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This paper details how the ARS community and a large research university library's ARS department responded and adapted to these rapid changes, acted creatively, and reinvented services through collaboration, creative solutions, grantseeking, and technology renovation. ARS staff continued to test a scan-beside-the-stacks methodology through a grant-funded project to create an Interlibrary Loan (ILL) mobile cart. This mobile cart allowed for a single employee to handle all items to complete the digital conversion of print materials and reduced the risk of coronavirus transfer between library staff members during the COVID-19 pandemic. An on-demand book digitization program in collaboration with multiple departments opened up access to resources to effectively fulfill patrons' needs. Through these and other adaptations, ARS staff retained their professional commitment to provide materials and a high level of services to their users.

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Grantseeking, Technology Renovation, and Creative Solutions to Support Library Access and Online Teaching and Learning During the Global COVID-19 Outbreak

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ABSTRACT

The sudden global epidemiological outbreak in early spring 2020 challenged the academic libraries' Access and Resource Sharing (ARS) department and prevented staff from providing the types of essential services that its users expect and require. With the full closure of campus and all courses moving online within a week, ARS staff were put on the front lines of finding ways to continue providing patrons with access to the library's physical collections while library buildings were closed.

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Keywords: COVID-19, Resource sharing, Grantseeking, Technology Renovation, Collaboration

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges and Creative Solutions in the Access and Resource Sharing Community

The world suddenly changed when the World Health Organization (WHO) rang the alarm bell and declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak as a global pandemic. On March 11, 2020 at a media briefing, WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries to take urgent and aggressive action immediately to contain the virus after more than 110,000 COVID-19 cases were reported, the viral disease had spread to more than 100 countries, and 4,000 people were dead (World Health Organization director-general speeches detail, 2020).

Following science and listening to the health experts' advice, all 50 states across America began to plan and prepare to close non-essential entities and organizations to minimize further spread of the virus, control infections, and save lives. In preparing for a full closure of libraries' buildings, academic libraries around the world faced difficult decisions regarding services to offer and resources to provide to their communities. Massey et al. (2021) discussed the library community's struggles in their article "Community as a Shared Resource: How One Consortium Congregated, Collaborated, and Innovated Its Way through the COVID-19 Crisis":

"All library operations were affected. Education, research and personal information requests still needed to be met; demand by library patrons for access to local physical resources and to items that would need to be borrowed from other libraries did not cease with the onset of the pandemic. Circulation and resource sharing staff scrambled to figure out how to effectively provide access to e-resources to fill as much of the demand from patrons and other libraries as possible." (p. 1)

Resource sharing professionals across the world acted creatively and collaboratively, developed new policies, guidelines, and workflow procedures, and initiated new services. Logue et al. (2021) pointed out, "During this time, the resource sharing community provided unique direction and support for new and expanded services during COVID-19 by sharing information, ideas, success, and challenges" (p. 131).

On April 21, 2021, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Document Delivery and Resource Sharing Section (DDRS) piloted a temporary free resource sharing service model to continue sharing resources in digital formats worldwide. A group of experts from the resource sharing community launched a Resource Sharing during COVID-19 (RSCVD) tool for resource sharing professionals in not-for-profit libraries to continue sharing resources via a web-based form. To ensure seamless delivery of content, the group chose to use the well-known OCLC Article Exchange methodology to deliver digital files to the end user's account. Article Exchange is a single secure document sharing location which allows lending libraries to upload files to the server for borrowing libraries' users to access anywhere in the world. The borrowing library receives an email with a link to the PDF file and a password to access it. The user can download the file a maximum of five times and the file remains on the user's account for 30 days.

This pilot project initially served as an emergency model to address access restrictions for libraries' print collections at the beginning of the pandemic. The committee planned to provide this service through August 31, 2020, with the potential of extending the service pending further assessments. As the pandemic continued, the project was extended to today, the time the author writes this article. RSCVD connected library workers with libraries in need and created a global resource sharing emergency response network. From April 2020 to September 2021, the project received 13582 article requests and 3951 book chapters requests from 26 countries and 893 institutions. Among the total 17533 requests, 9949 requests were filled by volunteer library staff. The overall fill rate is 57%. Table 1 provides information about article and book chapter requests received, filled, and the fill rate.

