

11-1-2016

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Adding and Slashing Serials

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Abstract

During a time of stagnating budgets and rising journal costs, Central Washington University's Brooks Library evaluated and added a popular print magazine collection and worked with faculty to eliminate redundant and low-use resources. The process of identifying the need, researching, evaluating, and gaining student input for popular magazines to be added to a recently opened coffee shop is addressed first. Secondly, the systematic approach the library used to identify journal titles received in multiple formats and low-use/high-cost resources then worked with faculty to change access models to realize a net savings is discussed. Throughout, insights are provided into the processes used to identify titles for possible elimination and the methods used to develop a popular magazine collection.

Adding a Popular Magazine Collection

Introduction

In January 2016, Central Washington University's (CWU) James E. Brooks Library opened a coffee shop in the library. The coffee shop, named Jimmy B's, is located on the first floor of the building in a fairly high-traffic area. Prior to the opening of Jimmy B's, the Serials and Electronic Resources department realized this was an opportunity to reintroduce a popular magazine collection to the library. During previous budget reductions, all leisure magazines were discontinued. With Jimmy B's creating a relaxing environment for students to take a break from studying, making popular, or leisure, magazines available provided a great avenue to potentially increase library usage and further improve the library as place on campus.

The initial idea of creating the popular magazine collection was put forward in the Serials and Electronic Resources strategic plan for fiscal year 2016 (July 1, 2015–June 30, 2016). The goal read "Provide a browsing collection of popular magazines, either in print or digitally" and included a number of milestones, such as gaining student input, evaluating costs, selecting a location, and preparing a proposal. It was soon determined that a print popular magazine collection would best serve our campus' needs and create a traditional coffee shop feel at Jimmy B's.

Process

Identifying titles to include was a three-part process. The first step involved completing a literature review of magazines that are popular with college students.

As there was not much scholarly research done in this area, general resources were used to gather this information. Next, feedback from students was collected using a whiteboard placed in the entryway of the library. The whiteboard is often in the entryway and is used to gain student feedback on a variety of topics. The question posed to students on popular magazine titles was "What popular magazines should The Brooks Library subscribe to?" This question was left up for just over a week, when a student worker from Serials and Electronic Resources recorded the responses.

The responses from the whiteboard survey were correlated with the list of titles gathered from the literature review. There were some titles suggested on the whiteboard survey that were already part of the collection, such as *National Geographic*, which informed us that better promotion of currently available materials was needed. After comparing the survey results with the literature review, a list with titles appearing on both was developed. Using this list, an online survey was created using Qualtrics, a survey platform subscribed to by CWU. A couple titles that were not mentioned by students in the whiteboard survey but found in the literature review were included in the Qualtrics as they were generally popular or broad titles, such as *The Week*. The online survey listed 12 titles and asked students to select which titles they would read and/or browse if they were available at the Brooks Library (Figure 1). Students were able to select as many titles as desired. There was an additional question where students could enter titles not on the list they would like to see at the Brooks Library. A link to the survey was posted on the Brooks Library's homepage and on social media sites for the Library.

Please select which popular magazines you would read and/or browse if they were available at the Brooks Library
(select all that apply)

Discover	Rolling Stone
Cosmo	GQ
Game Informer	Women's Health
Vogue	Sports Illustrated
The Week	People
Glamour	Men's Fitness

Is there a popular magazine not listed that you would like to see at the Brooks Library?

Figure 1. Online survey.

After the online survey closed, with 15 responses, a list of titles was created based on the results of the literature review, whiteboard survey, and online survey. Titles were included based on their presence on both surveys, as they provided direct student feedback, and to a lesser extent in the literature review. No titles were included that were not listed on either student survey. Lastly, titles were included only if they were available through EBSCO, CWU's serials

subscription agent. This choice was made as it would create the least burden on staff by having all titles ordered through one vendor and would thus streamline the ordering, billing, and claiming process. The impact from this decision was minimal, with alternative titles often available through EBSCO. *ESPN Magazine*, for example, is not available, while *Sports Illustrated* is. The list identified from the two surveys and literature review included the following titles:

Cosmopolitan
Discover
Game Informer
GQ
Men's Fitness
People
Rolling Stone
Sports Illustrated
Vogue
The Week
Women's Health

After the list of identified titles was created, pricing for each title was obtained from EBSCONET, and a proposal was created and taken to the collection management and development committee. The proposal included recommended titles, subscription intervals, pricing, and the number of times identified on each survey. The proposal was for the cost to come from the serials and electronic resources budget, with some possible future funds provided from revenue from Jimmy B's. There was some debate on certain titles on the list, mainly focused on women's magazines, with some committee members opposed to specific titles due to their content and/or images. In the end, all titles were approved on the basis that the library does not censor materials, and all included titles were identified through two rounds of surveys that showed student interest in them in addition to their presence in a general literature review. The location for the popular magazine collection at Jimmy B's was briefly discussed and approved, though without specifics.

