

Syracuse University

SURFACE at Syracuse University

Libraries' and Librarians' Publications

Libraries

11-2-2022

Against Wind and Tide: Alternative Case Studies Reflecting on Subject and Functional Librarians in a Hybrid Reality

Julia Gelfand

University of California, Irvine

Ibironke Lawal

Virginia Commonwealth University

Jill Powell

Cornell University

Anne E. Rauh

Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/sul>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gelfand, Julia, Anne E. Rauh, Jill Hanson Powell, and Ibironke Lawal. "Against Wind and Tide: Alternative Case Studies Reflecting on Subject and Functional Librarians in a Hybrid Reality" presented at the Charleston Conference, Charleston, SC, November 2, 2022.

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Libraries at SURFACE at Syracuse University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Libraries' and Librarians' Publications by an authorized administrator of SURFACE at Syracuse University. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Against Wind and Tide: Alternative Case Studies Reflecting on Subject and Functional Librarians in a Hybrid Reality



Julia Gelfand
University of
California, Irvine



Ibironke Lawal
Virginia
Commonwealth
University



Jill Powell
Cornell University



Anne Rauh
Syracuse University

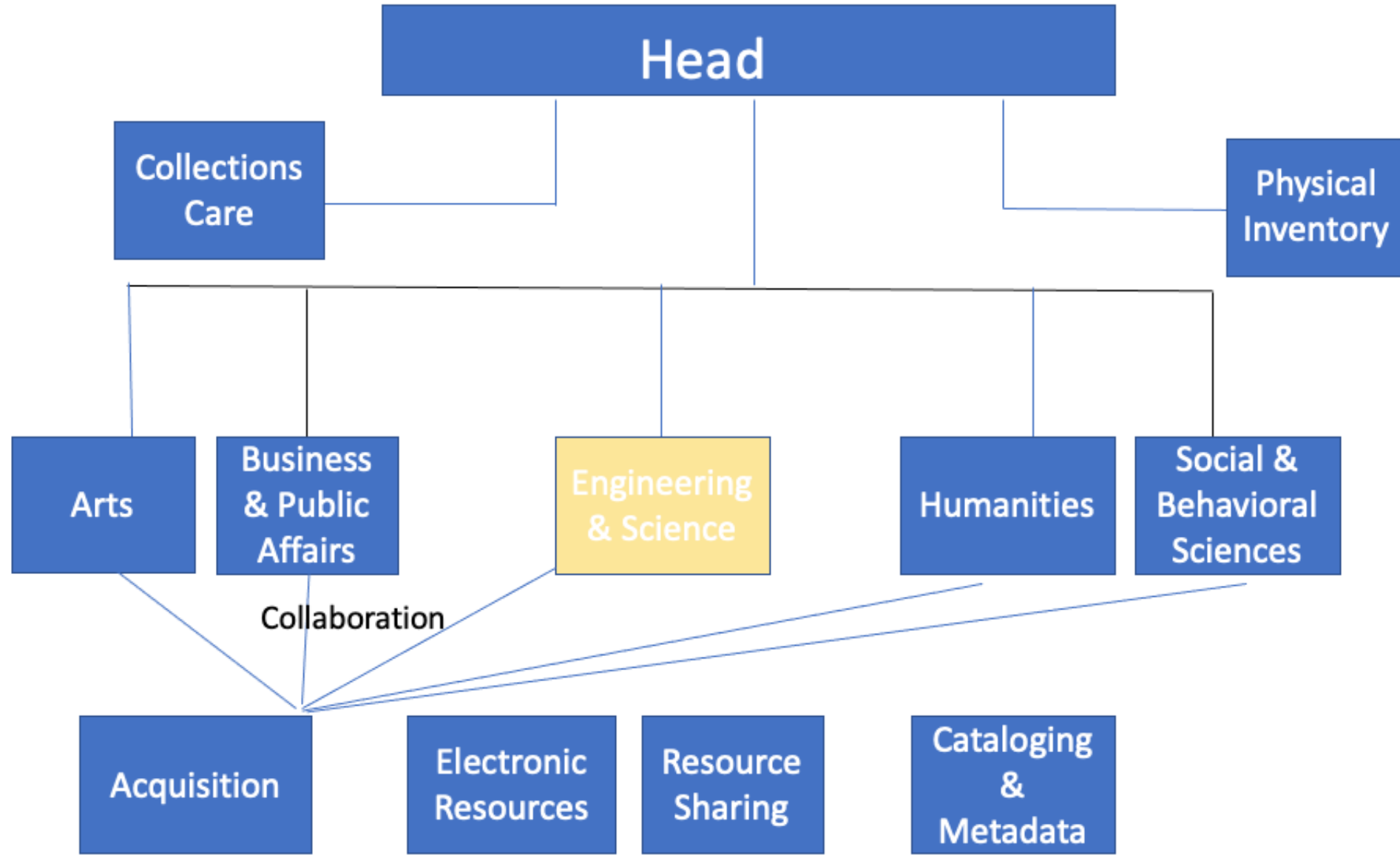
Introduction to Liaison Models Panel

- Academic Library focus – all from large research institutions
- Supporting STM disciplines
- Case study approach – Subject, Functional, Hybrid & permutations of each
- Considerations for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Challenges posed by pandemic – maintaining remote staffing options
- Perceived difficulties in hiring for new positions, replacements – concerns about retention
- General observations shared by panel