Table 1*Resources Sharing During COVID-19 (RSCVD) Statistics*

| 04/2020-09/2021 | Articles | Book Chapters | Total |
|------------------|----------|---------------|-------|
| Received | 13582 | 3951 | 17533 |
| Filled | 7996 | 1953 | 9949 |
| Fill Rate | 59% | 49% | 57% |

The outcome of this project displayed library and resource sharing professionals' resilience, optimism, and unbeatable spirit in the shadow of a global health crisis.

In early May of 2020, the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), a global library nonprofit cooperative organization, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and Battelle launched a Reopening Archives, the Libraries, and Museums (REALM) project. This research project shared findings from reviewing published scientific data and laboratory test results on SARS-CoV-2, to provide evidence-based information resources that helped libraries, museums, and archives to develop new policies and workflow procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Soon, OCLC also launched a new COVID-19 information website. This website was welcomed and highly used by the ARS community. As Hogan et al. (2021) mentioned, "OCLC's COVID-19 information and resource page provides a variety of resources to support libraries during this unique time" (p. 140). One of the most useful tools on the website was the real time ILL map.

When libraries suddenly closed worldwide, the main challenge for managing ILL returnable materials was that library staff did not know when to send ILL returnable items back to their home library. If items were mailed to libraries that were closed, and thus libraries were not able to receive the items, there was a high probability the materials would be lost or damaged, or additional fees may be incurred by the borrowing library because items were undeliverable. To address this issue, OCLC quickly developed a tool called the real time physical ILL return and lending status map. This was a crowdsourced list maintained by the entire resource sharing community worldwide. As libraries began to reopen, the postal service and statewide delivery systems resumed delivery services in late summer 2020. This tool helped libraries track the opening status of other libraries and helped to ensure that materials were safely returned to the owning institutions. Using this tool, libraries across the world effectively cleaned up the backlog on thousands of physical materials (Online Computer Library Center REALM, 2021).

Grantseeking, Technology Renovation, and Collaborations at a R1 Research Institution

Grantseeking activities, technology innovations, and creative solutions have helped libraries across the world to expand their resources and collections, assess programs and services, and initiate new services thus improving their user experience. Flagship R1 research intensive university libraries have a long history of grantseeking activities. De Farber (2021) writes,

"The dean of university libraries set aside funding to support an internal small-grants program initiated by a group of librarians who believed in the importance of training other personnel in the practice of grantseeking. Librarians and staff working at the newly created Digital Library center at UF in the late 1990s had successfully obtained a series of grant

awards to jump-start their operations. There was a sense that if more employees could learn how to navigate the process of grant project planning, budgeting, and writing, the new external grant funds could lift more boats within the libraries.” (p. 8)

In 2006, representatives from various departments in the Libraries, some of whom are principal investigators of externally funded grants, formed a Grants Management Committee and started an internal Mini Grants Program to fund small grant projects. In 2008, the Libraries created a grant manager position and recruited a grant manager. The grant manager manages the grant application process and post award activities, offers workshops to promote grantseeking opportunities, and provides training and mentorship for librarians and library staff. The University Libraries renamed the internal Mini Grants Program as the Strategic Opportunities Program, with a maximum of \$5000 per application. The Libraries further established an Emerging Technologies grants program to encourage technology innovation and creative solution services among library employees. Between 2009 and 2019, the Libraries funded 187 grant proposals for a total of \$8,944,180 in grant funds. Table 2 details the number of grants awarded during this time.

Table 2

University Libraries Awarded Grants from 2009-2019

| Sponsors | | Grant Funds Awarded | Number of Grant Awarded |
|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| External | Total of 31 sponsors | \$7,655,921 | 93 |
| Internal | University | \$965,084 | 21 |
| | University libraries | \$323,175 | 73 |
| Total | | \$8,944,180 | 187 |

It is worthwhile to note that most grant funds are awarded for digitization, preservation, and collection development. In the past ten years, the ARS department has not submitted any grant proposals. This means ARS staff are either challenged by the grantseeking process or have missed valuable opportunities. There are many reasons, as de Farber (2021) pointed out: “In general, most people have little or no training or experience in developing grant proposals” (p. 189). This is very true since, for example, library schools do not typically have grantsmanship in their curriculum, and the time commitment to apply for grants makes it even more challenging for library staff who spend most of their time helping patrons. In the past, ARS staff have not had sufficient time to engage in grantseeking activities, and grantseeking is not an easy activity. However, ARS staff do have an acute understanding of the user’s needs through daily interaction with them. As Mackellar (2011) writes,

