy away from activism in the area of serials management. Maintaining good relationships with university faculty is not only a cardinal rule for librarians but a matter of survival. Expending political capital in ways that seem to antagonize the very users upon whom good will is needed for support, advocacy and ultimately funding is not, on the face of it, a smart strategy for long-term success. At the same time, faculty are generally willing to engage in discussions about the unsustainable increases in the cost of SJ&Ds, and they often express misgivings about the state of scholarly publishing and recognize the need for systemic changes. Whenever this happens and librarians and faculty lock arms to confront the crisis, the worries about angering colleagues are subsumed by a sense of solidarity. Hence, while transparency often stirs the pot, at least in the beginning, the end result can be better and stronger relationships.

The Plan:

[slide] Collection Managers (CM) are proposing to phase in a plan that will facilitate a much more active approach to managing SJ&Ds. As opposed to relying upon the boom and bust cycle where funds pooled from large cancellation projects are used to stave off inflation until the next time when more cuts are needed, CM will begin to **[slide]** treat funds devoted SJ&D subscriptions as a fixed allocation. Instead of

allowing the amount of money devoted to SJ&Ds to continue expanding, regardless of the amount by which the resources inflate year to year, **[slide]** the library will address high inflating titles on a case by case basis, recognizing the need to fund inflation from existing funds or cancel titles to cover the cost.

It is worth mentioning at this point that, in the past, covering inflation over and above predicted levels was a matter of reallocating one-time money and burning down large carryforwards. Although well-intentioned, this approach hid the real problem from our users and it enabled subject specialists to look the other way when it came to dealing with costs of inflation. What motivation did they have to address large price increases when, from year to year, the library seemed no worse off (save for those pesky cancellation projects every 5 years)? Why should they take individual responsibility for dealing with this problem if their colleagues were able to blissfully carry on? Well, things have changed at the UO and the budgeting and allocation process on campus no longer sanctions large carryforwards. The library has gone from having several hundred thousand dollars with which to smooth over increases to a projected carryforward of only $30,000 this fiscal year.

So … and now I'm going back and picking up the thread of addressing high inflating titles on a case by case basis … CM is developing a methodology to provide subject specialists with **[slide]** timely provision of the data that they need to make retention decisions throughout the fiscal year. As SJ&Ds come up for renewal, price increases will be noted and **[slide]** any SJ&Ds that are seen to be inflating over projections will be flagged for review. Subject specialists will need to decide whether to cover the amount over the projections in one of two ways: **[slide]**

- Cancel to cover the additional cost
- Transfer discretionary funds to cover the additional cost

The review and evaluation is expected to trigger dialogue with UO faculty that will provide more understanding about the costs of resources in a given discipline and make transparent the dilemma that the library faces in managing monetary resources within its budget. By taking new aim at the problem of excessive inflation at a more granular level, it is hoped that librarians and faculty can work together to confront the SJ&D crisis, moving away from the pattern of the last 56 years where the library hides the problem as long as possible only to "surprise" the campus with the periodic, disruptive and distasteful prospect of a time consuming cancellation project.

How Does This Work?

So, that's the idea: Subject Specialists will manage serials subscriptions in real time within a fixed budget. The days of focusing solely on spending out discretionary funds and paying little heed to how much the cost of serials are going up are over … probably forever. But, how do we make this work?

The UO implemented the first step in this process during the past fiscal year. **[slide]** In the past, Subject Specialists managed fund lines in the structure that I'm calling "Old Method":

1-line: Monographs
2-line: Subscriptions: serials/databases
3-line: New serials
4-line: Standing Orders
5-line: Approval plan, if applicable

Going forward, the fund line structure will use a "New Method":

1-line: Discretionary
2-line: Recurring obligations
4-line: Standing Orders
5-line: Approval plan, if applicable

You can see that the 1- and 3-lines have been combined to create a single discretionary fund line. The 2-line contains no discretionary money and is entirely devoted to subscriptions. The big change for Subject Specialists is that the distinction between a separate pot of money to purchase books and a separate pot of money to buy new serials has been dissolved. All new resources of any type must be purchased from the discretionary 1-line. If the purchase involves a recurring commitment, then money will be transferred from the 1-line to the 2-line to cover the expense.

Under this new arrangement, if a 2-line resource is cancelled, the amount that the library last paid for the resource will be credited to the 1-line, unless the cancellation is to be applied to cover the cost of inflation. This means that 1-line allocations will fluctuate from year to year instead of remaining consistent. In the past, everyone spent out the 1-lines and received an identical allocation for monograph purchases at the start of the subsequent fiscal year. Acquisitions will use an internal spreadsheet to track transfers back and forth between fund lines, and this information will be used to set the budget allocations for the next fiscal year.

To Summarize: [slide]

- Subject Specialists assume responsibility for managing inflationary increases
- Inflationary increases over the amount given to the library for covering general inflation will be covered through cancellation or moving 1-line funds; this will be a choice left to the Subject Specialist

Notes:

- Inflation on titles locked into package deals (bundled titles from a publisher with a multi-year provision and known inflation rates) will be covered centrally as the amount should be known ahead of time

Getting the Work Accomplished:

Knowing how the work will be accomplished is still not enough. CM saw that it needed to establish a mechanism to help Subject Specialists understand how their titles are inflating throughout a given fiscal year. **[slide]**

[Demonstration of Collections Dashboard]
[Serial Expenditures – Excel]
[Pull up architecture titles]

As invoices for SJ&Ds arrive throughout the year, they are loaded into Alma. The dashboard can then be used as demonstrated to gather the last payment, the current payment and the percentage increase or decrease for each resource. My example is working with FY 16 data, so the cells last payment and current payment columns are nearly completed filled in. This won't be the case early in the fiscal year,

so Subject Specialists will not know their over or under until spring—the time when it's customary to make reductions for the new fiscal year.

The information on the screen can be downloaded into Excel for manipulation.

[Pull up Excel spreadsheet]

Subject Specialists can use this tool to track the over/under for the fund line for any given discipline. When you download the results into Excel, it's a simple matter to add a column (highlighted in yellow) that will allow you to track the overall consequences of inflation. In case of my example, the recurring expenditures for Architecture, you can see that costs have increased $843.39 over the course of FY 16. This then is the adjustment that the Subject Specialist needs to make either by moving money from the 1-line to the 2-line or by cancelling $843.39 in subscriptions.

A Few Concluding Thoughts:

[slide] In years, when the UO Libraries actually receives any augments to its collections budget, the infusion will be spread across the fund lines in the form of a percentage increase and Subject Specialists will only need to cover the difference if a publishers charges more than that percentage. For FY 17, the library was given no money to cover inflation, so any increase, no matter how big or small will need to be taken into account—a worst case scenario.

[slide] Years like the one we will heading into have the potential to completely drain all the discretionary money. So, what happens then?

[slide] It seems likely that we will need to take a very hard look at the large packages where we are locked into multi-year contracts. At what point does holding titles in these big deals, where we admittedly can lock in lower inflationary increases, become false economy?

[slide] Will this new level of accountability and management work to stave off disruptive cancellation projects? I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts. **[slide]** Thanks!