During the committee discussion, it was noted that the titles did not fully represent the diversity of CWU's student population, and it would be valuable to have a more inclusive collection. The committee approved the proposed title list as is, with the direction that two committee members would explore additional magazines that would be relatable to diverse and underrepresented populations and groups on campus.

The initial proposed title list was taken to Library Council, the Brooks Library's main committee, for approval. The proposal passed with limited discussion, and the dean announced that funds for the initial year of the popular magazine collection would be provided by the library administration. The serials and electronic resources department was instructed to work with the Jimmy B's staff on an appropriate location for the magazines.

The committee members tasked with identifying diverse titles to include in the collection performed an additional literature review focused on titles for diverse and underrepresented student populations and reached out to various campus groups that are associated with underrepresented populations. As no diverse titles were listed on either the white board or online survey, it was necessary for library staff to use their professional collection development judgement, with the limited feedback received from campus groups to create a second title list. This list was shared with the Serials and Electronic Resources department so they could determine which titles were available through EBSCO and the pricing for each title. A list was created with the following titles:

Alma Magazine
Azizah
Ebony
Islamic Horizons
News from Indian Country
Out

This list was taken to both the Collection Management and Development Committee and Library Council, where it was approved for inclusion in Jimmy B's popular magazine collection. All 17 approved titles from both lists were ordered, at a cost of just under \$900 per year. Additionally, serials and electronic resources staff met with Jimmy B's staff to identify a location for the popular magazines upon their arrival. It was determined that a three-sided rotating wire mesh display rack would be ordered for the magazines so that their location at Jimmy B's could easily be moved in the future. The wire mesh was chosen as it would allow library users to easily see what magazines are available.

Display and Assessment

With the arrival of each issue, it is barcoded and received in Ex Libris Alma, consistent with all serial titles. All titles are for in-library use only and receive a bright yellow sticker that states "Library Use Only." A separate collection for Jimmy B's was created for the collection to allow for easy tracking of use, expenses, and discovery of the titles. Furthermore, predictive check-in for each title was set up in Alma so staff could easily identify and claim missing issues. The most recent four issues of each title are made available at Jimmy B's, with older issues being moved to a display shelf in the Serials area.

Quarterly, the oldest issues are gathered from the serials display shelf and given to the Art Department. This process provides library users with two areas of the library to find and enjoy popular magazines, and through sharing older issues with the Art Department, the library has the opportunity to collaborate with another department as well as provide an additional use for old magazines instead of the recycling bin.

As all titles are barcoded, they are evaluated for use. Near the rotating display rack, there is a “return here” box. Any titles placed here or left on nearby tables are scanned by the circulation staff for in-house use. Issues available in the Serials department are treated similarly, which allows for the Serials and Electronic Resources department to evaluate the use of the collection. As magazines only began arriving in late spring, just before the end of the academic year, currently there is limited usage data available, of which we estimate to be rather low due to many users returning the magazines to the display rack themselves when finished. Once data is available for use throughout an academic year, we will be able to more accurately evaluate the usage of titles in the Jimmy B’s collection and determine if any changes are needed.

Collection Evaluation

Introduction

Throughout the period the popular magazine proposal was brought forward, the entire Serials and Electronic Resources budget was evaluated for cost-savings opportunities. This was done in response to subscription costs rising at unsustainable rates, stagnating university budgets, and the desire to have funds available to explore adding new resources, such as the popular magazine collection. A systematic approach based on usage data and title overlap was used to identify possible titles for deselection.

Print Serials Review

The review of the Serials and Electronic Resources collection began with examining usage statistics of print journals, as well as the availability of each print title in digital format. The most striking part of the collection evaluation was the number of print titles with duplicated formats. Many print titles were also available in digital format, with a small number also obtained in microfilm. Of the serials titles received in

print at the time of evaluation, just under half were already subscribed to digitally. Based on the extremely low usage of the print serials collection, a proposal was developed that all titles that were already subscribed to digitally should be discontinued in print. This list included prominent titles such as *Science*, *Nature*, and microfilm versions of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Wall Street Journal*, and some local newspapers.

