Managing collections at the University of Birmingham:
What have we learned from 3 years of the new Main Library and Research Reserve?

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The new Main Library
3 years in...
what have we learned?
Main Library upper floors: 20% (12km)
Higher use collections, open for browsing
Books: loaned in last 5 years, purchased in last 2 years
Journals: current, print only subscriptions

Research Reserve: 80% (50km)
Lower use collections, fetching service
Movement based on:
- Resource list category
- Usage
- Purchase date

E.g. books moved from RR to open shelves if:
- On a resource list (not background reading), or
- 5 or more holds in a rolling 12 month period
- Current editions only
Lessons learned

- Can’t escape manual overrides (for multi-volume sets, old editions etc)
- Metadata is a constant challenge
- No matter how you hone the reports, the data will find ways to surprise you (50k relegation items in 2019!)
The Research Reserve
Space in the Research Reserve

- Key layout decision: aim for a single Library of Congress book sequence
- Big benefits for fetching and browsing but
  - Interfiling and shifting will never end
  - Reduces working capacity of shelves
  - So many bookends...
Research Reserve requests

- Average 1639 physical item requests per month (Sept 16-Apr 19)
- Average 53 scanning requests per month
  - Scanning is free but only 3% of requests
- Most requests (>80%) are for monographs
## Research Reserve requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LoC Classmark</th>
<th>% of requests</th>
<th>% of collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B (Philosophy, Psychology, Religion)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (History)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H (Social Sciences)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P (Language and Literature)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q (Science)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% of requests since 2016 where the classmark can be analysed:
# Research Reserve requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top ten most used sub-classes of LoC</th>
<th>Requests since 2016*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PR English Literature</td>
<td>2757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PN Literature (General)</td>
<td>1559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA History (Great Britain)</td>
<td>1235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HD Industry/Management</td>
<td>1220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML Literature on Music</td>
<td>1069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PQ French/Italian/Spanish Literature</td>
<td>1024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Greek and Latin Language and Literature</td>
<td>999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N Visual Arts</td>
<td>837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D History (General)</td>
<td>833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS American Literature</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*out of 37578 requests with extractable classmarks
Research Reserve requests

- In 18/19
  - 54% of requests from undergraduates
  - 13% from post-graduate taught
  - 15% from post-graduate research
  - 12% from academic staff
Research Reserve browsing

- Politically important
- Only offered to academics, post-graduate research students, and taught students at their tutor’s requests
- Health and safety induction required ahead of/during first visit
Research Reserve browsing

- Average 33 visits per month
- In 2018, 374 visits, from 106 individuals
  - 27 individuals visited 5 or more times
  - The highest user visited 23 times
- Top 5 departments for browsing:
  - History; Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology; Music; Modern Languages; Byzantine, Ottoman and Greek Studies
Lessons learned

- Most usage comes from a concentrated group of users/subjects
- But there’s a big ‘long tail’
- Users of the RR want books, not scans
- Comparatively low use from research students and academics compared to taught students
What’s next?
Service development

- How low use should ‘low use’ be?
  - Strategic driver to raise profile of how Library Services support research
  - Service review group set up (processes, communication)
  - Summer intern focus on deeper understanding of researchers
What’s next? Space management

- Continued consolidation and interfiling
- Tough questions about best use of space
- Understanding the collection better through categorisation
Thank you

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