Automation and Technical Services Organization

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The pre-automation era dictated that functions be organized around physical files. These files retained order information, contained bibliographic holdings and maintained auditing and accounting records. These files also encouraged the traditional divisions of technical services: cataloging and acquisitions. As we automate, files begin to disappear, and as they disappear, so do the traditional organizational structures with which we are familiar. Departments begin to merge, the sharp lines marking divisions begin to blur, and work becomes interrelated.

There are many factors about automation that prompt reorganization and that must be considered in the process, and I will highlight four of them. The primary goal should be the streamlining of functions, and this might very well be the basis on which any reorganization is planned. It is important to make sure that duplication of effort is eliminated, i.e., that the same person does not have to handle the material twice and that the item moves through technical services in an organized way. Cost-effectiveness also comes into the picture, both in terms of human resource allocation as well as the actual cost of searches, record transfers, and bibliographic utilities. In addition, automation has provided for immediate access to all we do in technical services. The patron is able to track how a book is acquired and cataloged virtually every step of the way. How our orders look and how the database is maintained suddenly take on a more global meaning. Finally, the integrated database binds all of our functions together. One record is used for order, receipt, and cataloging. Therefore, whatever we do in one section automatically affects the work of another. It is that integration which one needs to exploit. No longer can one department work in a vacuum because of this interrelatedness of function.

The reorganization of technical services at Syracuse University coincided, for the most part, with a physical reconfiguration of the library building itself. This greatly facilitated our reorganization, as past history, in terms of physical surrounding, was soon shed. We moved from a basement to beautiful fifth floor headquarters, with windows and carpeting. Prior to July, 1991, the technical services division was traditionally organized. We had a cataloging and an acquisitions department, physically separated by an enormous shelflist. Each department had a head and reported to the Associate University Librarian for Technical Services. The two departments shared a bank of eight OCLC terminals. There were scattered shared terminals throughout both departments that accessed a home-grown system, which has since been replaced by NOTIS. With our physical reconfiguration, the shelflist was discretely placed in a far corner of the room, so that any attempt at barriers was eliminated. The eight OCLC terminals grew to

ten and were placed into three smaller clusters rather than one. In addition, every staff member now has a terminal at his/her desk to access NOTIS.

In July, 1991, we combined acquisitions and cataloging into one department, and called that department Bibliographic Services. The new department is divided into three units and one section: the Monograph Unit, the Serials Unit, the Receiving/Accounting Unit, and the Database Management Section. All three units and the one section report to the Head of Bibliographic Services (Figure 1).***FIGURE IS OMITTED IN THIS FORMATED DOCUMENT

The first step in our reorganization was the combination of the receiving and accounting sections into one unit in May, 1991, and this is the one unit where a true merger has taken place. This merge was precipitated by the implementation of NOTIS, and as I said earlier, a desire to streamline and not duplicate effort. Within the NOTIS system, receiving and paying is done at the same time. The individual calls up a record, receives it, creates an invoice, and indicates payment at one time. Prior to our combining of these sections, the book would have been received by one section, then moved down the hall to a different section, which would have had to retrieve the very same record for payment purposes. The duplication would have been wasteful and foolish. We have one further link and that is between the library and university accounting. That is an electronic link-all invoice payments made by the library interface with the university's accounting office. Whatever we do, and vice versa, affects the other. Again, the interrelatedness of function is apparent.

It was two months after the creation of the Receiving/Accounting Unit that the former acquisitions and cataloging departments were merged into one. The Monograph Unit comprises monographic searchers and catalogers from the two former departments. As the database was integrated, and as searchers begin to actually select OCLC records for transfer into the local system, it became more evident that the database was a shared resource. Each section of this Unit realized that what one did directly affected the other's work. Since good communication and the ability to share in the decision-making process are crucial, it was clear that the decision to merge was a sound one. Training is also shared as searchers learn cataloging rules in greater detail. We notice more of a concern on the part of searchers that they are choosing the records that catalogers want to use. They are much more aware of and sensitive to cataloging rules and interpretations as they constantly ask which is the better record to choose, and it is in this way their training continues. We have even asked catalogers to do some preorder searching. That was an eye-opener as they realized the difficulty of selecting an OCLC record without the book in hand. This type of flexibility of staffing was not possible prior to the merging of the two departments. There is also a greater implicit trust in the work of the preorder searchers on the part of the catalogers. They trust that the record selected was the proper one to choose. With a paper search history no longer accompanying each book that trust needs to become implicit.