“With your strategic plan and technology plan in place, you have what you need to create technology projects that are mission driven and designed to meet the information needs of the people you serve. It is essential that your technology projects emerge from your library’s plans, as they are groundwork you have built to serve your community and its specific needs.” (p. 5)

Despite the challenges, the Libraries’ ARS department project team was awarded an internal grant for testing the scan-beside-the-stacks methodology using an ILL mobile cart in late 2019. The project team continued to develop and test a reconfigured ILL mobile cart funded by a state grant during the pandemic. This mobile cart allows for a single employee to handle all items

to complete the digital conversion of print materials and reduces the risk of coronavirus transfer between library staff members during the COVID-19 pandemic. The department also initiated an on-demand book digitization program which helped to fulfill user's needs to access information in an effective way. Hogan et al. (2021) concluded, "The on-going COVID-19 pandemic has shined a light on resource sharing as a mission critical service for libraries" (p. 139).

BACKGROUND

The Libraries' ARS department consists of one faculty librarian, one program manager, two program coordinators and six staff members. The department centralizes ILL and course reserves services across all branch libraries, standardizes circulation policies and procedures, and provides training and documents for all branch libraries. In the past three years, the department focused on improving operational efficiency and initiating new services through grantseeking, technology renovation, and interdepartmental collaboration. The department received a total of \$49,029 in grant funding and \$150,000 in endowment before and during the pandemic.

With these funds, the department upgraded its current digitization capacity to meet the demand by students and faculty for digital versions of essential library materials by testing and implementing innovative methodologies for scanning library materials within the book stacks. These methodologies afforded the department's staff members the ability to meet the requirements of physical distancing for COVID-19 re-opening standards, addressed the concern of employee safety, and also met the requirement of limiting onsite staff members during the height of the pandemic.

To address patron and resource sharing community needs for accessing print materials while the Libraries were fully closed, the department creatively launched an on-demand digitization program that leveraged the Libraries' staff expertise, fostered collaboration and cooperation among the Libraries' departments, and ensured that users had reliable, affordable access to materials they need.

ARS GRANTSEEKING ACTIVITIES MILESTONE

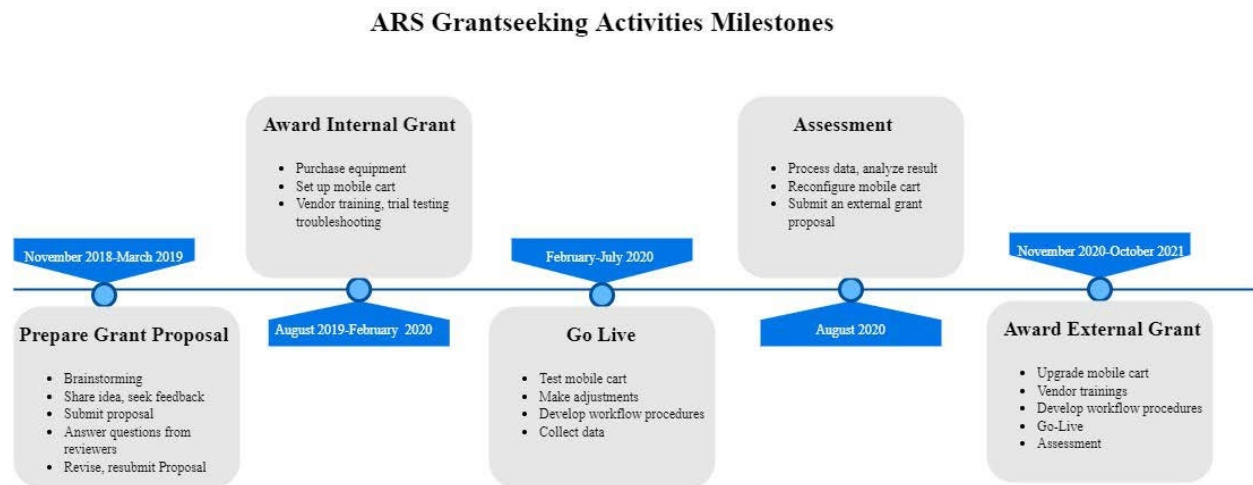
ARS's grantseeking story highlights the possibility of receiving funds for service orientated library departments. It is a matter of creating a culture of grantsmanship, encouraging staff to learn new skills and engage with grantseeking activities. The department's accomplishment in grantseeking activities sets an example to the library ARS community and shows that grant work is within all our abilities and is possible. This is something we all can pursue and achieve.

