

RBMS Public Services Discussion Group

NOTES

ALA Midwinter Meeting

Saturday, January 24, 2009

4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Colorado Convention Center Room 401

Conveners: Susan Walker, Yale University (recorder)

Margaret Tenney, University of Texas at Austin

In attendance: Nicolette A Dobrowolski, Syracuse University; Oksana Kraus, Cleveland Public Library; Helice Koffler, University of Washington; Josh Sorensen, BYU; Liz Chapman, UCL; Christine Megowan, Loyola Marymount University; Jennifer McIntosh, Casper College; Charles Getchell, Quinnipiac University; Kimberly S. Burton, UNC SILS; Laila Miletic-Vejzovic, University of Central Florida; Melissa Conway, University of California, Riverside; Carla Rickerson, University of Washington; Ann Myers, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; Steve MacLeod, University of California, Irvine; Kasia Leousis, Washington University; Elsa Feiring, Pratt Institute; Eva Guggemos, Beinecke-Yale; David Faulds, Emory University; Athena Jackson, RBMS co-chair 08-10; Jeffrey Marshall, University of Vermont; Mark I Greenberg, USFL; Jessica Pigza, NYPL; Susan Fagan; Joellen Dickie, Newberry Library; Moira Fitzgerald, Beinecke, Yale; Jeffrey Makala, University of South Carolina; Lois Fischer Black, Lehigh University; Alvan Bregman, University of Illinois, Deborah Cribbs, St. Louis Mercantile Library at UMSL; Lois White, Getty Research Library

Welcome and Introductions

Announcements

David Faulds – Job opening—Coordinator of Research Services at Emory.

(<http://web.library.emory.edu/services/hr/CoordinatorofResearchServices.html>). Margaret Tenney: Ransom Center is in the process of customizing the Aeon Special Collections Circulation Tracking system software. She will report more on the implementation at Annual.

Discussion Topics:

Core Competencies and Public Service

Digitization, after last summer's preconference

Exhibits and Public Services

I. Core Competencies

[http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/core_competencies/index.shtml]

The group discussed how the new “core competencies” fit into public services staff searching and if current staff comply.

Discussion centered around the difficulty of maintaining a secure environment and monitoring handling practices in the Reading Room with reduced staff and with greater

demands on staff time. When asked a majority of the attendees indicated their institutions were under hiring freezes. Coping mechanisms included trying to convince staff not to leave or retire. Difficulties in training and continuing education of both professional and para-professional staff was also discussed.

Training suggestions included bringing in subject specialists from the University departments to train staff; using existing technology that is already available to increase outreach, such as blogs, YouTube “A Minute with a Curator”, videos, and interactive calendars of events.

One University was hiring an outreach librarian with the task of exploring ways to connect the University to the wider community, not only to spread the word about what they have in their collections but also to develop collaboration.

Discussion moved more toward outreach at this point with most agreeing that we need to set realistic expectations in this financial climate. Suggestions included going out into the classrooms with materials and Power Point presentations, also visits from curators and subject specialists and collaboration between public services and subject specialists/curators to write letters of invitation to the different departments.

Other topics in this section of discussion centered on security and how different Reading Rooms were coping with security. There was great variation depending on the size of the institution and the number of staff members.

II. Digitization, after last summer’s preconference

Discussion centered on digital topics and how last summer’s pre-conference had impacted procedures. Some of the topics discussed included:

The group was questioned about how they handle born digital collections – One institution was serving patrons born digital manuscript collections. The digital archivist assists the patron; the archivist brings the patron a specific laptop and the patron then accesses read only files on a specified server. No more input from other institutions.

One library has a new program to digitize materials and a digital project to scan 200,000 items. Discussion included how to retrieve images and which images to save. Libraries offering digital images to patrons reported orders were processed much faster and the procedure was popular with patrons.

Discussion continued on the topic of Access and whether and how best to retain low res scans.

One library is using CONTENTdm Digital Collection Management Software by OCLC but expressed hesitancy about putting disposable images into it.

Another institution provides scans for no charge and have scanner at the Reading Room desk. These are one-offs but they do keep them. They feel it is worth making a concentrated effort to get in i-space.

One Reading Room does minimal photocopying but never for bound materials. Currently they keep every scanned image. Technology services make an original high res. scan then they provide the patron with whatever quality scan they want.

At another university, if it’s suitable, they will do a substantial part of a book and put it into an Open Content Alliance (subscription) file. They then send the patron a password to access the images from OCA.

One university scans entire items whether or not the entire item was requested. Another recently scanned to Internet Archive a collection of Spanish plays.

Turnaround time differed between libraries, ranging from less than 72 hours to 3-4 weeks. User-supplied comments and metadata enhancement was also made possible in some instances. In other libraries, reluctance on the part of systems departments to provide support hampered implementation of enhancements.

Exhibits and Public Services:

Discussion centered on the demands on Public Services staff by exhibits and programs. Many participants indicated they had dedicated exhibit space but not too many had Curators. For many the responsibility for mounting exhibits was included as a part of their duties.

At one university they have exhibit committees. The responsibility rotates among curators, librarians, and conservators. Exhibit topics are based on what's going on on campus. They plan two years in advance and mount three exhibits a year. They also have some exhibits based on the book arts. Some are student-curated and are part of a class. Some ways in which mounting exhibits affect Public services staff included preparing suggested reading follow-up lists, creating programs related to the exhibits and conducting tours.

Another university reported having no curators or budget. They are successful with staff participation concentrating on personal interests. There is also input from grad students, faculty, and staff. They get lots of positive comments and staff loves it.

The group expressed some concern for the amount of time exhibits preparation takes up. There was stress on having slick-looking exhibits but little money or staff to do them. Some participants suggested that their efforts to have involvement from graduate students, visiting faculty, and interns was very productive.

Overall there was also some discussion on the corresponding pressure on Conservation staff. Also mentioned was the need to increase the quality of the exhibits as related to development and galas as well as sources of funding. It was mentioned by several people that their university librarians/directors see exhibits as related to development.

The discussion ended at 5:30.

Respectfully submitted by Susan Walker and Margaret Tenney