

Report from the Ad Hoc Floating and Discards Committee Meeting

June 4, 2014

The Ad Hoc Committee for Floating and Discards met at George Mason Regional Library, June 4, for a working meeting to discuss progress on the recommendations of the Committee. The F&D report was submitted to and approved by the Library Board of Trustees, November 9, 2013. The timeline was submitted to the County Board of Supervisors, January 14, 2014.

Using the time line for a framework-agenda, the Committee queried the Collection Services Coordinator, Elizabeth Rhodes, as to how Technical Operations was responding to our recommendations and discussed the process. Public comment was welcomed.

Floating Collection

(Recommendations in the summary chart, 1,2,4) It is evident that the floating process is a work in progress. The FCPL collection is now, with few exceptions, one collection, rather than collections "owned" by each branch." A chart previously shared with the Library Board comparing February 2014, with April 2013, showed that several Regional branches have significantly fewer books on the shelves than before, and the collections of several smaller Community branches have gained. A Transfer Focus group composed of representatives of both Technical Operations staff (TechOps) and branch staff is meeting monthly to review and improve rebalancing materials. There are still some problems with transfers that need to be worked out, although the Committee has been assured the Collection HQ and the SIRSI systems "talk to each other," although not necessarily in real time as data is input on a periodic schedule. each other." Community libraries are assigned a Regional to receive books which need to be redistributed; Regionals send theirs to TechOps to be sent to rebalance collections across the system. The F&D Committee expects communication between the branches as well as with TechOps be monitored by the Transfer Focus Group. From public comments during the working meeting, it is clear that the concept and operation of the floating collection is not necessarily well understood by all segments of the public.

(6) There is a recommendation to accept and process add/swap books at the branch from donations and from TechOps. If the book is already in the catalog it seems that replacing a new copy in the branch for an old makes sense to members of the F&D committee, rather than sending it to TechOps. This should be considered as a way to get the book on the shelf as quickly as possible.

(3)The Collection Evaluation Focus Group recommended by the F&D Committee is reviewing current procedures and practices for collection development. The group, made up of representatives both from administration, TechOps and branch staff, meets monthly . The shrunken budget for library materials will continue to be a challenge to the system. This focus group will also update the Library Board at monthly meetings.

(5)A survey of in-branch use is ongoing. Branch staff is very aware of the possibility of books and other material used within the library (not checked out) may be considered "low interest" and deleted. From comments at the Committee meeting , it isn't clear to the Committee that the public understands the purpose of the survey and complying with the request not to re-shelve books (so that their activity can be recorded by staff.). Perhaps there could be an addenda to the "Please do not re-shelve your books" signs indicating the ongoing survey.

It was suggested that branch staff consider: (1) Underserved populations (children, limited English patrons, harried library users) are not likely to place holds for items (2) Last active lists are not discard lists, but reminders to investigate, evaluate and merchandise, and (3) Last copies are not viewed as likely discards and may need special review, recalling that public libraries are not archives.

The Library Director, Sam Clay, will continue to include a monthly update on the progress of the floating collection in his monthly report to the Library Board.

Discards

(7, 8)Discard procedures for library books and other materials are also a work in progress. Both Ms. Rhodes and Branch Managers on the F&D Committee provided useful information as to how discards are handled by the branch and by TechOps. In addition, Don Heinrichs,(Mt. Vernon Library trustee), Melanie Quinn, Library Operations Director, and Elizabeth Clements (Mason Library trustee, chair) met with Cathy Muse, Director of Purchasing and Supply, June 29, 2014, for information. The recommendation of the F&D committee that the discarding process return to the branch has created another layer of required signatures (4 in total) and does not allow disposal of any deleted books at the branch. Three signatures are required: 1.staff deleting the item on SIRSI, 2.Assistant Branch Manager or Collection Manager, 3.Branch Manager. The fourth signature, the Friends, can by signing, reject the deleted books on site (if they haven't sent a letter to FCPL that they want no books at all), or, if they sign for the books, they assume the ownership of the books for sale or discard.

Even very damaged books must be deleted and placed in a sealed bag and thrown into the branch discard bin. Then, signed off by the Branch Manager, the bin of all deleted books is sent directly to the county warehouse. At this point the discarded books and materials are no longer

FCPL's property, but belong to the Department of Purchasing and Supply Management, who may dispose of these materials as they see fit. Presently Ms. Muse, has contracted with Better World Books, a for-profit book buyer who does some charitable work, to purchase the deleted books. This has not happened yet, but the FCPL no longer discards deleted books.

There were several questions from the F&D Committee.

Why was the fourth signature (Branch Manager) at the branch when only two were required in the audit, but no signatures to sign off at TechOps.

As to a question of boxing the books for the disposition to the warehouse, Ms. Muse had assured us that boxing the books for the buyer would be done by her warehouse employees, not requiring library staff.

There were concerns for the health of the front line staff. Gloves will be provided for staff who must deal with possibly hazardous books.

A report to the Library Board after the complete process is in place would be helpful. Information to the Committee.

Other Transfers

(9) A recommendation was made that the FCPL though one of the statewide library organizations should explore opportunities to transfer usable items to other library systems in the state. Director Sam Clay plans to satisfy this recommendation by talking to other libraries at the state library association this fall.

Friends of the Library

(10) A recommendation that the FCPL's policy should reflect that the Friends groups are responsible for the disposition of books which have been donated directly to the Friends or given to the Friends by the Library. When the Policy Committee meets we will bring up the issue. Collections already has been very good about communicating with the Friends groups as to adding any of their donated books to the FCPL collection.

(11) No issues were identified with the implementation of this recommendation. Friends groups are well known for their diverse, but compatible approaches to donations to FCPL and the FCPL Foundation. The rapport with the Branch Managers and branch staff is commendable. Friends' interest and support of the Library system is essential to the future of our Library.

(12)Joining the Ad Hoc Communications and Evaluations Committee, the F&D committee strongly recommends allocating more space to the Friends in planning future libraries and renovating older ones. If the Fairfax County values the work the Friends do, it should see to it that they have room to work.

Report of the Ad Hoc Floating and Discards Committee, submitted June11, 2014

Fairfax County Board of Trustees

Elizabeth Clements, Chair, Mason District

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Others on the committee:

Nancy Allard, John Ball, Fran Milhouser, Teresa Schlecht, Catherine Quigley

Branch Managers-- Kathy Hoffman and Barbara Peters