What's Next For Collection Managers and Collection Management?

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"What's Next" was initiated with the intention of communicating the latest news and developments that affect collection management and collection managers. The idea was to provide readers with some insight into trends, upcoming events and conferences, and noteworthy activities of agencies, organizations or institutions that have some impact on collection management. To write about serials cancellations therefore seems somehow to cheat *Collection Management* readers, denying them access to the latest, greatest developments or tendencies. Why expend energy talking about serials cancellations? There are so many other interesting, and certainly less depressing, matters to focus upon. How will OCLC and Google's agreement to exchange data affect libraries and their collections for better or worse? (OCLC 2008). What impact will the purchase of Biomed Central by Springer, the world's second largest science, technical, and medical (STM) publisher, have on the growth and progress of the open access movement? (Albanese 2008).

It is true that *Collection Management* established "What's Next?" to highlight forthcoming issues and challenges that collection managers will face. However, from that perspective, there is no better challenge to spotlight than that of serials cancellations. Many collection managers regularly cut journal titles from their publisher packages and consortial collections. Such trimmings allow collection managers to make the most effective use of their available funding and to maximize the meager cancellation restrictions that many publisher deals offer. Typically the allowable restrictions hover in the range of two or three percent of the overall total purchased, which means a couple of titles at most get cancelled. The cancellations to which "What's Next?" will refer in this issue of

Collection Management are more serious, constituting five, 10, 20 percent or more of a library's overall serials budget. An unscientific search of university library websites in the fall of 2008 showed that several larger libraries had instituted or planned to institute significant reductions between 2007 and 2009, including:

University of Rhode Island

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Washington State University

University of Wisconsin-Madison

University of California-Riverside

University of California-Irvine

University of Georgia

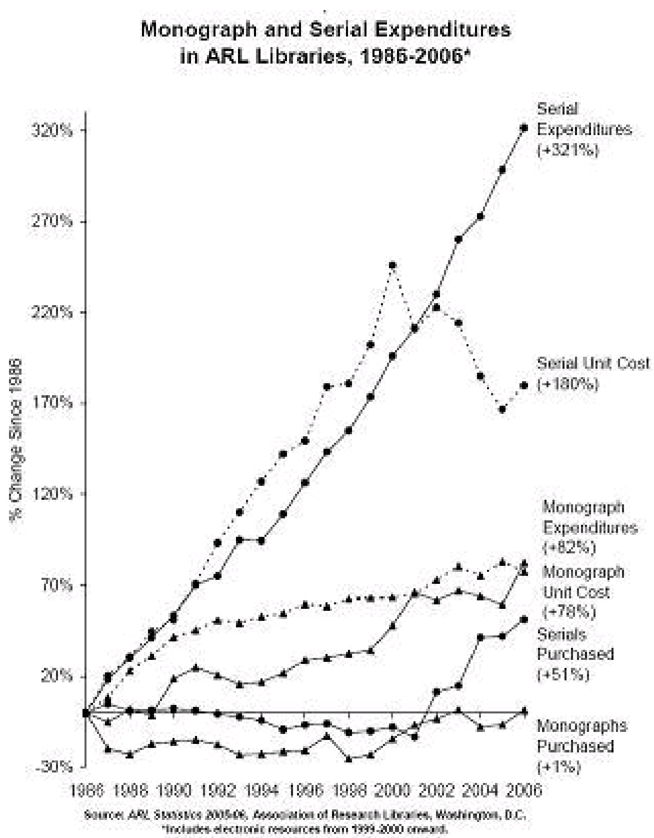
Oregon State University

Given the state of the global economy in late 2008, and in particular the U.S. banking crisis, no one needs a fortuneteller to predict that collection managers ought to expect to wrestle with serials cancellations in the future with perhaps more frequency than before. Cancellations totaling in the hundreds of thousands of dollars are an essential response to a larger predicament facing collection managers and the users they serve—the serials crisis. As an issue, the serials crisis has been with libraries, specifically academic libraries, on a large scale since the late 1980s though there are libraries that made significant cuts in the mid and early 80s. The serials crisis even has its own entry in Wikipedia though many librarians might not like the most recent contributor's prediction at the article's end:

