Practicum Self Evaluation

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With

William Allen White Library – Technical Services

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Introduction

For my practicum in the technical services department at Emporia State University Library, Earl Givens, the e-resources librarian and I sat down to discuss my goals. We settled on four main goals involving World Share Management System, the new search widget, MARC records, and database management.

First Goal

The first few days of the practicum, I did the MARC record cleanup on e-books. The record cleanup involved assuring the OCLC number was in the 001 field, and that the 856 field was correct. My original goal was to clean up 500 individual records.

I found this part of the practicum enjoyable. I got to look at each e-book that the library owned and learned about MARC records and OCLC numbers. I did not find this activity boring at all, because I came across different problems that made things interesting. Sometimes the OCLC number listed in the MARC record didn't match the number from OCLC. Sometimes there were two different numbers in OCLC, so I didn't know which to use. I did find that to do this, you must have an eye for detail, and a very careful steady hand. Looking at numbers for several hours in a row can start to make even the most attentive person cross eyed, and there was more than on occasion where I accidently typed in the wrong number, completely changing the book.

After only a few days, I only had about 150 finished, but another one of the tech services librarians figured out a way to create a macro to fix everything automatically, so the records had all been fixed without much of my help. Since my goal was to do 500 records, and I only did 150, I did not meet my goal, however, they found an easier way to do what I was doing that saved time, so in the end, all the records were updated, and they didn't need my help as much as they thought they would.

Second Goal

The second task I worked on was the java scripting and the cosmetic changes to the search widget and the library's main webpage. My goal was to publish the new search box and make the page live by July. I spent a day working on this, making small cosmetic changes, but it was rather difficult because I did not write the code and some of the boxes or borders that I wanted to change didn't have code, or I couldn't find the part of the code that talked about those particular aspects. Another change I wanted to make was to the layout of the entire webpage, to put the search box at the top center of the page. These changes had to be approved and updated by the university webmaster, Amir. We sent a message to him, asking if they could be done, and he said it shouldn't be too hard, and he'd get things changed in a few days. Then, before he had a chance to do anything, the university president needed him to help with something else. Obviously, the president's request takes precedence over a simple webpage change requested by a practicum student. Needless to say, I finished my practicum time before Amir ever got around to fixing what needed fixing before I could complete this part of my practicum.

Even though this goal was also a failed goal, I learned quite a bit about how university webpages work (at least the ones from ESU.) All the major changes had to be done by one person, and each

department only had the ability to change small details. If I had known this before, I might have been able to make smaller changes and still accomplish what I wanted to do, but I was unaware that we had to go through someone else, so I designed it in the way I thought would look best.

Third Goal

The third goal I had related to electronic resource configuration and database management. ESU library currently subscribes to 134 databases, and my goal was to ensure that all of them were properly linked in the OCLC service configuration tool and to export each of them to Google Scholar to make for easier access and discoverability to students. I began doing this, but quickly learned that not all of the databases work well with OCLC. We had to use a third party software, called PubGet for a lot of these databases. Then I found one database in particular that didn't work well with PubGet. I had to go through each journal that we subscribed to from JSTOR individually, and assure that it was linked appropriately. There were several thousand of these. Although each one didn't take very long (I could check and make the link active or inactive in a matter of seconds), it was still rather time consuming and boring. It wasn't too bad though, and at the end of the day, this monotonous work was sort of relaxing. Click, check, click, close, check. Click, check, click, click, close. Click, check, close, click....

In addition, during the course of exporting our holdings to Google Scholar, during one of Earl's conversations with a representative from OCLC, we were told not to export anything to Google Scholar until after the migration was completed in November. I did not go back and un-export anything, but I did stop exporting content to Google Scholar. In the end, I did not get to complete this goal either.

Fourth Goal

The fourth goal that I wanted to accomplish was to migrate 2000 individual print periodical records from the old ILS, Innovative Millennium to the new one through OCLC. Earl showed me how to manually migrate each record, and generally, what it constituted was created a new record in OCLC for each individual print periodical, and then to assure the coverage dates were correct. I spent most of my practicum doing this. I completed about 300 individual records.

When I only had three days left in my practicum, it looked like I wouldn't be able to accomplish this goal either, Earl told me about K-Bart files. The reason he had never told me about them before, is because he said they were very difficult, and that he could never get them to work. He acknowledged that I had different skills than he did, and would allow me to try to get them to work. If done properly, the K-Bart file would allow a batch upload of all the records at once. However, the K-Bart file was picky. Each field had to be input in a very specific way. When we downloaded the file from Millennium, the formats were wrong for uploading.

I played around with things a bit, and just wanted to try to upload things to see what kind of error I got. To my surprise, I didn't get an error at all. In fact, With just the click of a button, in less than 30 minutes after Earl showed me how do to them, I had just uploaded the entire collection of print periodicals. This was over 3000 individual records. This was very shocking to me. I did not expect to successfully upload everything at once, so soon. Since I wasn't expecting this to actually work, all the records were incomplete. In the end, I got things fixed, just not everything. 3000 records were

uploaded, but the formatting from Millennium for the coverage was too confusing to try to decipher and fix, so I left that out of each record. I did upload the records, but since only the first 300 were complete, I only count this goal as half-accomplished.

Conclusion

Maybe in the end I only had one half accomplished goal, but I feel the practicum was a success. I learned a lot about working in technical services, and now have the much-needed experience for technical services jobs in the future. At the beginning, I did find myself asking Earl many questions, but after just a few days, I got the hang of things and tried to fix the minor problems, and only asked him about the most extreme cases that I didn't know how to fix, or that I'd tried to fix, but failed. I learned from the failed goals. None of the failures were anything that I could change; circumstances beyond my control rendered them failures.