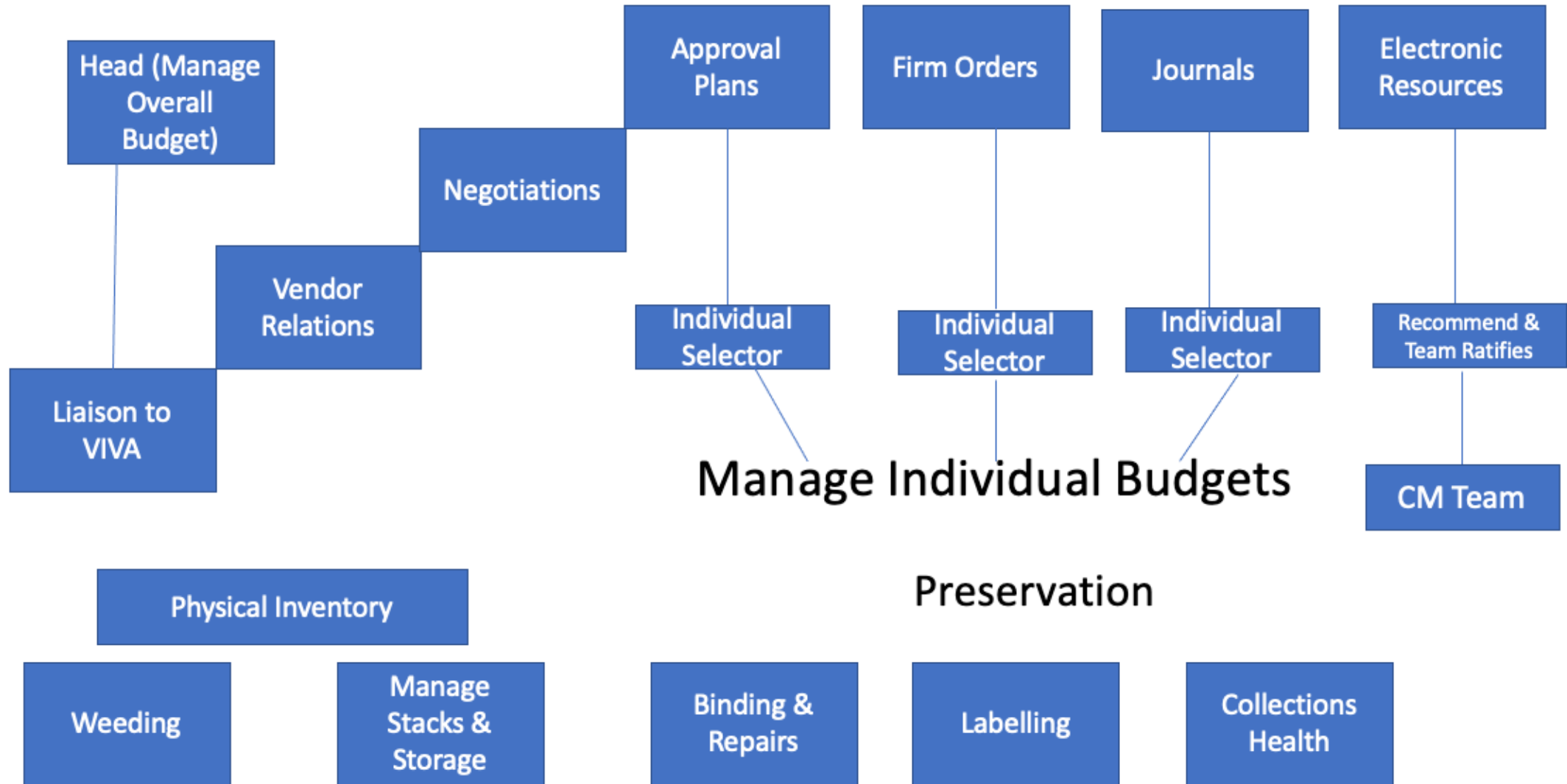
Subject Model

- Organizational Structure – 2 Divisions:
 - Public Services – with 4 major home departments: Reference, Education/Outreach, IT, Design Services
 - Research Resources (Technical Services) – with 4 departments: Collection Strategies, Special Collections/Archives, Acquisitions/Cataloging, Digital Services
- All Subject librarians:
 - have general titles – Research Librarian for Applied Sciences, Physical Sciences, Humanities, Performance Arts, etc
 - Deliver all/same services to their liaison units:
 - Reference, Consultations, Collections, Scholarly Communication, Instruction from undergraduate to Post-Docs, Systematic Reviews, other related services
 - Make referrals to Functional Librarian Colleagues for data management, digital scholarship services, computational & quantitative analysis, etc
- Perform as a Generalist when working outside of Liaison assignments
- Portfolio is deeper & sometimes feels equally wide

