

Collection details delight librarian at liberal arts college

Ability to look up, manipulate and compare collection data leads to better decisions



Situation

Assumption College has a unique heritage. The Worcester, Mass., college was founded in 1904 for French-speaking boys who wanted to become priests. It remained a bilingual institution until the mid-1950s and today still maintains its roots in the Catholic intellectual tradition. However, the curriculum has changed over the years, greatly expanding the number and types of degrees offered.

It's easy to see how diverse the library's collection has become during the last 100 years. What's not easy though is seeing what's in the collection with enough details to make informed collection management decisions, says Dawn Thistle, Director of Library Services. "We were trying to get our hands around understanding what we have, what to keep and what to get rid of. We had a way to look at the holdings, but it was time-consuming and difficult. We needed a better way to do assessments in preparation for our college accreditation self-study report."

Solution

Though Thistle knew her current library system could produce custom reports, she wanted the ability to do them herself and easily manipulate the data. In January of 2006, the library subscribed to WorldCat Collection Analysis. "I had known about it for a while," she says, "and with our upcoming accreditation review, I decided to finally get it for our library."

And she immediately began working with it—only she describes what she is doing a little differently. "I'm having a lot of fun," she says. "I'm able to reorganize conspectus divisions so they relate to academic departments. I can

AT A GLANCE

Emmanuel d'Alzon Library

- Serves 2,700 undergraduate, graduate and continuing education students
- Owns more than 200,000 volumes;
- 1,300 videos, DVDs and audio titles; and subscribes to over 2,000 print and electronic journals
- Notable collections include French language and literature and Theology

"As soon as you get into (WorldCat Collection Analysis), you see all the things you can do."

compare data to circulation. I do graphics, too. "As soon as you get into it, you see all the things you can do. It's fabulously easy."

Results

Her enthusiasm for WorldCat Collection Analysis is obvious when you look at what she's accomplished in the first six months and what she has planned next. "The two things we're doing are seeing how our collection reflects the curriculum and looking at our French collection." The latter is almost 13 percent of the collection, and, according to Thistle, the college has few French classes anymore, so change is needed.

Based on the information Thistle has reviewed, she's already been making adjustments to budget allocations per department. With WorldCat Collection Analysis, she now looks at her collection data in multiple ways to make the best decisions for the college.

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In addition, Thistle is comparing her collections with those of other academic libraries and Catholic colleges. She says she wants to identify her library's unique items as well as any gaps. Eventually, she plans to conduct one-to-one comparisons with select colleges. "We want to know where we are: if we're ahead of other institutions, on par or behind," she says. "That will help us determine how to build our collection."

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For more information about WorldCat Collection Analysis, visit www.oclc.org/collectionanalysis/, call 1-800-848-5878 or send an e-mail to libservices@oclc.org.

