Collection Refresh:
Using Project Management to Handle your Library Collection during a Renovation

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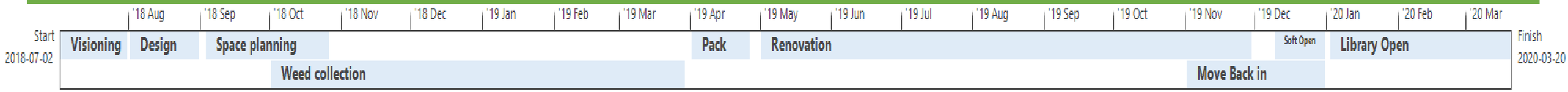
DOUGLAS COLLEGE LEARNING RESOURCES



Scenario

July 2018 Douglas College Library learned our main library branch would be renovated. As a community college serving 24,000 students, losing access to our main campus library was a challenge. As the Collections and Technical Services Librarian, I oversaw the changes to the Stacks using my background in Project Management.

With a year of planning, preparation, weeding, transferring, and storing our collection, the renovation was the most significant undertaking by the library in the past decade. The library officially re-opened in January 2020.

Background

Douglas College was founded in 1970 and we were preparing for our 50th anniversary and we have two campuses. We offer bachelors degrees and career programs but mostly focus on University transfer in the arts and sciences. We have 8,000 FTE students of which, 17% are international from India, Vietnam and China.

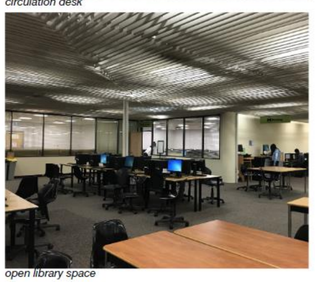
The main library has two levels. The main floor has security gates, checkout, Reference, the Writing and Learning Centre, classroom, computer lab, Reference, Media, Serials, and our offices. The second floor has the stacks, group study rooms, and study carols.

In 2018 we had 870,000 visits with some of the strongest circulation amongst academic libraries in our province. We have 10 librarians, 26 staff, and additional on call and auxiliaries.

Renovation was approved in 2018 with $4 Million from the college's capital reserve and Provincial funding. The main goal for the library renovation was to replace the aging HVAC system but we now had the opportunity to:

* Modernize the library from the 1970s
* Improve lighting and electricity
* Better student study space & seating

circulation desk



open library space

It was determined that the best way to complete the project was to close the library, remove the collection, and provide limited library services from the main concourse.

The project required work from many departments inside and outside of the library, but this poster is only focused on the work required for the collection.

Preparation

In April 2018, the library collection had 160,000 monographs, 9,000 videos, and 14,000 electronic and other materials. The main library has 60% of our collection and closing it would negatively impact our students. To prepare for the renovation, I focused my efforts on weeding, transferring, and working with faculty. In Project Management, most of the work you do is around the planning and timing of work and communicating with others.

Weeding

We had not done a major weed in several years and I did not want to store books that were no longer required. As an academic library, our collection usage varies, but my colleagues agreed with my plan to weed titles with a Catalogue Date before 2007 and NO CIRCULATIONS after 2007. This simple criteria yielded 34,000 items or approximately 25% of the collection. The first problem I discovered was our printed pick list only had 8 records per page, so using MS Access I designed a report to give me 20 with more detailed data.

The original plan had me weeding each LC call range per month. Weeding a bay took between 2-11 minutes and there were 548 bays. At the original rate of work, I would be 3 months over my timeline.

Project Management

In Project Management we focus on the time and duration of a project: The work you need to do is the Resource Effort (RE); The number of people doing the work is the Resource Productivity (RP); The time available in a day is the Resource Availability or Working Time (WT). The formula we use is (RE/RP)/WT . No matter how fast I worked, the amount of work remained the same. By asking Technical Services and Circulation staff to use the pick list to pre-pull titles for my review (hence increasing the Resource Productivity) I was able to complete 60 bays per week and finish at the main library in December. The second library was completed in March.
By the end of the weeding, we removed 20,000 titles.

Transferring

Weeding was done not only to save money on storing titles we no longer needed, but also to make space in our second campus for temporary access to the collection. By utilizing the top shelves in the other library, and the weeding, we had room for 11,000 items. Selecting all titles that had circulated in the past 2 years, we had 10,000 to move. This transfer required a lot of physical and digital movement.

