

TECHNICAL SERVICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Edited by Samantha Schmehl Hines

ADVANCES IN LIBRARY
ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

VOLUME 42

TECHNICAL SERVICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

Samantha Schmehl Hines

While librarianship in general has had constant revolutionary change, technical services have nearly been completely reimagined in the twenty-first century. When looking to answer our broader question as a book series, “How have libraries been managed and how should they be managed?” the work of technical services and these groundbreaking changes provide many interesting opportunities and challenges for library administration. This volume collects 13 chapters from a variety of libraries that examine several aspects of technical services work in the twenty-first century. Our thoughtful authors offer applied theoretical solutions to practical problems encountered by library administrators and managers, in four broad categories.

PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

Bibee, Gallagher, and Isaak investigate how technical services show up in ARL libraries’ strategic plans and suggest guiding principles for tech services professionals, sourced in professional organizations. They chose to focus on strategic plans vs mission or vision statements due to the action orientation of these plans and their frequent update cycle. Their chapter highlights the valuable role of assessment, advocacy, collections and user experience in technical services, and the need for connection with the rest of the library’s work.

Buccicone and Leaman ask us to consider technical services as outreach, by framing technical services work as work on behalf of users. They also examine the supportive nature of the technical services community and how this is another form of outreach. This framing can help advocates make the work of technical services more visible and appreciated. The chapter offers actionable ideas for library managers to develop this perspective.

Servizzi uses Complex Adaptive Systems (CASs) to uncover the various dependencies that show up in technical services that affect costs of services, performance assessment, and connections to larger library goals. Larger library-wide shifts

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toward user-centered services alongside with fiscal challenges are destabilizing the networks that make up the systems involved in technical services.

WORKFLOWS

White tackles workflow process mapping in technical services, linking it to Deming's high-performance style of organizational management and illustrating how it can build strong teams. Based on a case study, she shows several positive managerial outcomes around the use of workflow process mapping.

deChambeau, McCullough, McGurr, and Monaco examine the differences in workload for technical services librarians with faculty status in academic environments compared to their public services' peers. They highlight the difficulty with assessing technical services work, particularly around benchmarks and metrics, and point out the challenges in evaluating faculty librarian workloads generally compared with a more traditional faculty workload in the university. However, the workload guidelines produced by the authors helped situate technical services better within the library and the university.

Ashmore, Collins, Hutchins, and Whittenberger discussed a merger of acquisitions, cataloging and electronic resources that resulted in a life cycle approach toward print and electronic resources. This chapter outlines the implementation of the package management model for serials and for monographs, describes the tools and technologies used for support, and shares what the authors learned for managers and administrators of libraries. Special attention is paid to workflows.

Barrett, Buccicone, and Shankweiler dive into the role of the special collections cataloger through a recent survey of those serving in this position in American cultural heritage institutions. These librarians span the worlds of special collections and technical services and face unique challenges in their work around communication within the library, setting priorities, and the security of the materials with which they work.

DATA

Sarah Theimer offers a reimagining of the way we measure the work of technical services, through a more thoughtful and contextual look at the metrics used and the metrics we could be using. This future-oriented chapter offers a lot of food for thought for managers and administrators considering how we measure what we do, and what we might need to do to measure the right things going forward.

Kim, Chen, and Montgomery delve deeper into BIBFRAME and linked data. Their chapter looks at the differences between BIBFRAME and MARC in a way intended to bring metadata professionals up to speed on BIBFRAME and what it has to offer the profession, looking toward the future.

Oberlin discusses the collection and organization of data around technical services, particularly focused on e-resources. She looks at how this data analysis connects with the evolution of library staffing models as well as changing user

needs. She offers her library's experience as a case study in how to effectively manage the reams of data produced in evidence-based assessment of collections, and turns an eye to the future of this analysis and the related needs and resources involved.

Williams talks about changing cataloging formats and tools to web standards in order to take advantage of linked and open data tools and increase visibility of collections. She offers valuable background on the use of linked data in libraries and connects it well with the mission and work of catalogers, while extending that work into a new domain. Suggestions for how to manage this cultural and workload shift are discussed and what it might mean for the future of library systems.

ACQUISITIONS

Maranville and Diaz examine the unbundling of "Big Deal" packages in libraries through four case studies, as these large package purchase of serials have become a pricing challenge. The decline of the big deal also has implications for the open access movement. These purchase model changes have created challenges for technical services departments in managing purchases, cataloging and access, as well as for consortial work.

