6-1-2011

Using Journal Evaluation as a Gateway to Collaboration

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Recommended Citation

Jones, M.A. (2011). Using Journal Evaluation as a Gateway to Collaboration – poster session presented at the 2011 NASIG annual conference; St. Louis, MO

Using Journal Evaluation as a Gateway to Collaboration

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Introduction:

Mississippi State University Libraries has faced three consecutive years of journal cancellations. We are looking at different ways to evaluate the remainder of our journal subscriptions by collaborating with campus constituents. By assessing the outcomes of our last journal evaluation, we can design and implement an easier and more efficient evaluation system to be used across campus in determining the usefulness of our remaining journal subscriptions. This poster describes the current state of journal cancellations, the last journal evaluation project in 2007, how we have used the data gathered in 2007 to make cancellation decisions, and what changes need to be made to the next evaluation to make it more successful in the minds of campus constituents and easier to administer for the library faculty and staff.

2007 Journal Evaluation Project:

In 2007, the Mississippi State University Libraries developed and administered a journal evaluation project, whereby giving teaching faculty an opportunity to rank their most used and important journals. The evaluation was done in preparation for looming budget decreases and was designed to help the serials department make cancellation decisions.

Each department received a list of titles assigned to them determined by subject. The department library representative was asked to administer the evaluation in their department by gathering input from as many faculty members as possible. Once the representative had gathered the opinions of their colleagues, they submitted a final list back to the library with each title assigned a rank. An example of the spreadsheet follows below.

Features of the 2007 Journal Evaluation Project:

- Measured department ranking of assigned journals
  - A, B, C, or D assigned to each title
  - Required 25% in each category
- Paper format
  - Titles were presented on an Excel spreadsheet and the spreadsheet was returned to the library with the rankings.
  - Most faculty printed the spreadsheet (legal size paper required!)
  - 4 tabs
    - Guide (goals, objectives, and instructions)
    - Titles to be evaluated
    - New titles needed
    - Restricted titles
- Complicated instructions
- Explanation of the project and the goals
  - Explanation of each tab
  - Explanation of the column headings
- Offered the opportunity to request new titles
- Did not include subscribed "big deal" package titles, i.e. ScienceDirect, Wiley
- Labor intensive
  - For library faculty and staff
  - For department library representatives
  - For department faculty (IF they participated)

Outcomes from the 2007 journal evaluation:

2009:

- Cancellations based on D list
  - Subsequent project asked faculty to rank their D list as high, moderate or low in importance
  - Strongly encouraged departments to divide journals into three lists of equal costs
  - Prepared faculty for possible cancellations
- 518 D titles cancelled
- 143 D titles spared
- $165,000 saved

2010:

- Cancellation of the remaining D titles
  - Including memberships with D ranked attached titles
- Cancellations based on very low and zero use
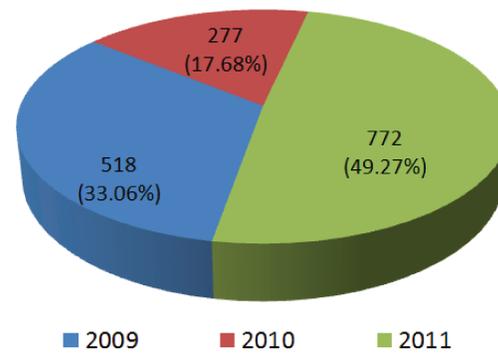- 277 titles cancelled
- $106,000 saved

2011:

- All C list titles cancelled
- Also canceled A and B list titles which were duplicated via an aggregator
- High cost / low use titles cancelled (more than $500 & less than 50 uses OR more than $50/use)
- Standing orders switched to slip plan
- 772 titles cancelled
- $242,000 saved

2012:

- Currently working to determine 2012 cancellations
- Analyzing the B list (and possibly the A list)
  - Usage statistics
    - High cost / low use and cost/use analysis
  - Duplicated via aggregators
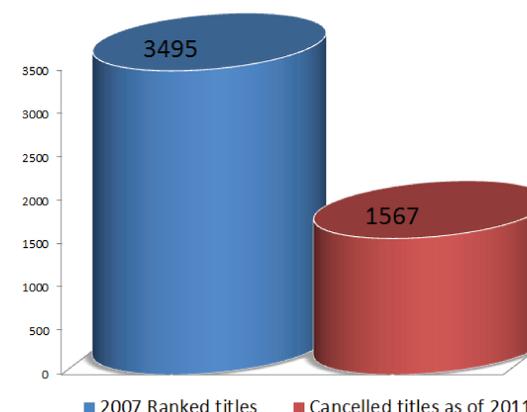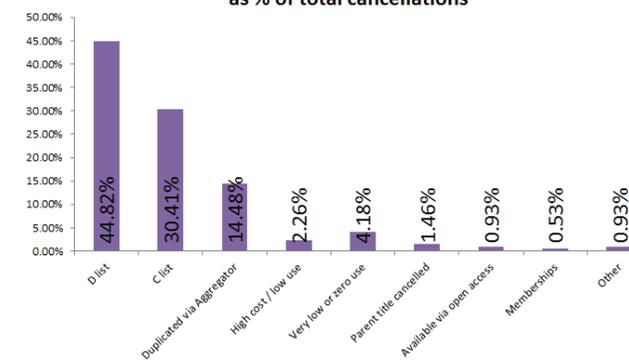- Estimated cancellations = $350,000 (not all will come from individual titles)

Number of Cancellations = 1567

- 277 (17.68%)
- 518 (33.06%)
- 772 (49.27%)
- 2009 — 2010 — 2011

Cancellations by Category as % of total cancellations

Category	%
D list	44.82%
C list	30.41%
Duplicated via Aggregator	14.48%
High cost / low use	2.26%
Very low or zero use	4.18%
Parent title cancelled	1.46%
Available via open access	0.93%
Memberships	0.53%
Other	0.93%

Cancellation Savings = $513,000.00

- $106,000.00
- $165,000.00
- $242,000.00
- 2009 — 2010 — 2011

- 3495 — 2007 Ranked titles
- 1567 — Cancelled titles as of 2011

Future journal evaluation project(s):

Based on experience using the results from the 2007 journal evaluation project, it is evident the next evaluation needs revisions. The library faculty have encountered complaints about the use of the 2007 results to cancel journal subscriptions. Therefore, it will be necessary to make significant changes so the next ournal evaluation project is more user friendly and builds collegiality on campus.

Suggested changes:

- Change the department assignment to either a college or discipline assignment
  - Will allow faculty to rank inter-disciplinary journals
  - Will allow faculty to rank journals they use outside of their department assignments, i.e. Chemistry and Chemical Engineering
- Online participation
  - Design an online survey instrument for ease of use
  - Administer via NetID, thereby attaching journal lists to faculty profiles
    - Allows for broad discipline assignments, i.e. science, humanities, social science, etc.
  - Negates the responsibility of the library representative to gather and report data
  - Potentially will increase the number of participants
- Change the ranking structure
  - "Core" or "supplemental" instead of A,B,C,D
  - Remove the strict "equalization" requirement
- Lessen the information overload
  - Reduce the number of columns
    - Fewer cost columns (2 years is probably enough)
    - Present the actual JCR impact factor (not a ranking)
    - Less ambiguity about aggregated access
    - Most recent usage information
- Remove memberships (only have the individual titles listed)
- Remove packages (only have the individual titles listed)
- List "comes with" titles together as one
- Include the subscribed titles for the "big deal" packages
  - Publisher changes
- Include all faculty in the evaluation process
  - Administration
  - Research
  - Extension

Conclusion:

Journal evaluation is never easy! It's complicated and often messy, but always necessary. The lessons learned from the 2007 journal evaluation will be incorporated into the next evaluation, hopefully making the project easier to understand and the process easier to manage. The collaboration and participation of the faculty is vital for the library to maintain a relevant and useful journal collection that supports research and teaching. Designing an easy to use, efficient online evaluation system is the best method to stimulate participation and communicate to the faculty the importance of their input.

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