

Proceedings of the 7th Annual Federal Depository Library Conference

April 20 - 23, 1998

Mainstreaming of Technical Services Processing for Federal Depository Collections

Fred C. Schmidt, Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523

Good afternoon. Today I want to discuss what is perceived to be a trend throughout the Federal depository system: the merging, or mainstreaming of technical services processing with the processing that is performed for general library materials. Sooner or later, every depository library may need to consider different alternatives for its technical processing functions. All of us are aware of the fact that some of the oldest and largest depository libraries in the system have mainstreamed their technical services operations for documents for many years, including the cataloging of most or all of their depository holdings. Indeed, a select number of these libraries house their depository collections in the general collections, using LC, Dewey or other classification schemes. This method of organization is used by a number of very small depository libraries, as well.

The majority of depository libraries house their collections in separate locations and rely on the Superintendent of Documents classification scheme. Most have an organization that combines technical services and public services. This is the type of organization that my institution, Colorado State University (CSU), has had since it became a depository library in 1903. A review of our situation, while perhaps not completely typical, may be of use to those institutions contemplating a change in their organizational structure.

Chronic staffing shortages (where have we heard that before), changing services and the receipt of funding for an addition to the main library were the factors that led to two library-wide studies: the Realignment Task Force (RAF) and the Rethinking Reference Task Force (RRTF), with the objective of developing ways to provide more efficient service to its users. A number of recommendations from these studies focused on Government Documents Services by calling for integration of the department's technical services functions with the various units in the Technical Services Division and moving the reference service, instruction and collection development into the Public Service Division.

As a result of these recommendations, the library administration established a Task Force for Mainstreaming Documents Technical Processing, with a charge to create a plan for

mainstreaming technical processing to affect improved user access to the large amount of Government information available in the Library's holdings.

Rationale for mainstreaming documents operations included the following: Government information has become available in a greater variety of formats and sources; there is a greater commitment of the librarians' time to collection management, user education and reference service; reference service time commitment is manifested in providing user assistance for accessing and interpreting the wide variety of databases (with a variety of software) available on the Web and on CD-ROMs. In addition, the librarians were providing users with very specialized services, such as electronic maps, geographic information systems (GIS) and others, which were demanding more and more of the librarians' time. The Congressional directive to GPO to convert the depository program to one that disseminates more information in electronic format contributed to the significant increase in public service provided by departmental staff.

With the Libraries' commitment to more of a unified access to its collections and its load of the GPO/Marcive tapes of post-1976 records into CSUL's online catalog, integrating documents technical services activities into the general Technical Services units became quite viable. CSUL's migration to a new OPAC (INNOPAC) in 1996 indicated that it might be an appropriate time to automate the Government serials records and close the shelflist because of the online catalog's (locally called SAGE) ability to provide an accurate automated shelflist. Staff felt that mainstreaming would lead to greater consistencies in processing. Integration of technical processing would enable Cataloging Services to streamline its workflow in order to more efficiently integrate the Libraries' goal of total integration of pre-1976 depository and non-depository Federal publications bibliographic data with the general library materials accessed through SAGE.

The planning of CSUL's new library addition also influenced staff in its decisionmaking. The addition was designed to provide for a unified technical services division, which separated it from reference services by one floor. Public services areas were designed to combine separate science/technology, social sciences/humanities and Government documents reference areas into a centralized reference point in order to improve user access and interaction.

The Task Force

The Mainstreaming Study Task Force was composed of subject specialists, documents librarians and staff, the serials librarian and the head of Database Maintenance. The Head of the Documents Department presented a series of sessions on the policies, procedures and workflows of the department and reviewed its organizational structure. At the time of the study, staff consisted of four librarians (including two temporary half-time librarians), four support staff and student assistants.

The Task Force analyzed workflows and routines. Position development questionnaires completed by each classified staff member were reviewed in detail to identify the technical services tasks performed by each and the estimated time assigned to each task. Technical processing duties of librarians and student assistants were also reviewed to determine how each could fit into general technical services units. Tasks were prioritized and time lines

were discussed. Requirements for supervisory levels and reporting lines were reviewed, as were the impacts of potential changes in existing units.

Staffing and Workload Review

For a period of years, the Department was unable to perform all of its mandated tasks at a satisfactory level, which contributed to significant processing and maintenance backlog. This situation existed in large part because over the years the Department was assigned or assumed responsibility for a number of new initiatives which were not always adequately staffed as these initiatives grew.

These tasks are common to many documents depository units in research universities. They included the following: the Library's map collection was consolidated and transferred to the Documents Department; the decision to bring the collection up to acceptable state and national standards resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of depository selections; in the number of maps purchased and received with a concurrent increase in the amount of time required to process, shelve, and maintain bibliographic records; and an increase in the need for map reference and location assistance. CSUL's participation in the ARL/GIS Literacy Project required a significant additional time commitment by the librarian responsible for the map collection. This commitment requires a significant, continuous amount of training to provide user assistance for GIS activities.

Assumption of the supervision and management of the microtext collection and services required a significant time commitment of departmental staff. Budget cuts eliminated a full-time staff member; the department's Library Technician II had to spend some 30% of her time in supervising the microtext area.