In any case, if the pay to publish model were widely accepted, or the hybrid model resulted in a reduction in site license costs, libraries would probably see their funding cut drastically as governments and institutions redirect the money they spend on 'reading' journals into 'writing' them (switch from pay to read to pay to publish). Such a funding cut is not often considered in the equation and would be as unpopular with librarians as paying for journals is. (Wikipedia contributors 2008).

SERIALS INFLATION ON DISPLAY

Unless you have been way out of touch in North American or European libraries, you might not know that the serials crisis results because the cost of journals, especially STM journals, rises faster than the rate of inflation; and while the cost of journals increases, the budgets of most libraries remains flat. There is the ubiquitous chart, courtesy of the hard working Association for Research Libraries, that demonstrates this decline so well (Association for Research Libraries 2007).



Because of the ongoing budget stagnation, libraries lose ground every year and are able to buy less and less with their materials budgets. Table 1 demonstrates how an individual fictional library with a $5 million materials budget might fare if inflation is unchallenged or allowed to run rampant and a library were actually able to cover its inflationary costs. This fictional library's serials budget is set at $3.5 million for the initial year; the monographs budget is $1.5 million. This simplistic but perhaps evocative chart also assumes the following: overall serials inflation remains steady at the 7 percent across the span of 20 years. Inflation on monographs stays stable at 2.5 percent.

