Keep Those Booktrucks Rolling: Strategies for a Major Move of the Library Collection

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Abstract

The University Libraries at Virginia Tech recently completed an extensive move of the physical collection and reduction of the stacks footprint in our main facility. This session relates key elements of what we learned during this multi-year process and share tips and strategies for an effective and efficient large-scale move. We cover ways to address such issues as project management, communications, staffing, identifying materials for storage or deselection, and processing of materials as well as how the process we used may be applied elsewhere.

Background

Between 2012 and 2015 the University Libraries at Virginia Tech moved its entire circulating collection in its main on-campus library facility. In the process significant numbers of volumes were moved to off-site storage or withdrawn from the collection entirely. The resulting reduction in the physical footprint of the stacks enabled targeted repurposing of spaces throughout the building for other needs.

We still have more moves ahead but would like to share some tips and strategies that we learned so far from our experiences.

The text and tables below are adapted from a poster session presentation given at the Charleston Library Conference in November 2015.

Some Major Milestones in the University Libraries (with approximate completion dates)

- Construction of SCALE-UP classroom—February 2013
- Expansion of 4th floor commons—summer 2014
- Leased new warehouse space for 10 years—December 2013
- Construction of library multipurpose room—January 2014
- Downsizing and renovation of veterinary medicine branch—summer 2014
- Completed upgrades to warehouse infrastructure—fall 2014

Table 1. The incredible shrinking collection—Newman Library, Virginia Tech.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volumes by Floor</th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY13</th>
<th>FY14</th>
<th>FY15</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>172,907</td>
<td>73,808</td>
<td>72,935</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>550,237</td>
<td>594,441</td>
<td>490,268</td>
<td>562,211</td>
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<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>362,130</td>
<td>281,700</td>
<td>339,289</td>
<td>336,294</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>148,409</td>
<td>122,360</td>
<td>120,558</td>
<td>119,794</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1,233,683</td>
<td>1,071,309</td>
<td>1,023,048</td>
<td>1,018,299</td>
<td>-215,299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Construction of ICAT studios—January 2015
Construction of R&I offices on 4th floor—summer 2015
Expansion of 2nd floor commons—summer 2015
Construction of digital humanities workspace—summer 2016
Construction of reserved faculty space on 3rd floor—summer 2016
Expansion of 4th floor commons phase 2—summer 2017

**Tips and Strategies**

The tips and strategies below are based on our experiences at Virginia Tech and are divided into four main categories. Each situation is unique, but these recommendations should help you better prepare for a move at your own library.

*Project Management and Workflow*

- Make a plan, but be willing to change it—Most helpful to us were detailed floor maps showing every range and the call numbers it held
- Seek to minimize the number of times any item is handled—Sometimes items must be moved more than once but doing so hurts efficiency
- Get started early and keep at it—Time moves quickly when the clock is ticking
- Identify what needs to happen next and try to keep at least one step ahead—Focus your time and energy wisely
- Expect the unexpected—In our case the only freight elevator was out of service for weeks

*Staffing*

- Have the staff on hand you need to do the job—Adding back two recent retirees made a world of difference for us, and no extra training was needed!
- Hire extra students—Moving is hard physical labor and turnover will be high
- Utilize staff from other areas during slow periods—Circulation staff provided valuable assistance during summer and breaks

*Identifying Materials*

- Find low-hanging fruit—We started with remaining print indexes and then moved to journal archives; both freed up large runs of shelf space fast
- Use overlap analysis to good effect—Tools such as Serials Solutions 360 can help identify what packages to buy
- Maximize archive/backfile purchases with a single vendor—Significant discounts can often be negotiated this way
- Rely on your partners to carry some of the load—We are part of a shared print repository system through ASERL
- Walk the stacks—All that dust is there for a reason!

*Making It All Work*

- Be strategic—Finding “push-back” from many humanities and social sciences faculty about moving their books on-site, we instead focused on journal runs, especially in the sciences
- Be strategic part II—We tried to add back extra study space along outer walls, which had both natural light and electric power
- Capitalize on opportunities—We were able to integrate much of our remaining reference collection back into the stacks
- Communicate fully—Misconceptions can crop up and the sooner you address concerns the better!