The original idea to experiment with alternative workflows for resource sharing electronic document delivery and electronic lending services came from trying to find a way to address the Libraries' space challenges created by physical space constraints in the Libraries, improve workflow, and ensure user access to the library's print materials. In spring 2019, the Humanities and Social Sciences Library, home of the ARS department, conducted a renovation and space consolidation project on the second floor of the building. This project required the ARS department to reduce operation space by 50% and to share the office space with the User Services Department. As a result, there was limited space for the scanning carts to hold the books and less shelf space for stack maintenance.

The challenge of losing office space presented an opportunity for ARS staff in the context of reassessing and rethinking the current workflows and procedures. The grant Project Investigator (PI) evaluated the workflows in place and analyzed historical resource sharing data. The PI brainstormed the idea of “scan-beside-the-stacks” through developing an ILL mobile cart. This mobile cart would eliminate the procedure of bringing the collection to the ARS office, which would improve workflow efficiency and free office space. This idea was welcomed by lending and document delivery staff. Three ARS staff members formed a project team, and we started the department’s first ever grantseeking journey.

Figure 1

ARS Grantseeking Activities Milestones



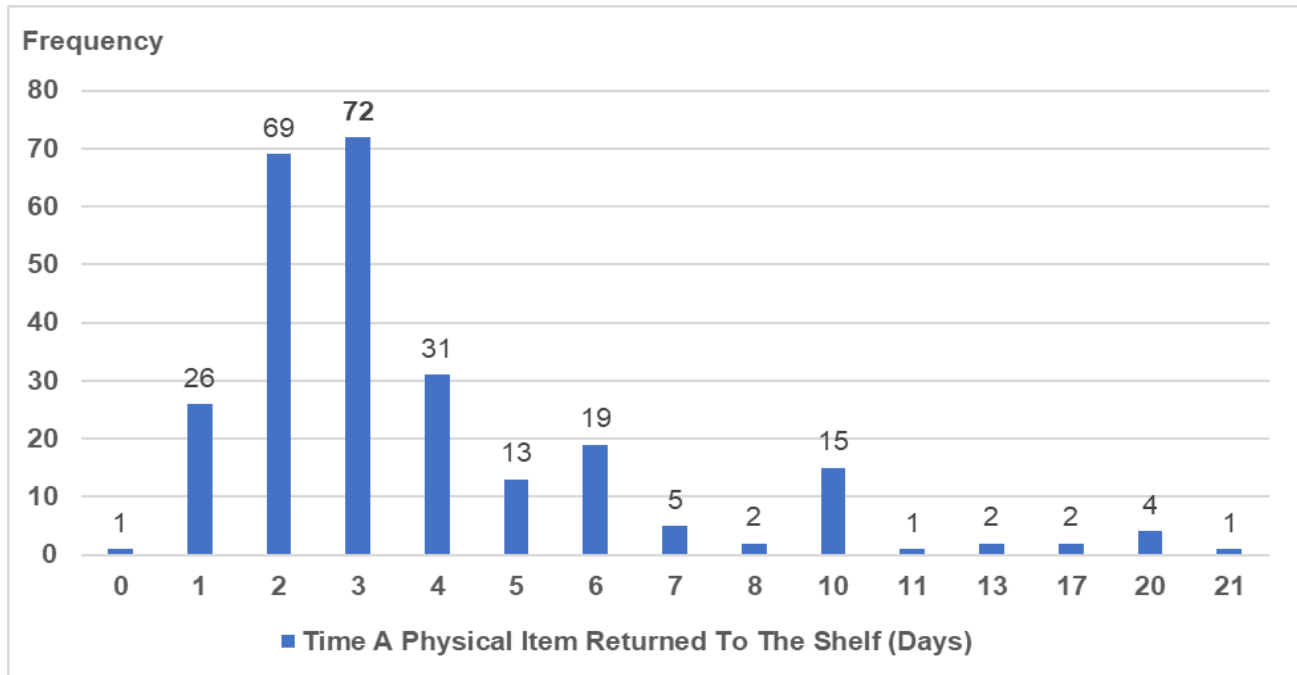
In December 2018, the PI met with the Libraries’ grant manager and discussed the idea of testing an ILL mobile cart. The grant manager liked the idea and strongly encouraged the PI to submit a proposal. This was thought to be the department’s first SOP grant project. SOP grants are one of the sources of grant support offered by the Libraries. With that support, the project PI studied the Libraries’ strategic direction, read funding applications that had been previously awarded, and attended the Libraries’ grant training workshops. Through these activities, the PI better understood the Libraries’ strategic plan and learned about the Libraries’ SOP grant application process. Most importantly, the PI learned the tips and tricks of technology grant proposals and understood that a grant proposal is different from other types of writing. For example, it is critical that the grant seeker thoroughly conveys their idea to the reviewers. This helps to build the reviewers’ confidence in the quality of the proposal and to instill belief in the applicant’s capacity to complete the project successfully within the grant period.

