

Different Departments, Same Goals:

Improving User Experience through Collaboration

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Abstract

The staff of Reference and Research Services at Edith Garland Dupré Library, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, determined that instructors and students of the School of Music & Performing Arts had difficulty locating scores for particular pieces of music because there were no contents notes in the catalog records. Reference brought this to the Cataloging Department's attention and suggested editing MARC record contents notes in SirsiDynix Workflows themselves. The Cataloging Department considered the feasibility of this course of action as well as other alternatives, such as purchasing enhanced records from a vendor. Ultimately, the Cataloging Department discovered a workflow using MarcEdit and OCLC Connexion batch processing that automated the editing for some of the records. This method had a fast turnaround time at no cost. After completion, Reference and Cataloging staff worked together and determined a workflow for manually enhancing the remaining records. Partnerships between public services and technical services improves user experience and fulfills the mission of the library.

Keywords: Academic libraries, public services, technical services, collaboration,
MarcEdit, SirsiDynix

Introduction

Interdepartmental communication is essential for a library to reach its mission goals. Indeed, “one of the biggest roadblocks to breaking down silos is not staff resistance but lack of information sharing” (Kowalski, 2017, p. 3). Trust, respect, and professionalism create an environment of open communication without fear of reprisal. It is an opportunity to play by new rules, break boundaries, and demonstrate the abilities and expertise of each department.

Background

The Reference and Research Services staff identified a need for a listing of contents within music scores. Dupré Library had a score collection numbering roughly 8,500 titles. Researchers found that many of the catalog records were brief. Instructors and students from the School of Music & Performing Arts often had a particular musical composition in mind when searching. When the catalog information was lacking, some researchers approached the Reference staff. Staff assisted them by searching in the catalog, locating the physical item, and paging through the score to locate song titles.

Reference approached the Cataloging staff and asked if Reference could take on the project of enhancing the records. With Cataloging’s approval and guidance, Reference planned to consult the physical copies of scores and enter the titles into the integrated library system, SirsiDynix Symphony, for display in the online public access catalog (OPAC). The Head of Cataloging agreed with Reference staff that this would be a worthy task, as enhancement of the records would yield better search results, reflecting trends in the literature:

[E]nhanced records on items sent to remote storage were three times more likely

to be recalled than those with unenhanced records. Increased usage clearly demonstrated the value of the work. Increased circulation of collections that receive genre headings, additional subject headings, tables of contents, etc. will help support the need for cataloging. (“Cataloging as a Public Service,” 2017)

However, Cataloging considered the feasibility of this endeavor due to the scope of the collection and investigated different alternatives to the solution, such as outsourcing the record enhancements to a vendor. Carver (2002) notes that “By relying on the expertise of reference colleagues and trusting them to find areas that need improvement, catalogers can focus on the details” (p. 170). Ultimately, Cataloging determined there was a way to automate the workload in-house at no cost.

Methodology

Cataloging discovered more robust MARC records were available through OCLC Connexion and set about determining how these particular set of records were going to be extracted and imported in the ILS. A file of MARC records was exported from the ILS by running an Extract Keys for MARC Export report, searching on item type. Next, the file was manipulated by MarcEdit, a free batch-editing tool. The program was “originally created by Terry Reese at the University of Oregon in 1999 to aid in a massive library database cleanup” (Cook, 2014, p. 24). Records were filtered and edited with MarcEdit. Next, the resulting file was imported into OCLC Connexion. Then, the resulting MARC records were collocated and loaded back into the ILS. This enhanced about 1,000 records. Finally, the remaining files with no content notes in WorldCat were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet and given to Reference along with instructions for basic record editing.

For the remaining, unenhanced records, a workflow had to be created for the

Reference department. The team needed to accomplish two things: first, the enhancements had to serve a lay audience in addition to a technical services audience, and second, the enhancement creation and submission process needed to be streamlined in order to implement the project without overly burdening already busy librarians. The Reference staff suggested meeting in person to clarify goals and processes and to understand different viewpoints. During the meeting, compromises were made. The Reference staff wanted to enhance folders of scores with multiple leaves; however, Cataloging felt that the project should start with volumes that contained a printed table of contents. Regardless of differences and disagreements, open discussion was encouraged. Truly, without Reference's insight and communication, Cataloging would have never known there was an issue with locating materials. Additionally, without communication with Cataloging, Reference would not have known there was a more efficient way to update the records.

Communication, interaction, and ultimately cooperation require that departments understand each other's work environment, restrictions, rules, procedures, and timelines. For example, deadlines are paramount in Collection Development and Acquisition Departments, and daily schedules are just as important to Instruction and Access Services Librarians, for whom deadlines don't have the same meaning as order deadlines or end of fiscal year deadlines, while standards are the way of life for Cataloging Departments. Understanding these conditions and respecting each other's set of rules is the first step in successful interaction and cooperation. (Bordeinau, 2013, p. 3)

Recommendations

The team identified several strategies that will aid in future interdepartmental collaboration. First, meet regularly from the beginning. “Nothing is more frustrating for reference librarians than expending a considerable amount of time and energy on how to handle a new resource or on the need for a new location code in the catalog, only to have the catalogers say it is not possible. Often the result of such a scenario is resentment on both sides” (Carver, 2002, p. 169).

Furthermore, trust each department’s expertise and unique viewpoints. Ultimately, each department has the institution’s best interests in mind. “Cooperation occurs when individuals realize the interrelatedness of their decisions and actions—developing an awareness of an organizational ecology of interlinking subsystems—and purposefully act to coordinate their efforts to help alleviate difficulties or facilitate processes within another subsystem” (Jankowska, 2003, p. 134).

In addition, consult with a systems administrator. The administrator may have to set up an account for the ILS for reference staff that do not normally work with the program. Finally, consult freely-available resources such as listservs and YouTube training videos. Listservs such as MarcEdit and OCLC and their archives are valuable resources, especially when taking on new projects.

Conclusion

For the best interests of the library, it is crucial to keep lines of communication open and work professionally and collaboratively. Each department has unique areas of expertise. Through open communication, solutions may be discovered serendipitously. Reference felt comfortable with approaching Cataloging with a cataloging-related issue.

Cataloging and Reference worked together with their respective technical and public service skills to find a solution to the problem. As a result, the library users benefited by having an easier and more efficient user experience.

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