TABLE 1

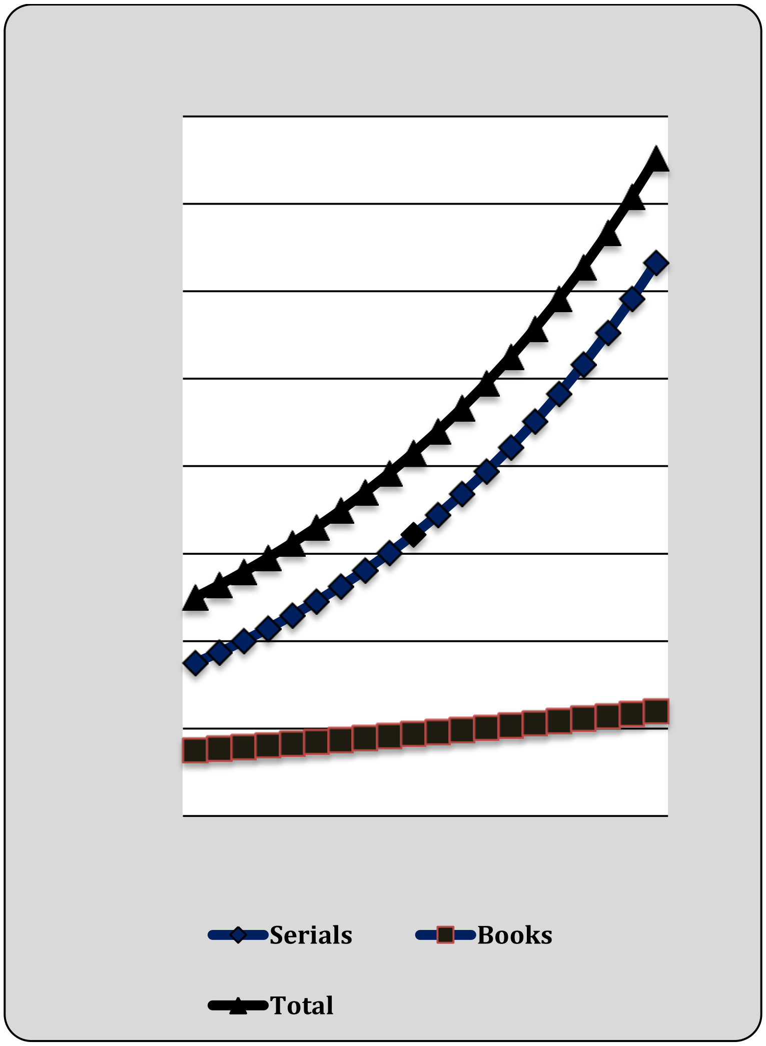


Table 2 complements the scenario that Table 1 demonstrates by calculating the growing budgetary figures from year to year for the fictional library. Table 2 uses the same presumed rate of inflation: 7 percent for serials; 2.5 percent for monographs. Given these inflation parameters stated, the fictional library's materials budget doubles in 11 to 12 years and triples in 15. Facing a higher inflationary rate of as a result of economic downturns, collection managers ought to suspect, the doubling could occur with greater rapidity.

TABLE 2

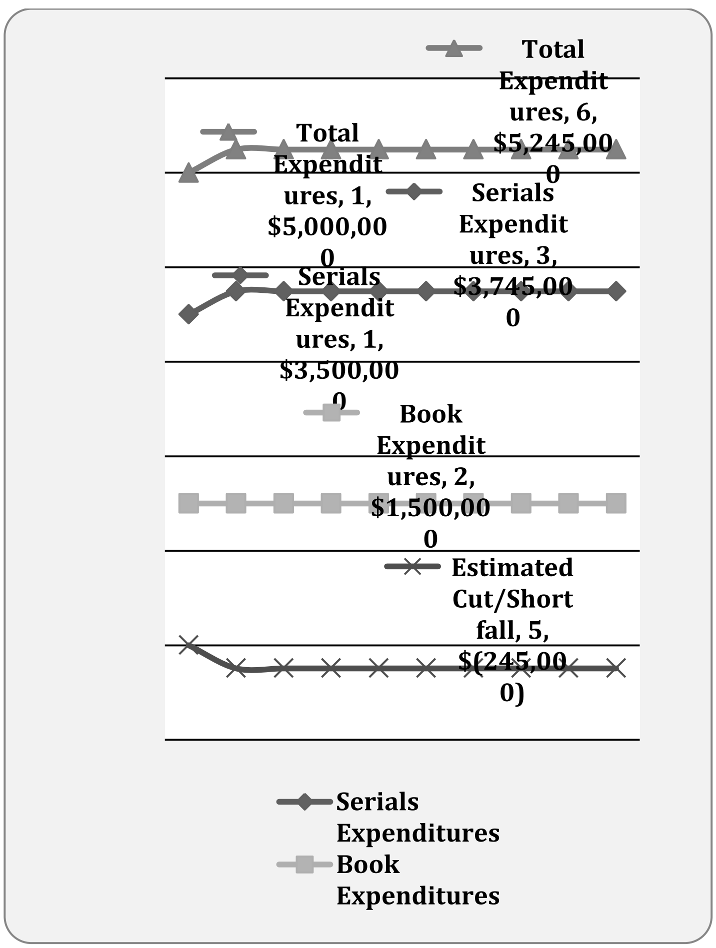
Year	Serials	Books	Total
2009	$3,500,000	$1,500,000	$5,000,000
2010	$3,745,000	$1,537,500	$5,282,500
2011	$4,007,150	$1,575,938	$5,583,088
2012	$4,287,651	$1,615,336	$5,902,986
2013	$4,587,786	$1,655,719	$6,243,505
2014	$4,908,931	$1,697,112	$6,606,043
2015	$5,252,556	$1,739,540	$6,992,096
2016	$5,620,235	$1,783,029	$7,403,264
2017	$6,013,652	$1,827,604	$7,841,256
2018	$6,434,607	$1,873,294	$8,307,902
2019	$6,885,030	$1,920,127	$8,805,157
2020	$7,366,982	$1,968,130	$9,335,112
2021	$7,882,671	$2,017,333	$9,900,004
2022	$8,434,458	$2,067,767	$10,502,224
2023	$9,024,870	$2,119,461	$11,144,330
2024	$9,656,610	$2,172,447	$11,829,058
2025	$10,332,573	$2,226,758	$12,559,332
2026	$11,055,853	$2,282,427	$13,338,281
2027	$11,829,763	$2,339,488	$14,169,251
2028	$12,657,846	$2,397,975	$15,055,822
2029	$13,543,896	$2,457,925	$16,001,820