To ensure buy-in and gain funding, the proposal started off by aligning with the Libraries’ mission statement and strategic directives. Specifically, the strategic direction of Innovate (experiment and adapt through experimenting with a mobile scanning station), as well as Integrated Space, Technology, and Services and Assure Effectiveness (efficient and equitable access to pertinent information resources for all library users). The proposal demonstrated the needs of the project. For instance, it highlighted the impact of ongoing renovation and space consolidation within the Libraries. The proposal was also filled with facts and data with surprising and unexpected details aimed at catching the reviewer’s eyes. One example is that the project team tracked 267 scanned items and found that the mode of the amount of time for the scanned print

copies to be returned to the stacks is approximately 3 days, with a wide range of return times on average (from 1 day to 21 days; see Figure 2). There are a couple of items that were missing during the transition.

Figure 2

Time for a Physical Item to Be Returned to the Shelf Using Original Workflow. (Pang et al. 2021)



The data indicates the need to minimize the time period print collections were taken off the shelf, thus assuring patron access to library collections. The proposal illustrated that the scan-beside-the-stacks initiative would eliminate duplicate workflow and procedures, reduce the potential for human error when re-shelving, improve operational efficiency, and save staff time.

In August 2019, the project team was awarded a SOP grant and the ILL mobile cart went live in February 2020. The ARS scanning staff continued using the mobile cart when the Libraries were closed during the global health crisis. In August 2020, the project team assessed the project outcome, reconfigured an ILL mobile cart and submitted a proposal to the State Library Information Services Care Act grant. In December 2020, the project team was awarded funds from the state.