The proposal for cutting individual print titles included their usage for just over one year. This time frame was used, as in December 2014, CWU migrated to Ex Libris Alma, and past usage data was not always available. The data still provided a significant overview of usage to assist in the evaluation. Additionally, as the proposal was not to eliminate any of these titles but simply to discontinue one format, it was hoped that there would be minimal resistance. In addition to the usage data, the proposal included the current price paid for both the print and online versions, the estimated cost savings of moving to online only, the usage of the online titles, and the availability of the title online. This was valuable to show if perpetual access was available, and what date ranges for each title would be available online.

During the review of print titles also available online, the entire print collection was evaluated for online availability. Some print titles were not available as online subscriptions, and while some were found available in general databases, the availability was not considered stable enough to propose discontinuing the print. There was a small amount of titles identified that could be moved online, though this process would create a net cost, not a net savings. Based on anecdotal comments from numerous exchanges with faculty and staff, digital is the preferred format due to its 24/7 availability and user-friendliness. Therefore, using some of the cost savings from discontinuing duplicate formats, a proposal was developed to move a small number of print only titles to digital only. This proposal also included evaluating similar titles, such as *The New England Journal of Medicine* and *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and determining if both titles were needed. The proposal brought forward included moving only *The Journal of the American Medical Association* online, while entirely canceling *The New England Journal of Medicine*. This cancellation also assisted in offsetting some higher costs of digital subscriptions over print subscriptions.

Electronic Resources Review

COUNTER usage statistics for individually subscribed journal titles and usage for databases were examined to identify any low-use and/or high-cost-per-use titles. This process used usage statistics from Ex Libris USTAT and EBSCO Usage Consolidation, a service that was identified to be eliminated due to it duplicating the functionality of USTAT, and involved looking at overall usage and cost per use. The proposal for electronic resources included usage data for up to four years (or the usage data available), cost, cost per use for that time period, and if the title was also currently available elsewhere in CWU's holdings. Only titles with extremely low usage, from zero to 10 uses per year, and titles with a cost per use of over \$25/use were included in the proposal. These numbers were selected as the titles included would represent a significant cost savings, though without eliminating a large number of titles. Titles that were on the border were often included, while some titles that were over \$25/use were removed as they did see significant use, as their subscription price was high enough to put them over the cost per use threshold.

Proposal and Feedback

These proposals were brought to library faculty meetings for discussion. At this point, the discussion was based on if specific items should be brought to individual departments for consideration or not. A small number of titles were removed from the list due to significance in the field. One additional, relatively new database was removed to allow more time for promotion of the resource to see if usage could be increased. After a consensus on titles was reached by library faculty, each librarian was responsible for contacting their liaison department representatives regarding titles proposed for cancellation. It was up to each liaison how much information they shared and how, though a sample draft e-mail with an explanation for the proposed reductions was shared. Most information was shared via e-mail, though all liaisons also offered to meet in person or attend department meetings to present the proposals.

Some departments were receptive and quickly agreed to the proposals. Other departments asked

for additional information, statistics, or further rationale for the changes. Some departments did not respond at all. For departments that were unresponsive, several e-mails were sent to the department representative to the library, then additional e-mails were sent to the department chair. For the very limited departments that still did not respond, a final e-mail was sent stating that if no response was received the proposal would move forward. There was also very limited, though strong, resistance to any changes, which required additional exchanges and meetings. At each step, library faculty offered as much information as possible and continuously offered to attend department meetings to provide more details. In the end, the library worked with apprehensive departments on title swaps instead of cancellations. While the library did not generally see substantial cost savings with these, we were happy to spend funds on titles that may see some usage, instead of continuing to subscribe to titles with consistently little to no usage.

Conclusion

Changes to collections, both additions and cancellations, can encounter resistance and be difficult to implement. The Brooks Library was able to provide a popular magazine collection in conjunction with a recently opened coffee shop through gaining student input and developing a browsing collection to meet their general interests. Canceling titles was more complicated and less fun. From this process, we learned to start early, have more data than you think you need, and be prepared to negotiate with hesitant departments. Having departments take ownership of low-usage titles through them developing proposals for title exchanges or maintaining low-use titles allowed for creating their buy-in to developing a sustainable collection for moving forward. This also allowed the library to become a partner with the departments on ways to increase usage, while also providing a venue to say that if usage doesn't increase in the coming year resources will be canceled. Overall, both processes were productive, informative, and allowed us to interact with additional groups on campus while creating a more sustainable, user friendly, and curriculum-centered collection.