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Collections and Space

An Update on Syracuse University Libraries' Journals Migration Project

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Executive Summary

In May 2014, Syracuse University Libraries began a multi-year project to transfer bound, print journals from Bird Library to the Syracuse University Libraries Facility (“The Facility”), the Libraries’ 20,000 square foot, high-density, climate-controlled scholarship storage vault and processing space located on South Campus.

The purposes of the journals migration project include:

- providing space for new books the Libraries have purchased to meet curricular and research needs;
- improving researchers’ ability to browse print collections;
- making available to students and faculty scholarly purchases worth hundreds of thousands of dollars that were warehoused within Bird Library due to lack of space;
- providing planning flexibility to develop new spaces that meet contemporary curricular demands; and
- reducing inventory capacity to a level below the professional maximum threshold.

To date, the Libraries have transferred to The Facility more than 100,000 volumes, including 7,000 journal titles, across all disciplines. By migrating these journals from Bird Library to The Facility, the Libraries will save the University more than \$1.9 million within five years. Continued strategic use of The Facility helps the Libraries manage principal collections whose aggregate value exceeds \$200 million.

This paper reports on the progress of the Libraries’ journals migration project, provides additional context and data that led to the spring 2014 approval for the project from the provost.

For additional questions about this paper or the journals migration project, please contact Scott Warren, interim Associate Dean for Research and Scholarship, at sawarr01@syr.edu or (315) 443-8339.

A. The Problem of Scholarship Overcrowding in Bird Library

Bird Library opened in September 1972 as a seven floor, 212,000 square foot building, designed by Syracuse firm King+King Architects¹ at a cost of \$13.8 million (Syracuse University Archives, n.d.).

Several changes to Bird Library's initial footprint reduced stack space, and therefore reduced the space allocated for scholarly materials. For example, efforts in the early 1990s to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act regulations (including installation of the staircase between Bird's second and fifth floors) and to create additional study space for students eliminated stacks shelving. To compensate for this loss of shelving, compact shelving was installed in the lower level of Bird Library for up to 300,000 displaced volumes. The Libraries also sent materials from Bird Library to the Hawkins Building for storage.

During the 2006-07 academic year, the Libraries transferred print materials to what is now known as the Cantor Warehouse to make room for classroom construction in the lower level of Bird Library.² In addition, the Libraries removed print volumes from selected journal titles wherever electronic surrogates existed in a trusted archive (such as JSTOR).

In 2010-11, diminishing space and renovation efforts forced the Libraries to remove print journals from Carnegie Library in instances in which the Libraries also paid for access to electronic back files of the same journal.

The Libraries' management did not decide cavalierly to remove or store scholarly materials from Bird or Carnegie libraries. Further, storing materials in the Hawkins Building and the Cantor Warehouse proved not to be scalable, for these locations were neither designed or properly outfitted to hold scholarly materials nor are set up to provide service from their respective locations. None of these measures, however, significantly alleviated the severe inventory overcrowding problem in the Libraries' stacks. In 2014 alone, materials worth more than \$100,000 were unable to be shelved in Bird Library stacks.

¹ Formerly King and King Associates

² The Spector Classrooms opened on Bird Library's lower level in January 2015.

B. The Facility as a Solution to Bird Library Materials Overcrowding

Library shelves are considered at materials capacity when they are 75 percent full. (Battaile 1992: 145-6). When library shelves are at or exceed capacity, a number of problems arise, including users having difficulty locating needed items, materials increasingly being prone to damage, and impaired stacks maintenance (Hubbard 1981: 43).

The Libraries needed to take action to address an increasingly severe space issue, or risk being both professionally irresponsible and grossly negligent. From 2008 through 2012, the Libraries' stacks, both in Bird Library and Carnegie Library, were 60 percent overcapacity. Books routinely were stacked on top of each other on the shelves due to lack of space, and the Libraries had an additional 80 shelves of books located on book carts throughout both buildings because staff had no place to shelve them. Without action, this problem – and the cost to fix it – would only have grown worse with each passing year.

