Table Talk

Preparing for Big Renovation of a Small Library

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Abstract:

Mount Allison is a primarily undergraduate university with an average intake of 2200 full-time students. The university is a member of the Novanet consortium, which shares an ILS, Ex Libris Alma, and collections across 12 libraries in the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, Canada. Mount Allison’s main library branch is the Ralph Pickard Bell Library, built in 1970, which holds all collections, several rare and special collections, and the university archives. There is a separate branch for the music collection, The Alfred Whitehead Music Library, in the Music Conservatory. The RPB Library building itself has never been renovated or updated, so the renovation plan is to gut the entire building. This will temporarily displace the library’s services and collections. No major deselection practices have taken place in many years (decades), so the entire five floors of the library are bursting with collections. Mount Allison just recently appointed a new Dean of Libraries, Rachel Rubin, who has been instrumental in aiding librarians to update collections policies and assess and measure collection space. This has allowed the librarians to set goals in their chosen areas to downsize collections. The humble budget does not include any funding for digitizing or converting formats of titles, yet continuous collection building is expected annually.

Discussion Questions:

Q1. In a limited time, how would you assess collection areas, without having to assess item by item?

Q2. What assessment tools would you recommend other than the data tools we are all familiar with?

Q3. In terms of withdrawing substantial amounts of items, how would you dispose of these collections?

Q4. Are there any project management tools you would recommend for major deselection projects?

Q5. In terms of the building functionality itself, what are the most important services and holdings a library should consider including in a newly renovated facility?

Q6. In terms of funding, would you consider an acquisitions freeze?