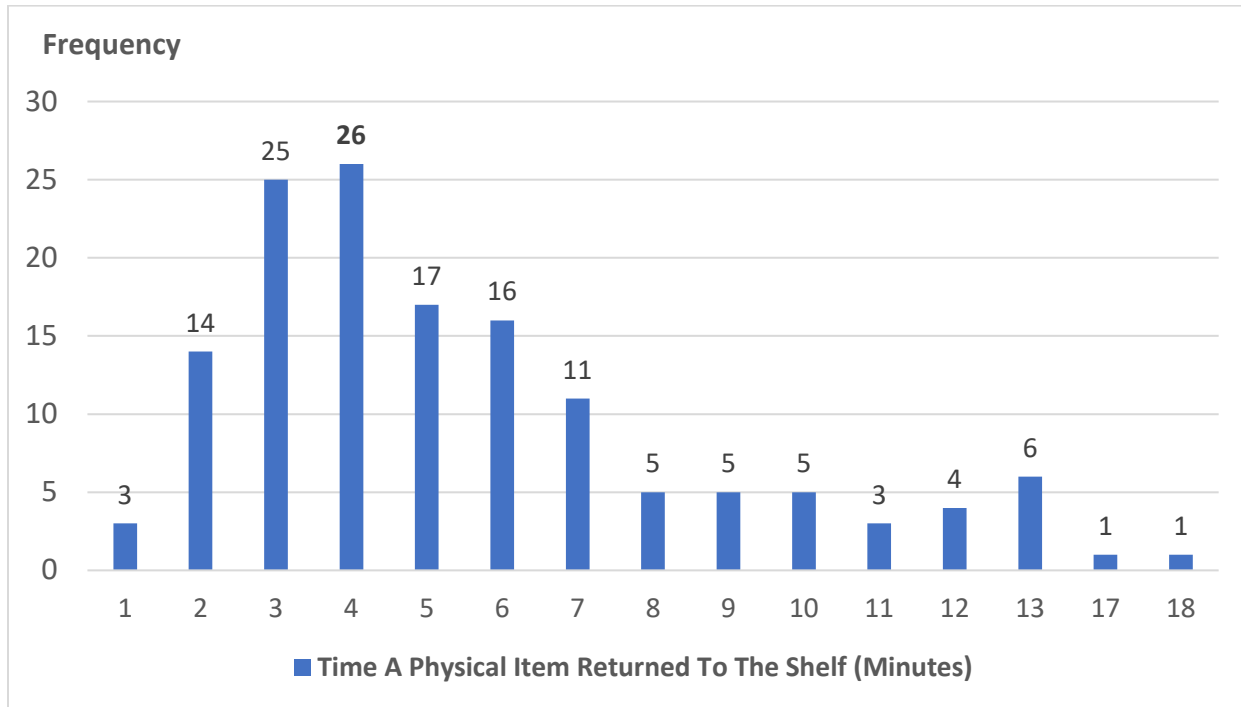
PROJECT OUTCOMES

Time for a Physical Item to Be Returned to the Shelf

The project showed that there were significant decreases in the time a physical item was returned to the stacks. The mode for materials to be returned to the shelf while using a mobile station was about 4 minutes, with a small range of return times on average (from 1 minute to 18 minutes)

Figure 3

Time a Physical Item Returned to the Shelf Using Mobile Cart (Minutes).



The significant reduction of time a physical item was off the shelf further supported the Libraries’ door-side pickup materials program, a program begun in summer 2020 while the Libraries were closed. If patrons requested an item for door-side pickup, the materials would more likely to be on the shelf due to the new scan-beside-the-stacks procedure. After the Libraries were re-opened, the new workflow and procedure ensured that there was a longer period of time materials stayed on the shelf for patrons to access whenever they needed.

Turnaround Time for Electronic Delivery and Lending Service

With the implementation of the mobile scanning station, there was a dramatic improvement in the overall turnaround time for electronic delivery and lending service.

Table 3

Electronic document delivery and electronic lending turnaround time (Pang et al. 2021)

| | Office Scanning Station (5/12/-7/16/2019) | Mobile Scanning Station (5/12/-7/16/2020) | Difference |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| Electronic Document Delivery Turnaround Time | 2.93 Days | 2.37 Days | 0.56 days (13.44 hours) |
| Electronic Lending Turnaround Time | 1.88 Days | 1.21 Days | 0.67 days (16.08 hours) |

ON-DEMAND BOOK DIGITIZATION PROGRAM

The ARS Department has a long-standing commitment to fulfill user's access and resources needs. The department is focused on providing access to the world of information. When coronavirus hit, ARS staff were unprepared for the sudden global health crisis. No one had ever experienced universities and the libraries being fully closed for more than five months. As the university was preparing for the full closure of campus and moving all courses online within a week at the beginning of the pandemic, the biggest concern was, "How can faculty and students access the library's physical materials?" The ARS department was tasked with finding ways to continue providing patrons with access to the library's physical collections while library buildings were closed. A multidepartment on-demand book digitization program was developed to meet users' needs.