THE FUTURE OF FLAT BUDGETS

It is not likely that many libraries will be positioned to simply meet inflationary increases from year to year as demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2, though the materials budgets for some libraries have been indexed to match cost increases. Most libraries will need to put some means into place, usually serials cancellations, to wrestle the demons of inflation back into the den from which they came. It is not unreasonable in the coming years to expect that the best fiscal scenario that many collection managers can hope to contend with is a flat budget.

Another relatively unsophisticated chart, Table 3 shows budget projections for our fictional library as it attempts to live with a flat budget scenario for a decade. Relating an inflation scenario identical to Tables 1 and 2, Table 3 shows how the fictional library with a 10-year future of flat budgets lives within its flat budget by simply reduces its serials budget by the necessary percentage or amount, in this case a projected annual shortfall of $245,000. In this instance the book budget is untouched and remains constant at $1,500,000.

TABLE 3



Obviously a more realistic budget picture for most academic libraries would reveal a more complex scenario. A more realistic picture would show varying inflation rates from year to year and take into account how annually most libraries draw from various available resources to cover collection costs. These resources may include gifts, precious unspent dollars that carryover from the previous fiscal year, and any unfilled positions. In addition, many libraries receive occasional augments to boost their materials budget from their home institutions based on any number of sources—indirect costs, tuition hikes, a greater percentage of the overall university budget.

The illustrative but unsophisticated budget picture drawn for the fictional library in Table 3 also doesn't take into account when a library might need to use those other funding pools to cover increases for personnel or staffing, the purchase of outdated equipment and software, or updates to facilities. Sometimes libraries may also want to explore or need to explore new initiatives that have nothing to do with the acquisitions of journals and books and databases. In such cases, this means a library makes a conscious decision to cut even deeper into the collections budget to fund a new project. As a result this means that collection managers and library administrators have their work cut out for them to explain to content consumers and university administrators the value that the library offers beyond just being a provider of content.

There are several important takeaways from both scenarios that Tables 1-2 and Table 3 portray. First, collection managers and their constituents ought to realize that neither scenario allows for much foray into support of new areas of research without cutting even deeper. AS a consequence, in order to support a new nanotechnology program or a department's venture to support a new Korean language program, a collection manager might have to "rob Peter to pay Paul" and take funds from an existing area to cover costs for the new. Truly, in either scenario, the only newness the collection's budget can support is the unique monograph titles bought or those few serials titles that might be dropped in exchange for buying new ones. There is no ability to add either breadth or depth to areas. The scenario that Table 3 suggests is actually even worse. In this case, facing the prospect of perennial flat budgets every year, the fictional library's collection manager has no recourse but to cancel title after title after title until the necessary percentage is met, more unique content is probably lost, and no new areas are addressed or they are addressed inadequately.

Most collection managers are familiar with the loss of unique content that following such a course of cancellation repeatedly means. In 1997, as an outcome of their 1994 Library Acquistions: Practice and Theory (LAPT) Research Award, Tina E. Chrzastowski and Karen A. Schmidt published an influential article assessing how recurring serial cancellations in the early 1980s affected 10 academic research library collections in the United States. Chrzastowski and Schmidt concluded:

> The good news and the bad news of this research is this: diversity in our research collections has dwindled, at least for domestic serial titles and, by extrapolation, probably for our foreign collections as well. No one segment of our collections, be they science, humanities, or social sciences, has enjoyed protection from the deep cancellations made in the past decade. (Chrzastowski & Schmidt 1997, 442-443).