Functional Model



Functional Model

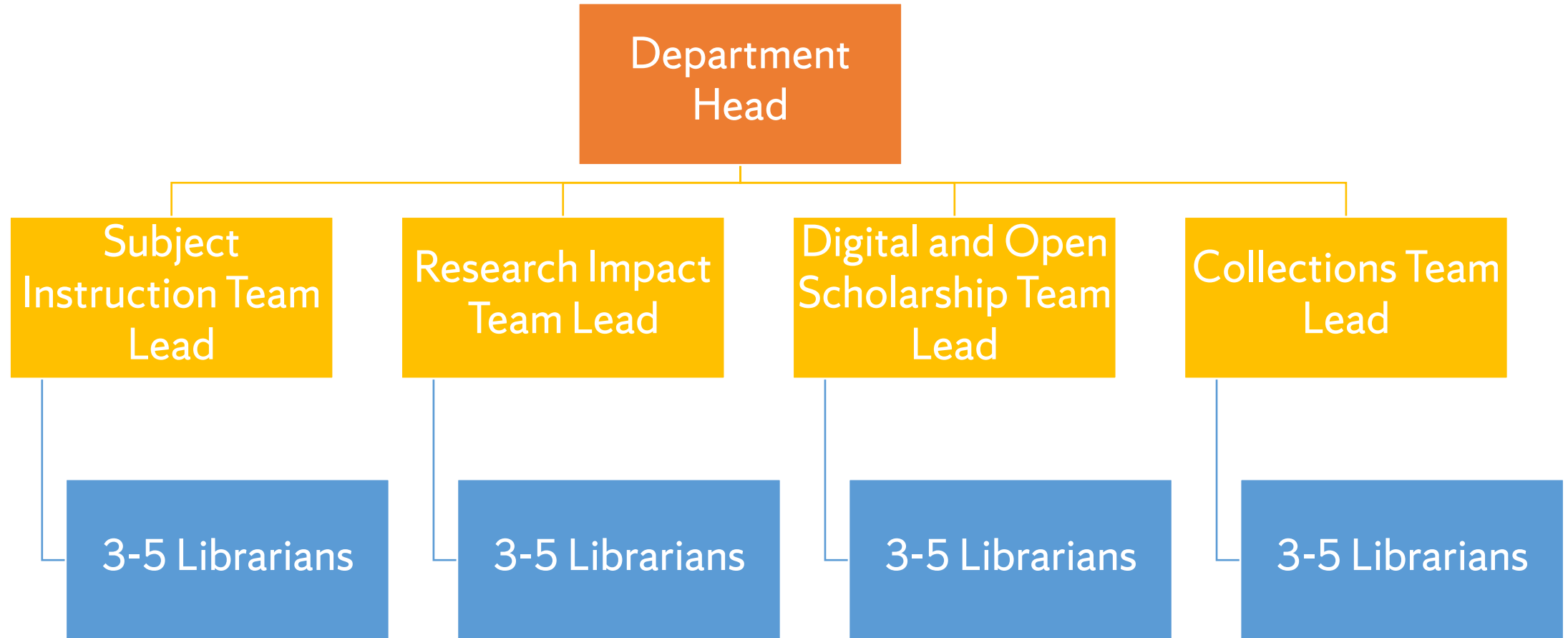




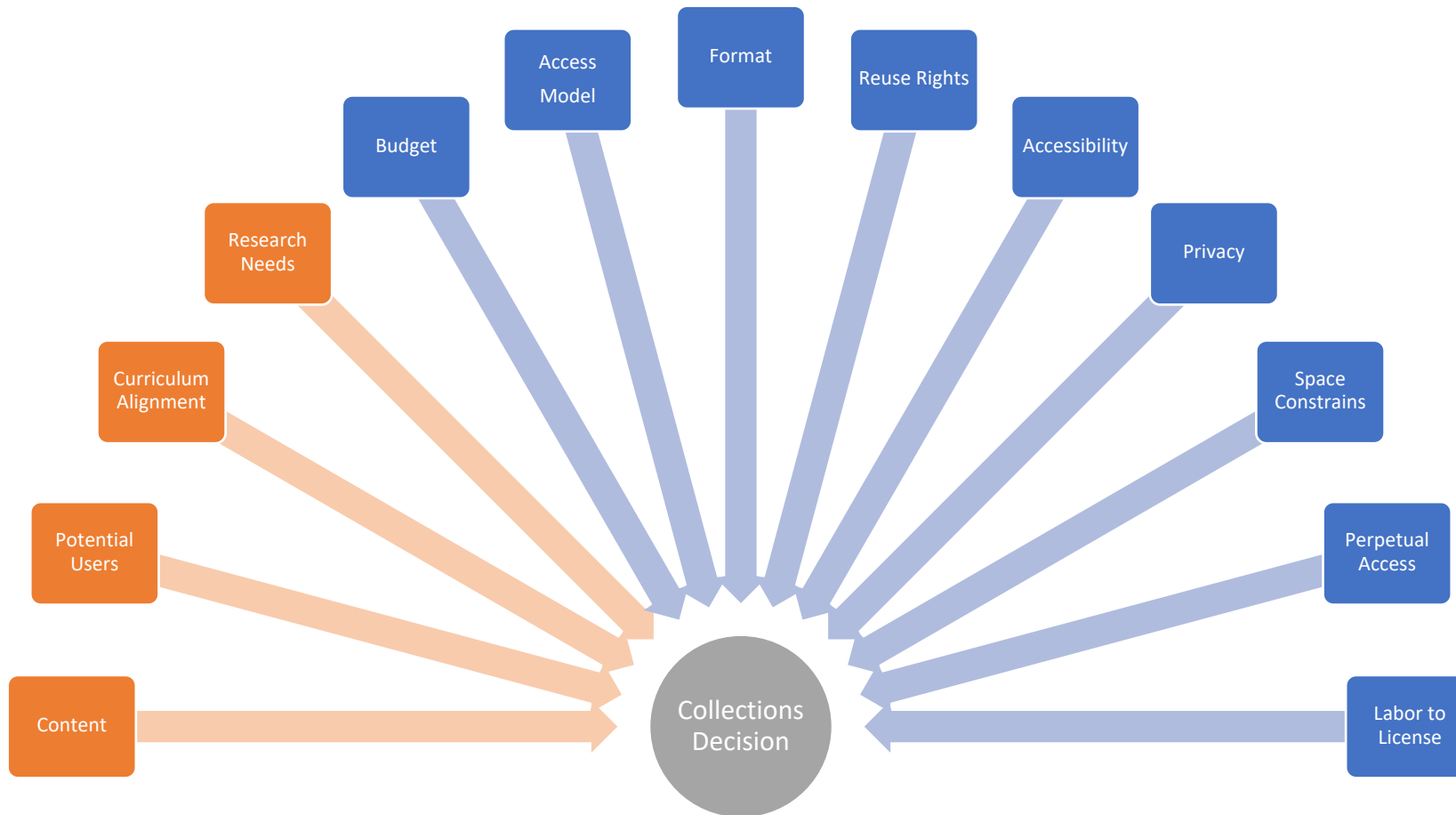
Hybrid Model

- Hybrid allows subject librarians to build relationships and develop deep expertise in their specialties.
- Referrals are made to functional librarians for their expertise, such as evidence synthesis, citation management, data management, etc.
- Build on people's strengths
- Cost/labor savings
 - Staff attrition may lead to some selection consolidation.
 - Negotiations team handles large purchases
 - Combine unrestricted funds
 - Streamline some book requests centrally

Hybrid Model



Hybrid Model



What do collections
responsibilities look like in your
model?

What are the strengths of your model?

What are the weaknesses of your model?

What can library leadership and management do to improve your model?

Conclusions & Audience Questions

- How is your library responding to changing staffing needs?
- What models are early career librarians most prepared for & likely to succeed in?