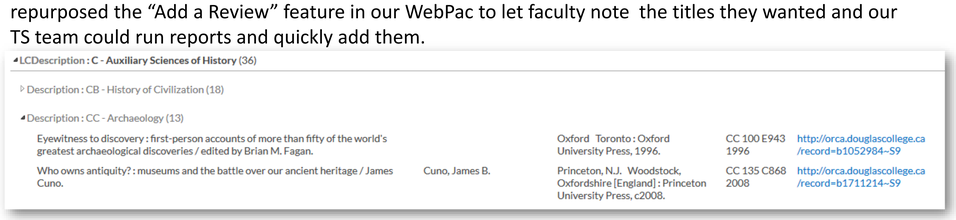
Physical items – on a daily basis, staff would be marking item records withdrawn (10-15 carts of weeding backlog for weeks, new ones arriving and ones processed leaving every day or two) - disposal either Better World Books or recycled

Catalogue records (Sierra ILS; EDS Discovery) - supervisor did record deletes and bib records marked withdrawn in batches using Sierra Create Lists and Global Update functions

Deleting holdings (OCLC Worldcat/Voila) - once a week ideal but often was every 2 weeks just because there was so much else to do!

Communicate with Faculty

Projects encounter problems because information is not shared with people at the right time. In December, I presented the plan for the library collection with our Senate, and during the winter semester, I shared the same message with all College Faculties and the Student Society. By speaking directly with faculty, I could ally their concerns directly. We also had stories on the library homepage, college intranet, and many "water cooler" discussions. From these discussions, we discovered that faculty did not know which titles would be accessible. I made the list of 10,000 titles browasable on SharePoint and we repurposed the "Add a Review" feature in our WebPac to let faculty note the titles they wanted and our TS team could run reports and quickly add them.



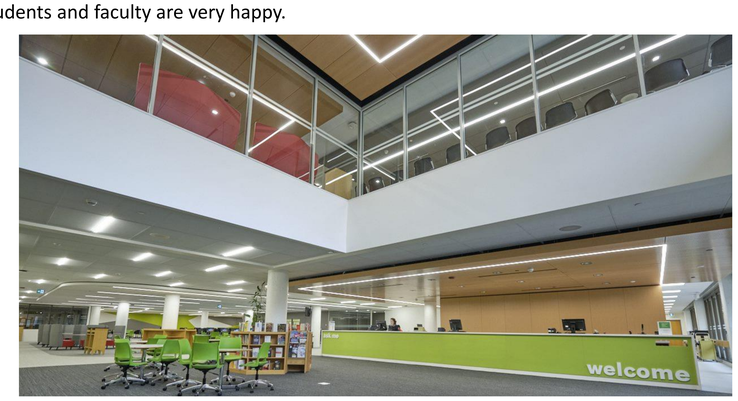
Easy Lessons Learned

At the end of a project, you should always review what you have learned.

- Trust your team
  - Never have the Project Manager as the roadblock to communication by agreeing on every part of the plan
  - My Technical Services team determined that when transferring items, they would receive a sticker for their new location. I did not want unnecessary stickers on 10,000 items which would need to be covered up upon return. But I also needed their voices to be heard in the project and to trust their judgement. Their decision was good, because with the pandemic, many of the titles have not yet returned.
- Don't worry about shelving
  - After a lot of math to calculate fitting all books back on the shelves we realized all books were packed in 2' boxes. With the shelves being 2.5' we quickly realized all we needed was to ensure the number of shelves matched the number of boxes.

Hard Lessons Learned

- Understand trade offs between Reuse/Buy New
  - In Project Management there are hard decisions to be made between buying new, reusing, or making your own materials. You need to investigate all scenarios to balance cost and time required to keep your project on target.
  - We planned to keep our shelves to save on costs. Our shelves were a mixture of styles (and colours like brown, green, white, beige, and mustard), and makes that were not compatible – one set dated back to the 1970s.
  - Old shelves were hard to reassemble and led to a 3-week delay in completing the stacks. The cost of new shelves would have been less than the labour needed to rebuild our old shelves.
  - The plan also noted that some bays needed to be cut and adjusted to fit under a bulkhead, which meant a loss of the top shelf in 12 rows. We did not account for the time needed to cut both the shelves and shelf-end covers. With no time available to fix the shelves, we lost 12 bays - instead of just 12 shelves!
- Ensure all members are at the planning table
  - When planning the shelving team did not see the original plans
  - The stacks layout did not fully account for wheelchairs on the corners
  - To ensure sight lines for fire escape signage, we made the main isle wider and lost 21 bays
  - The culmination of the lost bays meant we had lost room for 7,000 books. We adjusted our shelves so to have less "place your unused books here" break shelves
  - We were also unable to line up the three different ranges due to power supplies in the floor and lighting placement above leading to a one foot displacement between ranges which blocked the natural light.

Conclusion

No project goes exactly as planned. Overall we are delighted with the results and students and faculty are very happy.