Other research has continued to document the decline in unique content among the major research libraries in the United States and Canada.

CANCELLATION STRATEGIES

To mitigate their users' loss of access to unique content, collection managers have employed two time-honored strategies:

- Supplement a library's subscription base through the use of interlibrary loan;

- Provide users with a pay per view option for titles when their use in terms of cost-effectiveness does not warrant paying for an annual subscription.

To prevent the additional loss of unique content to which they subscribe or own, currently many collection managers are adopting one or both of the following strategies:

- Flip from print subscriptions to electronic subscriptions and reap the 5 or 10 percent savings that many publishers offer with the switch to electronic access;
- Analyze format overlap and whenever possible, move from a print subscription to electronic access perhaps even when the title is available electronically through a full-text aggregator database like Ebsco's *Academic Search Premier*.

The latter of the strategies, eliminating format duplication, is probably not new for many smaller academic libraries even if this strategy has meant relying on content in a full-text aggregator database. Larger academic libraries, especially those at the flagship institutions within their respective states, have perhaps not opted to adopt such a strategy. One can conjecture that avoiding this strategy thus far is likely the result of:

- desire and/or need to maintain a reputation for possessing the collection of record within the state;
- fear that many publishers will withdraw the content from aggregator databases once large libraries start cancelling print subscriptions;
- panic or concern that print elimination may evoke from library users even when electronic access is quite stable and makes sense fiscally.

Both libraries at the University of California-Irvine (UCI) and the University of California-Riverside (UCR) have similar projects in place to avoid cancelling unique titles by minimizing the duplication of format (University of California-Irvine Libraries 2007; University of California-Riverside 2008). Because most users have demonstrated a strong preference for the electronic version of a journal over the print, each library is seeking to eliminate print journal subscriptions in favor of the e-version. UCI and UCR are able to pursue this path because they can rely on one print archival copy in a shared print repositories established by the University of California system. In addition, the libraries within the University of California system have perpetual access to the online version of each journal in accordance with the licensing agreements the UC System has been able to broker. It will be interesting to see if other academic libraries will pursue a related version of this strategy. For instance, one library might agree to maintain certain titles held in print if another library agrees to maintain other print titles because both have access to all titles in a full-text aggregator database.

Because both predictably high use and reliable electronic access are important indicators that collection managers use to determine that a title ought to be held, another interesting strategy that collection managers might contemplate involves that portion of our serial holdings not presently in a digital form and likely not to become available electronically any time soon. At Oregon State University we estimate that this category of titles possibly amounts to between $800,000 and $900,000 annually as of 2008. Collection managers and their administrators might rationalize: Why not just cancel these titles and rely on interlibrary loan? Most of them probably aren't being used or we have no reliable markers of use because these titles do not typically circulate and they aren't presently available in a form that our users say they want (i.e., digital).

The problem with such a strategy is that it does so much potential damage to our unique holdings. It disproportionately harms some disciplines, the humanities and social sciences, more than the sciences, at least theoretically. And if you apply *Wired* editor Chris Anderson's theory of the long tail, a new Web-based business model for the entertainment industry, collection managers might may be undermining not only our local users but also that user 40, 400, or 4000 miles away--not to mention future users. To explain briefly, Anderson's theory of the long tail suggests that while the so-called popular or heavily used titles make up a considerable proportion of the market demand or business, for instance in the music or film industry, the so-called niche or less than mainstream titles generate or have the potential to generate a greater proportion of the market demand or business. Or as Anderson so cleverly put it: "Forget squeezing millions from a few megahits at the top of the charts. The future of entertainment is in the millions of niche markets at the shallow end of the bitstream" (Anderson 2005).