- Is there a best solution?

Further reading

Atkins, Jessica, Kelsey Badger, Claire Jordan, Hannah Nelsen, Katerina Ozment, and Olivia Young. “Translating Liaison Librarians to the Scientific Community.” *Journal of eScience Librarianship* 11/(1): e1229. 2022.

<https://doi.org/10.7191/jeslib.2022.1229>

Cramer, Steve, Beth R. Bernhardt, Mike A. Crumpton, Amy L. Harris, and Nancy B. Ryckman. “Great Expectations: New Organizational Models for Overworked Liaisons Based on the UNCG Libraries Liaison Collections Responsibilities Task Force.” In *Accentuate the Positive: Charleston Conference 2012*. Purdue University Press, 2013.

<https://doi.org/10.5703/1288284315112>.

Creelman, Kerry, and Jess Williams. “Subject Liaison, Hybrid, or Functional?” *Texas Library Journal* 98, no. 2 (Summer 2022): 62–63. https://txla.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/TLJ-Summer-2022_Issuu.pdf

Eskridge, Honora N., and Alexander J. Carroll. “‘Why Do We Need an Engineering Library?’: Designing Team-Based Liaison Services for STEM Educators and Researchers.” *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 20, no. 4 (2020): 565–84.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2020.0038>.

Hoodless, Catherine, and Stephen Pinfield. “Subject vs. Functional: Should Subject Librarians Be Replaced by Functional Specialists in Academic Libraries?” *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 50, no. 4 (December 2018): 345–60.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000616653647>.

Orcutt, Darby, Mira Waller, and Scott Warren. “What Are Subject Liaisons When ‘Collections’ and ‘Subjects’ Don’t Matter?” In *Roll With the Times, or the Times Roll Over You*. Purdue University Press, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5703/1288284316478>.

Palumbo, Laura, Jeffra Bussmann, and Barbara Kern. “The Value of Subject Specialization and the Future of Science Liaison Librarianship.” *College & Research Libraries* 82, no. 4 (2021): 584. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.82.4.584>.