![NASIG - TRANSFORMING THE INFORMATION COMMUNITY]

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PRINT SERIALS MANAGEMENT

Final Version

Approved and adopted by the NASIG Executive Board, May 30, 2015

Revised with minor edits by CEC, April 25, 2016

Revised with new logo by CEC, October 28, 2021

Introduction

This document supplements the NASIG Core Competencies for Electronic Resources Librarians (adopted July 22, 2013) by describing skills and knowledge that librarians need to manage physical format serials in today's libraries. The Core Competencies for Print Serials Management follows the structure of its companion document, highlighting competencies distinctive to managing information in physical formats. It is based on research conducted by the NASIG Core Competencies Task Force (CCTF), including an original content analysis of position descriptions.

The prominence of electronic resources in many libraries' collections does not render obsolete traditional print management tasks like receiving, claiming and binding, contrary to common perception. Libraries of all sizes report they are actively managing print serials and allocating considerable budgets and staff time to these activities. The personnel responsible for performing physical serials workflows vary according to staffing patterns based on a library's size and organizational complexity. At some libraries, MLS-holding librarians work directly with print serials; at others, paraprofessional staff perform these roles while librarians are responsible for supervision, budgeting and strategic planning. Even when they do not directly perform workflows, librarians still need to be familiar with the print serials life cycle and with tasks like binding, claiming and physical processing, in order to oversee staff, troubleshoot difficult problems, and evaluate the effectiveness of workflows.

We recognize that responsibility for print serials management is shared among librarians and paraprofessional staff, and that in many cases, individuals have responsibility for both physical and electronic format serials. We propose the following competencies for librarians involved in

print serials management, with the understanding that librarians can demonstrate proficiency in performing these tasks or supervising others, and that each institution may adopt a subset of these competencies, depending on its size, mission and workflows.

1. Life Cycle of Print Serials

Serials librarians have extensive knowledge of the life cycle of physical format serials, beyond that required of a generalist. This depth of understanding allows serials librarians to collaborate across the multiple units or departments involved in decisions about print serials.

Serials librarians have:

1.1. Thorough knowledge of serials acquisitions, including trends in publishing and subscription services, publication patterns for receipt and claiming, and shipping practices.

1.2. Ability to apply the principles involved in the organization and representation of recorded knowledge and information to the organization of physical format resources, in order to select and provide useful access points for the communities they serve.

   1.2.1. Experience describing physical format items using standards such as CONSER and RDA.

   1.2.2. Ability to describe materials written in languages other than English may be necessary at some libraries.

1.3. Thorough understanding of records management to coordinate and manage records related to serials purchases, subscriptions, checkins, and holdings.

1.4. Knowledge of best practices in physical processing of items (such as labeling, barcoding, inventory, and security treatments).

   1.4.1. Tracking and shipping may be of particular importance to libraries that contain multiple branches, store serials off-site, or participate in a shared print initiative.

   1.4.2. Some responding libraries stated specific expectations of physical abilities needed to hold, carry and otherwise manipulate serials, with accommodations to make these tasks accessible to people of all abilities.

1.5. Ability to apply classification systems (such as Library of Congress call numbers) and local practices (such as shelving and stack maintenance procedures) to ensure access to physical serials of all formats.

1.6. Ability to assist library users and provide basic instruction in how to use technical systems (e.g. microfilm readers) required for access to physical serials.

1.7. Knowledge of basic principles related to conservation of physical materials.

> 1.7.1. Familiarity with basic principles of binding. Ability to establish or apply consistent practices for itemization.

> 1.7.2. Familiarity with the library's disaster recovery plan.

1.8. Knowledge of local practices related to item deselection and withdrawal, and infrastructure for exchanging duplicate or otherwise unwanted items between libraries.

2. Technology

2.1. Serials librarians are familiar with library software specific to print workflows, particularly:

> 2.1.1. ILS serials module

> 2.1.2. Bindery record software

> 2.1.3. Bibliographic and other utilities used to record metadata

2.2. Serials librarians are familiar with the operation of physical equipment (e.g. microfiche readers) used in the storage and retrieval of print serials.

2.3. Serials librarians consider how new library technologies (e.g. cloud-based Library Management Systems) may impact print serials workflows, and contribute to discussions about the implementation of library systems.

3. Research and Professional Development

Serials management is a field characterized by rapid change, and the skillset required for serialists to be successful at their work is also in flux. Responding libraries emphasize the

rewards of creating an organizational culture that values collaboration and team learning. Serials librarians have opportunities to model a commitment to professional development through continuing education and engagement with the defining problems of the field.

Research skills are also helpful for serials librarians. Many positions require the incumbent to define and pursue a research agenda. Even in positions that do not include a formal research requirement, many day-to-day decisions related to print serials management can be improved by gathering and evaluating evidence related to workflows or the collection. Respondents mentioned several specific examples of ways that serials librarians can help to promote a culture of evidence-based decision making. Among other areas, serials librarians can provide useful input on:

3.1. Acquisitions and collection management (e.g. determining the cost-effectiveness of converting a subscription from print to online formats; minimizing service fees)

3.2. Preservation (e.g. most effective format for retaining back issues of a serial; cost-effective physical preservation of serials; participation in a shared print repository)

3.3. Use of physical space (e.g. determining shelf space to be freed by a stack shifting or weeding project)

3.4 Troubleshooting access problems (e.g. estimating error rates in catalog records)

4. Effective Communication

Serials librarians strive for effective communication with colleagues in the library, as well as with vendors, agents, patrons and other external stakeholders in the serials information cycle. Libraries value the ability to clearly articulate problems and goals, the capacity to collectively brainstorm solutions and the trait of continuously innovating on current practices. Therefore, the ability to clearly communicate both verbally and in writing is crucial for serials librarians, although the extent to which these skills may be called upon in the performance of the job will likely vary, depending on the organization. Language competency was also a preferred qualification in some position statements, and responding libraries mentioned situations where language skills were helpful, such as communicating with international vendors or describing collections in fields like modern languages, art or history.

5. Supervision and Management

In many libraries, paraprofessional serials staff are responsible for hiring, training, supervising and evaluating the work of student assistants or other staff. Serials librarians model effective managerial skills, time management and the ability to evaluate and improve workflows. Effective serials librarians are advocates for their staffs, building trusted relationships that serve to motivate and encourage their subordinates' growth.

6. Personal Qualities

Most of the same qualities that make a librarian effective at managing electronic resources - flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity and complexity, a focus on serving users and effective time management skills - also apply to managing print serials. Responding libraries often specifically mentioned the need to apply logical reasoning in support of troubleshooting activities (such as fixing errors in ILS records or locating misrouted issues).

This document was prepared by the members of the NASIG Core Competencies Task Force:

Eugenia Beh, member (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
Steve Black, member (College of Saint Rose)
Susan Davis, member (State University of New York, Buffalo)
Sanjeet Mann, chair (University of Redlands)
Taryn Resnick, member (University of Wisconsin, Madison)
Sarah Sutton, board liaison 2013-2015 (Emporia State University)