Prior to the pandemic, the ARS department had centralized ILL service across all branches. ARS staff digitized the Humanities and Social Sciences Library, Latin American and Caribbean Collection (LACC) and Marston Science Libraries' collections (MSL) for document delivery and lending service. Offsite storage facilities and the other three branch libraries provided digitized files to ARS, and ARS staff delivered the documents to patrons' accounts. While the on-demand book digitization program was in the planning stages, the department decided to keep the current scanning workflow. However, ARS could no longer access the MSL and LACC buildings due to restrictions on accessing library buildings during the shutdown. After coordinating with MSL and LACC branch chairs, two staff members at each location with some previous scanning experience were chosen and trained to fulfill digitization requests. Before the Libraries were fully closed, a scanning team was formed and included two ILL staff and six circulation staff at each of the branch libraries.

A book digitization web request form was created to allow patrons to submit their requests to the ILL platform ILLiad. A new service announcement was announced on the ILL website on March 19, 2020, before the Libraries were officially closed on March 23, 2020.

March 19, 2020

"During the COVID-19 pandemic/library closing, the Libraries Interlibrary Loan staff will strive to support your teaching and research to the best of our ability. We will continue to obtain and deliver electronic items from the University Library's collection and from other libraries (articles, book chapters, papers, etc.).

In addition, we are offering a special temporary book digitization service to our patrons. Please follow [this link](#) to submit your request.

We are not able to supply physical items (Books, DVDs, Microfilm, etc.) at this time. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause."

The ARS department head was closely monitoring the demand for ILL service. On Monday March 23, 2020, the first day of the closure of the library building, the ILL department received more than 200 borrowing requests submitted by patrons over the weekend. One user requested 8 books for digitization from special collections. The ARS department head shared the information with library administration. The head suggested revisiting the On-Demand Book Digitization policy and bringing library acquisition and subject librarians into this project to fulfill the user's

needs. A new book digitization policy was developed and was communicated with patrons. On March 26, 2021, an updated announcement was posted on the Libraries’ website.

Update on March 26, 2020

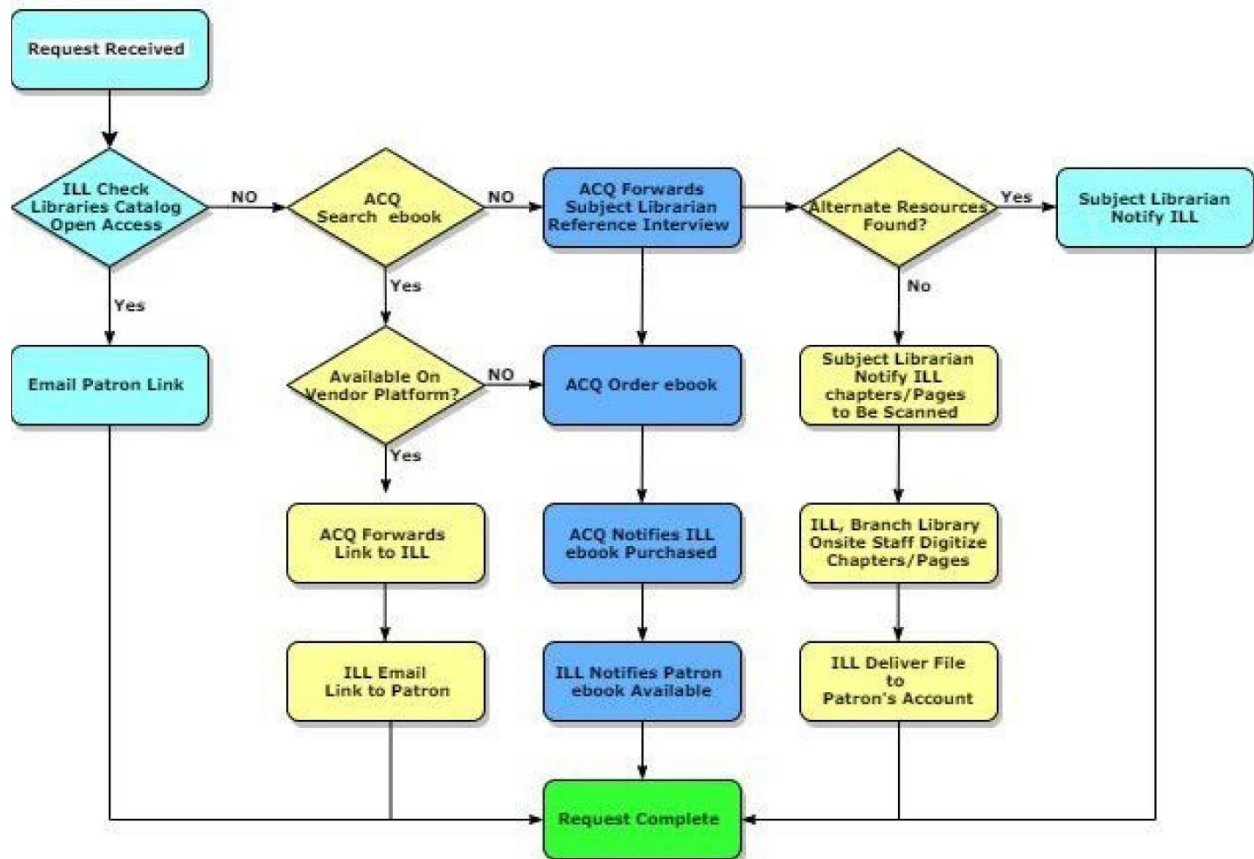
“While we cannot provide access to our print collections during the closure of the library buildings, we are committed to providing electronic access to the resources you need. Please submit a Book Digitization Request via our Interlibrary Loan Service. We will try to purchase an electronic copy for you. If we cannot purchase an electronic version, we will digitize up to 50 pages per request from any book held by libraries. Due to limited staff on-site, we can process 3 digitization requests per patron, per day.”