Designation of CSUL as a full depository for State of Colorado publications added to the Department's responsibilities and workload. Although a librarian was assigned responsibility for the collection, there was a chronic shortage of support staff to process new and retrospective receipts.

Load of the Marcive tapes into SAGE necessitated a commitment to ongoing online bibliographic and item record maintenance, as well as quality control of the Marcive loads. At the time of the Task Force study, few of the records of the post-1976 documents had barcoded linked holdings records; serials holdings records had been created for approximately one-half of the active Federal depository periodical titles and input into SAGE; bibliographic and item records existed for selected State of Colorado publications. Concurrently with the initial Marcive load, the department initiated retrospective conversion of bibliographic records of pre-1976 depository and non-depository titles. Part of these tasks were assumed by departmental support staff, in addition to maintaining manual check-in records.

The Marcive load increased the circulation of Government publications by some 253 percent; the ever increasing amount of Government information becoming available in electronic formats and the continual loading of Marcive tapes increased the amount of reference service by some 207 percent. In order to meet this increased demand, documents reference hours were increased to nearly the same number of hours that were provided by

the Science/Technology and Social Sciences/Humanities reference desks (besides the documents librarians, four graduate students were hired to provide evening and weekend service).

Although these new services and the substantive amount of database maintenance were performed with some new staffing, such staffing remained inadequate for technical services functions; instead, more staffing continued to be assigned to public services to cope with the ever-increasing user demands from both on-campus users and distance-learners. Clearly, it was necessary to continue to achieve greater efficiencies in processing and bibliographic access to the collection.

Recommendations of the Task Force

The Task Force recommended that mainstreaming be done in phases to accommodate processing priorities, availability of supervisory staff from new reporting units to train the Documents processing staff, and to coordinate move of staff with completion of new Technical Services facilities.

The first operation recommended for mainstreaming was database maintenance. After approval, a new job description was prepared for a Government documents database maintenance position in the Database Maintenance Unit (DBM) of Cataloging Services, and in June, 1995, a Documents staff member was transferred to DBM and training was initiated. Subsequently, cleanup and DBM activities began for online records: linking of circulation records to their bibliographic records; updating classification numbers on bibliographic records; correcting typographical mistakes on the records; adding contents notes to the records; eliminating duplicate records; making location changes and updating of the item records; modifying the bibliographic records as needed; and initiating quality control and cleanup of problems resulting from duplicate barcodes in the Marcive loads.

In March of 1997, DBM began to load Marcive Shipping List Service (SLS) records into SAGE. This enabled the department to begin to close the documents shelflist, and made available to users a brief record for new depository titles upon receipt. DBM assigned part of one additional position to cope with the resulting increase in bibliographic maintenance and quality control.

The second phase of mainstreaming was the transfer of acquisitions functions to the Acquisitions Department. Purchased documents had always been ordered through Acquisitions; all orders for non-depository gift items were assimilated in the Acquisitions workflow. Collection development activities remain the responsibility of the documents librarians. This phase was originally scheduled for July 1997, but was delayed until October because of the usual delays in completing the consolidated technical services area and because the Library sustained on July 28 what is considered to be the worst flood ever to strike an academic library.

The processing of Government serials was concurrently transferred to the Serials Unit of the Acquisitions Department. Documents Processing Unit staff were trained by the serials librarian to convert the serials records in the manual shelflist to SAGE. As soon as all current serials records are converted and receipts are routinely recorded in SAGE, the

manual shelflist for these records will be closed. Other routine processing, including all remaining manual operations, will be performed by the Documents Processing Unit staff under the direction of the serials librarian. The documents librarians continue to be responsible for liaison with Federal and state depository entities.

Conclusion

Institutions contemplating mainstreaming technical services functions should carefully study the advantages and disadvantages of retaining processing functions within the documents unit. If the study identifies elements of processing that could result in greater efficiencies in terms of staff utilization, processing turnaround time and increased accuracy of records by merging processing functions with general technical services processing, then mainstreaming should be seriously considered.

At Colorado State, staff have observed the following benefits of mainstreaming technical services operations: there is greater consistency in maintaining local standards for general library materials records and those for Government documents; on-time quality control/cleanup of records enables the user to more easily rely upon the online catalog as the source for correct holdings information; modification and loading of SLS records allow immediate user access to records of newly received titles; maintenance of Government documents records is done concurrently with general library records; and closure of the manual shelflist is on schedule.

Documents librarians have been able to devote considerably more time and effort to collection development (necessary to acquire at least a portion of the estimated 50 percent of Government imprints considered fugitive), to electronic and traditional reference assistance and to user education and outreach. They continue to interact closely with technical services units assigned to process documents by being involved in training activities and in reviewing all materials received for proper routing and disposition.

The mainstreaming of documents technical processing will be reviewed and evaluated after one year to ascertain its effectiveness; however, our experience has shown that it is quite successful in meeting its objectives of better staff utilization and more efficient processing of materials.

[An amended version of this presentation entitled "Mainstreaming Government Documents Technical Processing: the Colorado State Experience: (jointly authored with Nora S. Copeland) appears in *Colorado Libraries*, 24:5-7, Spring, 1998.]