In his now landmark article, Anderson advanced three rules that companies in the entertainment industry ought to follow to make "long tail" content more viable for them:

1) Make everything available.

2) Cut the price in half. Now lower it.

3) Help me find it.

How does the "long tail" apply to libraries? Tom Storey explored this idea in the *OCLC Newsletter* not long after Anderson's article appeared. He interviewed Nancy Davenport, former president of the Council on Library and Information Resources, who said that libraries are "well-positioned for this new era . . . The Long Tail is something they understand and have practiced for years, perhaps without realizing it. . . The model for how libraries have built their collections sounds a lot like The Long Tail. Whether it's New York Times best-sellers or scholarly journals, libraries stock up on what they need to meet "high point" demand,. . . but also purchase less popular materials to fill out the collection and serve niches, which might be genealogy, travel or the history of furniture making. 'Libraries are the edification of The Long Tail,'" (Storey 2005).

I am most familiar with how making everything (or at least almost everything in terms of monographs) available to a larger population has played out for the Pacific Northwest academic library consortium, the Orbis-Cascade Alliance. According to the Alliance's 2007 borrowing statistics, 41 percent of the requested titles were owned by five or more libraries among the 30 Alliance members, while 26 percent of the requested titles were owned by only one member (Orbis Cascade Alliance 2008). That means that the highest percentage of user demand was for titles held in common by 5 or more members. The next highest percentage was generated by those uniquely held titles or perhaps what might be deemed long tail items.

Invoking Anderson's three rules, libraries might make more of a concerted effort to promote their long tail journal titles in any number of ways: enhancing their discoverability by digitizing formerly unavailable table of contents or reformatting the journals to appeal to users by offering to deliver articles directly to users' desktops. The challenge for libraries is not only battling the budgetary woes associated with perennial serials inflation but also supporting the means and operations to make everything available and to help users then find it—the costs associated with developing better searching tools or paying for them, operating server farms to deliver and preserve digital content, and paying to house low-use print material. CLIR's announcement of their new grant program, Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Building a New Research Environment shows a lot of promise to help build a national program that identifies and catalogs the veiled riches of our special collections and archives (Council on Libraries and Information Resources 2008). What of the not so special or non-archival material? Perhaps libraries might collaborate to collectively share and house their long tail titles in a shared print archive like the UC system's. In addition they might agree to work together to enhance their discoverability and delivery in a digital format and reap some savings to fight the serials war in the process. More libraries could also partner with some of the long tail publishers to help them make their content available. Once again, however, such projects do not come to fruition and remain sustainable without placing demands on already stretched, if not often inelastic library budgets.

Regardless of the strategies that collection managers might employ to handle the rising costs of journals, it is clear that managing electronic journals has not made the task of managing serials cancellations necessarily easier. In fact, the evidence is strong that making choices about what to cull from the digital library is harder than during the good old days of print journals. First there is all that usage data to accumulate and plow through. Because not all publishers comply with COUNTER standards, there are questions about how reliable some statistics are—a point that would seem to drive home to publishers the very reason why compliance is so important—comply or lose subscribers. And exactly how helpful or meaningful are the electronic usage statistics most collection managers receive? Yes, we can determine that our users executed 10, 100, or 1,000 downloads from a particular journal. Downloads, of course, don't translate into actual use anymore than a checkout does. Also were those downloads from the current year or across multiple years? In a given year, was there a particular article that was downloaded more often than all the others combined? Journal citation reports and impact factors do assist in the process of analyzing journal collections, but even their verity and value has come under suspicion in recent years as made manifest in Rossner, Van Epps, and Hill's article "Show Me the Data." (Rossner, Van Epps, and Hill 2007).

