

Seeing is believing as university gets first detailed look at its library collection

WorldCat Collection Analysis changes faculty perceptions about what really makes up the collections that support academic programs



Situation

Southeastern Oklahoma State University is a public institution located 15 miles from the Oklahoma–Texas border. It opened in 1909 as a school for future Oklahoma teachers, and while it has expanded its academic programs over the decades, it is still affectionately referred to today as “The Teachers’ School.”

In that inaugural year, the library also opened and created its first collection by having each faculty member donate 10 books. Since those initial gifts, the collection has increased to more than 190,000 titles and periodicals.

The only challenge the growing collection has created, says Collection Development Librarian Susan Webb, has been how to analyze it effectively. “There was no consistency in how we looked at the collection,” she explains. “Acquisitions were made based on what we thought was needed. We never knew with certainty how well our titles supported the academic programs.”

Solution

What the library staff wanted, says Webb, was a way to take detailed information to the academic departments to show exactly what was in the collection—from the age of materials to the number of titles by subject and more. “We needed to really understand what we had and provide valuable data to the programs so together we could make better decisions about what to add.” This was also a goal shared by the university: to assess its academic programs more thoroughly and determine how best to move forward.

During the 2005 Amigos Conference, Webb and a fellow librarian uncovered the solution—WorldCat Collection Analysis. “We were so impressed that when we came

AT A GLANCE

- Founded in 1909 in Durant, Oklahoma (www.sosu.edu)
- 19 undergraduate programs and five graduate programs
- Library serves 4,000 students from 31 states and 20 countries
- 190,000 titles in collection

“WorldCat Collection Analysis gave us information we had no other way to get.”

back, we put together an internal grant request for it,” she explains. “Since it was easy to show how WorldCat Collection Analysis would help with assessment, it was fully embraced.”

Results

Almost immediately after adding WorldCat Collection Analysis, the library put it to the test for the School of Business. “They are a proactive group and were working on their program accreditation,” says Webb. Together, they did a collection assessment and compared titles to collections at other accredited business schools. “We used the information to add several titles. In fact, we followed what other already accredited schools had in their collections.”

Other programs also benefited from the detailed analysis. “Many can’t believe how many books we have on a certain

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subject for a program,” Webb says. “You don’t realize how heavily a collection might be slanted toward a department until you look at it in detail. And you can’t dispute it because it’s there in black and white.”

“It has changed the perception for a lot of people,” she adds. “WorldCat Collection Analysis was fully embraced due to its contribution to assessment and institutional accreditation.”

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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.