Part of the solution involved building The Facility that houses approximately 1.2 million print volumes at ideal environmental conditions of 50 degrees and 30 percent humidity, significantly extends the life of University scholarly materials and allows for overall growth in the Libraries' print collections. After a ground breaking in 2011, The Facility opened in October 2012 at a cost of \$5 million.

As of this writing, which includes the first phase of the journals migration project, the Libraries shelves remain overcapacity, but overcapacity status has dropped generally from 60 percent to less than 15 percent.

As the Libraries' continue the journals migration plan, the goal is to lower overall shelf capacity to 65 percent – 10 percent under the professional maximum – with 5 percent shelf space for growth by the end of FY2016.

In the aforementioned ideal environmental conditions, the usable life of print materials stored inside The Facility is extended by several hundred years. The Libraries' staff manages and

operates The Facility six days per week, and operate key services such as Articles to Go³ and Library to Go⁴.

C. Bird Library as Book Library

Despite common perceptions to the contrary, Libraries users continue to use print materials – especially books (also called monographs) – extensively. Humanities faculty and students, for example, continue to desire bound, print materials because long-form reading remains a substantive and essential component of their academic work. In part due to this demand, the Libraries acquired more than 47,000 monograph volumes from between 2011 and 2013.

Even with e-book purchasing, the Libraries will continue to acquire print books in substantial numbers for years to come, not only because of curricular needs, but also because our data indicate print book demand far outstrips demand for print journals. Since 2009, University users have browsed books at a rate 15 times greater than journal volumes. During the past six years, University users have registered more than 724,000 circulation transactions for books;⁵ students alone checked out books more than 500,000 times during that time span. These data make it clear that University patrons interact far more with print monographs on the Libraries' shelves than they do with bound print journals, necessitating growth space for them.

Thus, the decision to transfer bound print journals to The Facility and turn Bird and Carnegie libraries into book libraries is based squarely on years of faculty and student choices as captured via Libraries' metrics.

D. Journals Migration Project Scope and Process

After receiving approval from Vice Chancellor and Provost Eric Spina and beginning a comprehensive, staged communications campaign to campus stakeholders in March 2014, the Libraries began the journals migration project in May 2014, immediately after Commencement Weekend. The first part of the project involved moving bound print journals in social sciences and the humanities to The Facility's storage vault. A full itemization of call numbers and

³ Article to Go is the Libraries' scan-and-deliver service. More information is available at http://library.syr.edu/services/getting_help/circulation/article_to_go.php

⁴ Through the Library to Go service, the Libraries deliver physical volumes from The Facility to campus libraries or faculty offices. More information is available at http://library.syr.edu/services/getting_help/circulation/delivery.php

⁵ Monographs can circulate; journals cannot.

subjects impacted by this project appears in Appendix A. The migration continued through late August 2014.

The Libraries, one of the few University academic units that operates on a full schedule year-round, chose summer as the best time for the journals migration project because the number of faculty and students on campus, the number of users in the Libraries' public spaces, and the number of service calls for the journals in the Libraries is at its lowest during the summer.

The journals migration project involves more than simply moving journal volumes from a Libraries' shelf to The Facility storage vault. Every journal title in The Facility must have complete and accurate representation in the Libraries catalog, which requires a thorough review of the existing catalog record; creation of a new catalog record (if needed); and verification, cleaning, and repairing (if needed) of every physical volume of the journal being transferred.

Staffing for this project included Libraries staff with skill sets in cataloging, preservation, stacks management, and access services. Temporary staff, hired per diem, provided the physical labor of bringing journals, as directed, from the stacks to the cataloging unit and, under supervision, shifting the book collections that remained on the shelves. In addition to considerations of user needs and the availability of Libraries and temporary staff, the availability of The Facility staff had to be factored in.

