Stacks Services: Serials in the Stacks Implementation Plan

Introduction

In August 2008 the Stacks Services Planning Team submitted its final report, which was approved by the Library’s Executive Committee on September 4, 2008. One issue that dominated the group’s deliberations was the suitability of the Main Stacks as a location for managing unbound serial literature. In its final report, the team recommended that the Main Stacks no longer serve as a location for housing unbound serial literature. The full recommendation stated that:

The only serials to remain in the Main Stacks should be bound volumes. The Serials Display has been an unsatisfactory operation for many years. The display does not encourage use. The display does not support efficient management of the materials displayed, nor does it efficiently store the materials awaiting binding. And, perhaps most importantly, the serials display does not encourage the type of curatorial management required to ensure that the materials selected and acquired by the University Library are appropriate to the academic needs of the University community. While there are unique titles in that location, the display tends to fall into the ‘out of sight/out of mind’ category of collection development. Moreover, it only composes a portion of the serials received in the Stacks. A number of titles are received in the Stacks and placed, unbound among the rest of the collection.

In the case of both these items and those shelved in the Stacks, acquisitions are not always managed with an eye to developing a valuable research collection, and the collection itself is neglected. It is the recommendation of this body that the University Library close the Stacks Serials Display, identify those items received in the Stacks, and redirect both to appropriate units or a central serials location for management of the current holdings, and refine the Stacks collection profile to focus on the management of bound serials. We believe that the CDC should charge a Task Force to review the current receipts in the display, review the current receipts in the general stacks, identify appropriate units to house the current receipts whenever possible, and work with the Acquisitions unit to centrally check in those items and direct them to the appropriate units within the Library. The space currently housing the Stacks Serials Display is required for the Retrospective Reference Collection by May 2009.

Acting upon this recommendation, the Serials in the Stacks implementation team was appointed to look more deeply into the Stack serials display and to determine the best way to provide access to current issues after the display area is eliminated. The Serials in the Stacks team members are: Mary Stuart, Sue Searing, Mary Burkee, Lynn Wiley, and Tom Teper. While the timeline has slipped slightly, we have made up for the delay by targeting those portions of the display collection that could be addressed by team members as a means of developing a methodology for disposition of this material. The team therefore focused on titles in history, philosophy, religion, and library and information science. We discovered that a significant portion of the material received and housed in the Stacks display consists of gifts, exchange materials, and “comes with” items such as society newsletters (i.e., “auxiliary” material supplied on a membership maintained by the Library in order to acquire the organization’s scholarly journal). The proposed implementation plan is based on our experience with the pilot project. We note that as a result of the the haphazard development of the current serials display collection and its “invisibility” to
selectors and library users, there are discrepancies between OPAC records, acquisitions records, and the actual items on the shelves. The implementation plan therefore gives us the opportunity to provide proper stewardship of the material we decide to continue to receive.

**Why Not Create a Serials Room?**

The team discussed this option on several occasions. However, the consensus was that such an option would not address the larger curatorial issues raised by the Stacks Services Planning Team, particularly the hidden costs of maintaining a large collection of marginal material. The development of a new “out of sight/out of mind” location for current serials would only perpetuate the larger problems associated with not managing this material. Furthermore, as more and more core journals are converted to electronic-only format, a central serials reading room would house a collection of current issues with little reader appeal.

**Benefits of Addressing this Issue**

- Space for Stacks Reference Collection.
- Increased visibility and improved access for those items deemed important.
- Decreased staff time dedicated to management of items identified as marginal.
- Increased staff time for more pressing collection management needs.

**Proposed Process for Closing the Stacks Display**

Upon approval by the Library’s Executive Committee, the team recommends that following steps be taken:

- The Office of Collections issues a list of titles from the Current Serials Display to subject specialists for review.

- Subject specialists decide which Stacks Display items should be continued and which should be cancelled. For those items to be continued, subject specialists should make arrangements to house the current issues in a new location (excluding Stacks and Oak Street for unbound material).

- Subject specialists submit their recommendations to Lynn Wiley by **July 24, 2009**.

  - Items identified by subject specialists for continuation and transfer to another unit should be identified via the serial transfer form on the Acquisitions page. See **Serial Run Transfer Form** at www.library.illinois.edu/acq.
Items identified by subject specialists for withdrawal and discard should be cancelled via the Acquisitions Unit’s serial cancellation form if there is an open P.O. If there is no P.O. for an item, the title and call number should be submitted directly to Lynn Wiley.

Upon completion of this process, the Acquisitions Unit will notify the Stacks Office to initiate the transfers (keepers) and/or binding (cancellations) for existing, unbound print copies.

- If no decision is made by July 24, 2009, the default decision for any title in the Stacks display will be cancellation for subscription items and discard for gifts and exchanges. All runs that can be bound will be commercially bound and sent to Oak St. Items that cannot be bound will be cancelled and discarded. Any newly received items that continue to come will be discarded as they are received.

**Communication Plan**

In addition to the aforementioned libnews email announcing the closure and requesting that subject specialists work with CAS to begin taking over remaining titles, news about the serial display’s closure will be communicated in the following manner:

- Announcement on NSM webpage
- Libnews announcement from CAS
- Signs in Stacks posted by CAS indicating that materials currently shelved in new locations

**Notes on the Proposed Process for Closing the Serials Display**

- There are discrepancies between the records maintained by Acquisitions, those maintained by Stacks, and the reality of what is on the shelf. In some cases, material has continued to come even though there is no open order for the items. Items that fall into this category are likely to require some clean-up on the part of the Stacks Office, Acquisitions, and the units that claim them and/or are determined to be responsible for them.

- Gift and Exchange materials will be a problem as they are not all centrally managed. Should any unclaimed gift and exchange materials be identified in the final sweep of this space, they will be boxed separately and reviewed by the Office of Collections, Acquisitions Unit, and members of this team.

- Oak Street has not historically accepted unbound serials. It should not be expected to accept unbound materials from this space.

- The new “home” for a journal in some cases won’t be the permanent home. Some titles may require relocation again as other New Service Model proposals are implemented.
• The deadlines in this document are largely driven by the need to make space for the Stacks Reference Collection.

Ongoing Work

• Upon completion of this project, the team will reconvene to address the issues focusing on those serials that are received and placed unbound into the Main Stacks general collection.