Reno examines the motivations behind the move to an access model for streaming media vs an ownership model, given the unsustainability of this model. She finds that, although librarians are aware of the problems of the model, they feel their patrons' preference for streaming media access outweighs the downsides.

Overall, this volume will help library managers and administrators understand new trends in technical services work, how previous structures and workflows fit in and are evolving, and new ways that we need to describe, assess and carry out what we do in libraries. It is my hope that this volume will help you think about ways to revolutionize your own library as we move further into the twenty-first century.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TECHNICAL SERVICES THROUGH A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC PLANS

Abigail Bibee, Erin Gallagher and David Isaak

ABSTRACT

Academic libraries develop strategic plans as instruments for grounding operational work in shared vision and measurable goals. The authors of this chapter test the assumption that technical services work is often absent in library strategic plans, even if that work is an assumed component. They explore the representation of technical services through a rich content analysis of Association of Research Libraries member strategic plans to reveal key themes and use the results as a tool to more broadly develop a set of guiding principles for technical services professionals in the 21st century. To provide valuable and relevant services to users, technical services professionals must develop bold and sustainable guiding principles informed by both their representation in their libraries' strategic plans and emerging trends in academic libraries.

Keywords: Strategic plan; guiding principles; emerging trends; technical services; content analysis; electronic resources; collections

INTRODUCTION

Technical services professionals in 21st century academic libraries are no strangers to perpetual change. The authors of this chapter are mid-career and have only known technical services to be in a constant state of disruption and overhaul. We have each weathered large-scale systems migrations, departmental

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reorganizations and role transformations—often simultaneously—and all while ensuring the day-to-day work gets done. The challenges inherent in balancing revolutionary change with traditional tasks are not new, but libraries need new modes for tackling these challenges that extend beyond operation and function to ensure the work being done in technical services is aligned with the priorities of the library. [Cimbala \(1988\)](#) illustrates the struggles of technical services professionals tasked with conveying the importance of their work to library administrators. If the value of technical services work is not communicated effectively to administrators, it is unlikely to be reflected in the library's strategic priorities. Accordingly, technical services professionals will achieve significant benefits by developing a set of guiding principles that reflect and direct the nature of work in the 21st century library.

Academic libraries set goals and priorities using a variety of methods, but many rely on strategic plans as instruments for grounding operational work in measurable aims. Unlike mission and vision, strategic plans are built of concrete, actionable goals to be completed in a specific time period. Daily tasks and long-term projects are guided by and anchored in the strategic plan. To lay the groundwork of this chapter, we set out to explore our assumptions that explicit mention of technical services work is frequently absent in strategic plans—even if that work is an assumed component—through content analysis of strategic plans of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) members. This chapter will focus on the following questions and assertion:

- Are core concepts for technical services professionals in academic libraries found in ARL member strategic plans, and if so, to what extent?
- How do these findings align with current key themes or trends in academic libraries?
- To provide valuable and relevant services to users, technical services professionals must develop bold and sustainable guiding principles informed by both their representation in their libraries' strategic plans and the key themes affecting academic libraries in the 21st century.

BACKGROUND

Library technical services operations vary by institution in terms of size, scope, and structure. Regardless of differences among institutions, there are core positions and functions associated with traditional work in technical services. Library professionals can visualize the vast roles and responsibilities fulfilled by technical services librarians and staff in the core competencies produced by the [Association for Library Collections and Technical Services \(ALCTS\) for Acquisitions \(2018\)](#) and [Cataloging and Metadata \(2017b\)](#), as well as by the [North American Serials Interest Group \(NASIG\) for Electronic Resources \(2013\)](#) and [Print Serials Management \(2015\)](#). The competencies, roles, and responsibilities defined in these documents demonstrate the array of skills and knowledge that inform the methodology and results of this study.