The entire project was a carefully coordinated set of logistics, processes, and staff in several locations. Journals had to be pulled systematically from the Libraries shelves, reviewed in the cataloging unit, repaired in the preservation unit, delivered to The Facility, ingested into the storage vault, and entered into The Facility's records. Journals were pulled at a pace calculated so that only two days elapsed between the journal volumes leaving the Libraries shelves and entering The Facility's storage vault.

The project engaged staff from departments across the Libraries, including Access and Resource Sharing, the Business Services Office, Acquisitions and Cataloging, Preservation, the Program Management Center, and Research and Scholarship.

E. Benefits

The journals migration project has produced a number of benefits for the University. From May to December 2014, the first phase of the project, the Libraries transferred 102,693 physical

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units (7,037 journal titles) to The Facility. The Libraries spent \$114,396 moving this scholarship, including labor and supplies.

Including the first phase of the journals migration, The Facility now holds more than 250,000 items with an estimated value that exceeds \$20 million.

The annual cost of maintaining materials in open stacks in campus libraries is \$4.73 per item. In comparison, the annual cost of storing volumes in a dedicated high-density, climate-controlled storage center such as The Facility is \$0.96 per item (Courant and Nielsen 2010: 91).

By changing the storage location of the journals transferred in this phase, the Libraries will realize an annual savings of \$387,153 for the University. Over a five-year span, this savings totals \$1,935,765.

This first phase of the journals migration project also helped identify missing materials and repair damaged ones, as Libraries staff corrected more than 5,300 catalog items, repaired more than 2,100 volumes, and rehoused 545 volumes.

In addition, the project provides a number of ongoing benefits for the campus community, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Creating shelf space for the ongoing purchase of new books;
- Facilitating browsing and use of the book collection;
- Further unifying Bird Library's principal collection by call number by eliminating Fine Arts Limited Access and Fine Arts Reference sub-collections;
- Capitalizing on the lower cost of storage in The Facility;
- Expanding delivery of scanned articles directly to faculty and students;
- Guaranteed long-term availability of every historic journal volume; and
- Setting the stage for developing Bird Library's second floor into a more flexible space for future service initiatives.

Finally, since the project involves transferring journals to The Facility, and the vast majority of patrons need a particular article rather than the entire journal volume, the Libraries' Articles to Go operation has emerged as a key service in facilitating the continued accessibility to articles that have no electronic surrogates. The service's efficiency and convenience have elicited numerous favorable comments from students and faculty. The consolidation of bound, print journals in The Facility – instead of variously in Bird Library, Carnegie Library, the Architecture Reading Room, the Geology Library, the Warehouse, and Hawkins – makes it far more efficient to manage the Articles to Go service, allowing the Libraries to better realize its service potential to the benefit of the University's students, faculty, associated researchers, and the non-University public we continue to serve.

Conclusion

The Syracuse University Libraries Facility is a strategically important asset that helps the Libraries manage a principal collections portfolio that exceeds 3 million volumes (ALA 2012; NISO 2013) whose aggregate value exceeds \$200 million.

As the Libraries face an increasing number of contemporary challenges – including helping the University manage a dearth of campus study space and changes in the scholarly record (Lavoie, et al. 2014), The Facility will continue to play an integral role in helping the Libraries and the University successfully face these and other transitions. Further, the \$1.9 million savings the Libraries are producing from the journals migration project is consistent with the University's quest for increased efficiency through Fast Forward Syracuse.

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APPENDIX B – Migration by Library of Congress Call Number

As is the standard in most world research libraries, Syracuse University Libraries uses the Library of Congress (LC) classification system to categorize, inventory, and manage its print collection, which exceeds 3 million items and has a value exceeding \$200 million as of December 2014. These totals exclude items within the Libraries' Belfer Audio Archive and Special Collections Research Center.

This phase of the Libraries' journals migration project impacted print scholarship in the following LC call numbers:

Letter	Subject area
B	Philosophy, Psychology, and Religion
D	General and Old World History
E	History of America
F	History of the United States and British, Dutch, French, and Latin America
G	Geography, Anthropology, and Recreation
H	Social Sciences
M	Music
N	Fine Arts
P	Language and Literature