Serials functions were combined during this reorganization as well. The Serials Unit now comprises serials receiving, serials adds, and serials cataloging. As we proceed with NOTIS and the closing of the serials shelflist, we have now begun to merge the serials receiving and adding functions. Again, the reason is to eliminate the duplication of effort. It seems redundant to have the receiver receive an issue of a periodical, and not just, on the same NOTIS record number, create the volume holding as well. Why pass the issue along to a different individual? Within

serials, acquisitions, adds, and cataloging are, as Jennifer A. Younger and D. Kaye Gapen say, "so intertwined as to be inseparable" [1]. They continue to ask the question: why spend time separating the problems?

Technical Services has a much greater profile in libraries with integrated systems. We realize that whatever we do affects public services. The way we record current receipts, the way we indicate which volume is on order, the way we list our volume holdings all have a public profile. It is partially for this reason that the Database Management Section has been created; its prime goal is to maintain the integrity of the database. They are responsible for authority control as well as error detection and correction. This section also incorporates serials maintenance functions as well. This is one more way we have worked toward a true combination of not only departments but functions. This is an important section because it works to assure that the same records all of the other sections have worked on somehow fit into the larger database properly. It is a way of assuring quality as well as accuracy.

The benefits of the combined department have revealed themselves through some recent projects we have undertaken. A recent library-wide weeding project called upon searchers, receivers, catalogers, and serials staff as well as database management to come up with a shared set of procedures to work together to ensure the withdrawal of weeded titles. In the past, this would have crossed departmental lines and as a result, would not have gone so smoothly. Probably the burden would have fallen only upon the old cataloging department. In addition, recent training sessions for OCLC's Prism called upon the cooperation of supervisors from three sections to work as one to develop and implement training. Again, this cooperation might not have been possible prior to our reorganization.

We have come a long way. The single department approach has resulted in a staff working together for the good of the library patron. Our shared automated functions have led to a mutual concern for the database. We are all a part of the end product and work together to ensure its quality and integrity. But, what might the future hold in terms of technical services organization?

There are several products and innovations which are mandating additional change in the traditional technical service divisions that we have in our libraries. One is online access to vendor and publisher bibliographic tools, as well as EDI. We are also able to access bibliographic records beyond our own local online databases via the Internet. This ability has significant implications for searching, cataloging, and collection development. In addition, we have the prospect of workstations where the staff member can search, transfer a record, create and receive an order, and perform interlibrary loan functions. This ability to integrate acquiring, cataloging, and borrowing functions into one functionary work area has far-reaching implications. Will we be seeing a marriage of ILL, document delivery, and acquisitions? If we order periodical titles on subscription, is it so different ordering an article as well, for the library? for the patron?

Finally, technical service functions are becoming scattered throughout public service areas, and I strongly believe this is what the future holds in store for us. As our automated systems grow more and more sophisticated, so do they grow in interrelationship. The amount of detail that public services needs to know about how the system works increases to the same extent for

technical services as we need to understand the demands and wishes of our patrons. The amount of information that the automated system is capable of increases that demand for crossover. The fine line that, divided both divisions is disappearing. This, I believe, is a contributing factor in a trend toward the decentralization of technical service functions. Many of our branch libraries are beginning to check in periodical issues and create item records.

Departments are transferring titles and assuming the technical responsibility for that as well. Other branches are cataloging maps and documents, and I see a future where bibliographers in collection development will soon have the capability of placing orders into the database for retrieval by the technical services staff for final verification and placement. The role that technical services will play once decentralization is taken further still needs to be established. How we insure the quality of functions once these functions are scattered throughout the campus and what our roles as technical service librarians will be are the questions that we will be asked to address at some point in the very near future.

Note

1. Younger, Jennifer A. and D. Kaye Gapen. "Technical Services Organization: Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going," Technical Services Today and Tomorrow, ed. Michael Gorrnan. Englewood Cliffs: Libraries Unlimited, 1990, 180.

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