While core competencies provide a framework for the tasks and proficiencies needed to successfully perform work in technical services, they are more meaningful when guided by a set of shared guiding principles. Academic library professionals have access to a variety of guidelines, standards, and principles set forth by their professional organizations:

- [ALCTS Guidelines & Standards for Technical Services \(2010\)](#): While not updated recently, these support specific tasks in areas like preservation and cataloging.
- [American Library Association \(ALA\) Standards and Guidelines \(2017\)](#): ALA presents this list of continually updated documents organized alphabetically by the areas and audiences they serve.
- [Association of College & Research Libraries \(ACRL\) Standards for Libraries in Higher Education \(2018b\)](#): “The standards articulate expectations for library contributions to institutional effectiveness” (Introduction section, para. 2).
- [ALA Guiding Principles for All Types of Libraries \(2018\)](#): ALA’s principles focus on high-level concepts like diversity of materials and freedom of expression.
- [ARL Guiding Principles \(2018\)](#): ARL presents a set of high-level principles meant to guide the association’s members.

These documents are useful, but none provide guiding principles specific to technical services professionals in academic libraries. We aimed to fill this gap in the professional literature by analyzing references to technical services representation in ARL member strategic plans. This analysis revealed themes to be used as tools to develop a set of guiding principles for technical services professionals in the 21st century.

METHODOLOGY

We used content analysis as the research method to identify the extent of technical services concepts in ARL member strategic plans. Content analysis uses a set of systematic procedures to identify specific characters in text to make valid and replicable inferences about context ([Krippendorff, 1980](#); [Stone, Dunphy, Smith, & Ogilvie, 1966](#)). The technique has been used to reveal the focus and patterns in an organization’s communication ([Weber, 1985](#)). Using content analysis to identify trends and themes in academic library strategic plans has been done before ([Bielavitz, 2011](#); [Saunders, 2015](#); [Staines, 2009](#)), but we are the first to focus on technical services representation.

Creating a consistent and replicable methodology required careful planning. The authors met virtually weekly or biweekly. We resolved issues that arose between meetings over email and documented all analysis-related questions for later reference.

Inclusion Criteria

We resolved to focus on strategic plans and not on mission or vision statements. Missions and visions can remain static or are updated infrequently. They tend to be brief statements not optimized for textual analysis. A well-written strategic plan is specific, actionable, measurable, and time-limited. They are commonly tactical and updated frequently and therefore able to reflect current trends, directions, and priorities, providing a richer and more relevant basis for analysis.

We focused on ARL institutions ($n = 124$) because of the ease of identifying those libraries online ([Association of Research Libraries, n.d.](#)). We searched ARL member websites for the word “strategic” along with the terms “plan,” “direction,” “framework,” “goal,” and “principle.” If we could not locate a plan by searching the ARL member website, we performed a web search with the same keywords to exhaust all search options. We reviewed the latest document available ($n = 104$). When documents included sections on both vision and strategic direction, we analyzed only the strategic portion of the document. One document was just a mission and vision statement and was excluded. We also excluded a non-English language plan and a plan that was primarily graphical and presented in Tableau. We did not review any accompanying documentation presented alongside the stated strategic plan. Fig. 1 maps out the number of plans identified, exclusions, and coding method used.

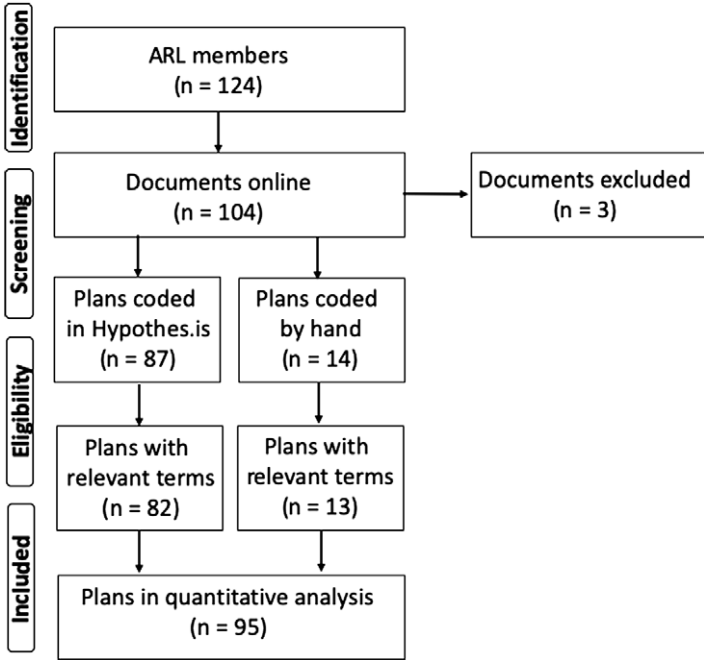


Fig.1. Plans Identified, Exclusions, and Coding Methods Used.