Secondly, each deal we negotiate with journal publishers for electronic journal access is complex and unique. At this point, managing our electronic journals adequately requires most of us to maintain a separate module in our integrated library system (along with those shadow systems and spreadsheets we cannot live without) just to keep up with licensing terms, allowable cancellation limits, the titles owned vs. those that are consortial add ons, the cost per use, and so on. Given this ordeal, should this speculation from *Library Journal*'s spring 2008 report on serial trends come as any surprise to collection managers:

> The largest publishers negotiate pricing for much of their content, and they are finding the resource-intensive process to be a drain on profitability. Some commercial publishers are talking about getting out of the negotiating business and are considering selling their journals as a single database with fixed pricing. No titles in, no titles out—unless the publisher chooses. Publishers are also monitoring the use of their content and are looking for ways to tie usage to price. It's easy to see the utility of these ideas from a publisher's perspective but difficult to see how they would play in the market given the high value librarians place on selecting their own content and the levels of dissatisfaction with already high prices (Van Orsdel and Born 2008)?

Such a move on the part of publishers will of course only increase the difficulty of executing serials cancellations. Collection managers could find themselves in the untenable position of having to choose from between a ScienceDirect database and a Wiley journal database. And to hearken back to the earlier long tail discussion, if most libraries subscribe to only those titles with the appropriate abundance of cost-effective hits, then all we are building are collections of homogenous materials that probably don't serve some of our constituents very well and will not be a draw to potential library users searching for that niche article on some obscure research topic which may have great impact on their work.

SERIALS CRISIS INTERVENTION

Though published more than 10 years ago, Chrzastowski and Schmidt's article deduced that "Driven by the marketplace, but having some years to respond to the community of users, research libraries may well have found their core of serials" (Chrzastowski and Schmidt 1997, 442). If what they presumed was true about our core serials more than 10 years ago, how should we describe today's collections after 10 years of cancellations? What is "more core" than core? Certainly many collection managers understand that the core collection needs to be somewhat fluid to adapt to change in curricular direction or advances in research. However, it is doubtful that many of us presume that the core collection is the kind of moving target we would need radar to track.

As a profession we have insisted on describing the overall dilemma in which we find ourselves as the serials crisis. Is crisis an accurate term? It probably is if what we mean by crisis is what *Merriam Webster's Dictionary* describes as

> 3a: an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; *especially***:** one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome <a financial *crisis*>
> b**:** a situation that has reached a critical phase <the environmental *crisis*>.

But when does a crisis stop being a crisis? Basic crisis counseling or crisis intervention literature suggests that if a crisis is not dealt with in a healthy fashion, there are going to be long-term psychological, social, and medical problems to confront. Crises are by nature supposed to be temporary and intervention should occur quickly and it should not last long (Gleason, 2008, Basic Steps). We in academic libraries are well into our second if not third decade of having to deal with serials inflation and manage cancellation projects. It is not surprising then that our conversations and literature are rich in describing the process or activities in a myriad of violent ways: wars, confrontations, skirmishes, or battles. Most experienced collection managers have participated in their share of serial cancellation projects where the process was described as cutting into the bone or hacking into the muscle. We also talk about the scholarly publication model as being broken. Recently when discussing yet another round of cancellations, I told another collection manager at a peer institution that we were beyond cutting into limbs or severing them; we were actually harming the spirit of our collections. In retrospect, it would have been more accurate to say we were harming the spirit of our collection building efforts because the activity leaves so many of us demoralized and depressed and feeling helpless and hopeless. Meanwhile, our users are frustrated and become firmer believers in how the situation and our requisite responses are permanently damaging the way that research is conducted.

It is probably not fair and some may even construe it as flippant and perhaps disrespectful to draw any parallel between the problems collection managers face with the serials crisis and the very crucial issues many people face when in a legitimate personal crisis as a result of a life-threatening situation, natural disaster, physical or sexual abuse, or illness. Being grossly impertinent is not my intention at all. Rather the goal to illustrate a parallel, identify what the proper steps or techniques of crisis intervention are, and uncover where we are in the recovery process.

There is a wealth of literature, both in print and available online, about crisis intervention detailing anywhere from three or more steps to follow to escape a crisis but typically crisis intervention includes these activities:

1) assessing the situation

2) establishing rapport with the client

3) examining the factors that contribute to the crisis

4) exploring and generating alternatives or solutions

5) implementing a plan of action to begin restoring normal functions

6) identifying additional resources and making referrals

7) following up (Gleason, 2008, Ten Steps).

It is my belief that crisis intervention activity for most libraries presently falls somewhere between steps 3 and 4: examining the factors and exploring and generating alternatives. We have spent enormous energy analyzing how we came to be in the situation we are in. One need only take a look at the literature generated since the serials crisis began in the 1980s. Many of us have detailed websites outlining the issues and the challenges as part of our scholarly communication websites. Every day we also investigate multiple solutions to turn the serials crisis around or at least manage it. Some of these as they relate to managing serials collections have been mentioned above. But those solutions with the power to truly transform the situation include developing strong scholarly communication programs, advocating for open access mandates like the National Institute of Health's, and encouraging authors to self-archive or to deposit in their institutional repositories if not a discipline-specific repository.

While it is clear that some of are beginning to shape and implement a clear plan of action (the University of California system comes to mind), what is not clear is whether we and our constituents all understand or can agree about what normal functions should be. To be fair to the crisis intervention literature, restoration of normal functions doesn't necessarily mean a return to the same old normal functions one followed in the past. Restoration of normal functions, as I understand it, is more akin to behaving or acting in a healthy and probably altogether new manner—see the transformational actions mentioned above. I kept wondering why it was so uncomfortable to answer not one but two inquiries about how the open access (OA) movement, especially the success of the

NIH mandate, was going to affect our need to cancel journals or the ability to keep costs down. There just didn't seem to be a clear impact or connection yet. I understand now that this was because we in libraries have been more likely to define normal as moving more and more journal subscriptions to open access, especially as a way to stop the madness of perpetual serials cancellations and to stop paying for expensive journal subscriptions.

Upon reflection I see that the normal or healthy plan of action for libraries may actually involve moving more articles, not necessarily more journals, to open access. Stevan Harnad pointed this out in his 2005 article criticizing "The 'Green' and 'Gold' Roads to Open Access: The Case for Mixing and Matching" by Jean-Claude Guédon. Harnad stated then that about 92 percent of journals are considered green or open access friendly as opposed to about 5 percent that are gold or all open access. According to Harnad, this means that many authors already have "the green light to self-archive their articles if they wish" (Harnad 2005). He goes on to argue strongly for encouraging authors to go green or stay green rather than trying to convert or wishing that whole journals would go gold.

From the collection management point of view, this position ought to be supportable. The more articles there are available as a result of OA, the more content there is for our faculty to find when we can't afford expensive journal subscriptions or when our users won't wait for interlibrary loan. The increased use of OA articles adds impact and visibility to the available research which in turn ought to motivate more authors to self-archive or deposit their research in institutional or discipline-based repositories. Ultimately collection managers can hope that the savings generated by not having to subscribe to every journal title in a discipline can be used more strategically to support teaching and scholarship.

It is clear that more discussion and thorough analysis about a proper plan of action for crisis intervention will have to ensue beyond this iteration of "What's Next?" But as collection managers face more serials cancellations in the near future, our intervention in the serials crisis should involve participation beyond just exploring more cancellation strategies, generating and sharing lists of titles to cancel with our faculty constituents, or analyzing the usage of journals. Primarily collection managers will need to take up the important role of communicating clearly to users, administrators, and policy makers why sustainability of our current path is impossible. We will need to demonstrate the vital connection between the serials content to which our users are losing access and the need for those same users to take control of their scholarship. We can and should establish goals for reaching a higher percentage of the researchers about why paying attention to author rights matters and set up measurable goals for soliciting and adding more open access content to our institutional repositories or to discipline-based ones like PubMed.

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