Later, two of the Libraries’ Associate Deans, the Chair of the Libraries’ Acquisition and Collections Services Department, and the head of the ARS department met to discuss the book digitization workflow and procedures. The workflow was modified and finalized. Figure 4 illustrates the on-demand book digitization workflow across multiple libraries’ departments.

Figure 4

On-Demand Book Digitization Workflow

On Demand Book Digitization Workflow



From March 2020 to August 2020, the Libraries' staff retrieved 113 free e-books from Open Access resources, purchased 51 eBooks, and digitized 558 titles (multiple chapters for each title) from the Libraries' collections for its patrons.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PLANS

The on-going global epidemiological outbreak has posed challenges to our professional and personal lives. The global health crisis has illuminated potential reforms and offered the chance to rethink beyond traditional library operations and services. Library professionals and the ARS community today are collectively stronger than ever through global partnerships, information sharing networks, consortium efforts, and individual institutions' best practices. Members of the profession have demonstrated resilience and adaptability by quickly developing new tools and initiating new services to deliver information digitally, support online teaching and learning, and continue to provide communities with the resources they need. Once again, the profession proved that the heart of any academic institution is still its library, and that without one, a university or college cannot achieve its educational mission.

Throughout the Libraries' closure, the ARS department struck a fine balance between protecting staff and users' safety and minimizing service disruption. Department staff strived toward its mission and performed due diligence in their work despite living in an unprecedented and disruptive environment. ARS continued its grantseeking activities and was awarded a state-funded grant during the pandemic. Staff felt encouraged and rewarded by the department's first two grant awards.

With practice, the project team gained competence and confidence in developing fundable grant proposals. The team learned the mechanics of grantseeking and understood the complexity of the grant process. Team members learned how to generate ideas for fundable technology grant proposals, how to prepare and complete the grant application, as well as how to manage the post-award grant funding. Through reading funded grant proposals, the team realized that modern technologies have significantly changed the landscape for libraries and ARS services. ARS staff realized that they must stay up to date in current technology trends, explore innovative technologies, identify the most appropriate technology to improve workflow efficiency, and meet the information resource needs of the community they serve.

The department will continue to pursue grantseeking activities in the future with a focus on technology innovation and improving workflow efficiency. Specifically, ARS will be looking for ideas and opportunities such as integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology into the ARS workflow. AI technology has the potential to open new horizons and shift library services in a new direction. Library professionals should embrace advanced technologies and assist the upcoming generation with their evolving needs.

The on-demand book digitization project opened a door to increase service capacity to support online teaching and learning. Staff in the Libraries across multiple departments have worked tirelessly during this incredibly challenging time. Their efforts highlight their passion for library service and demonstrated their creativity and ingenuity to enrich users' experience.

Through this project, the department advocated for and promoted open educational resources to the Libraries' researchers. ARS staff connected users to their subject specialist to help fulfill user needs. The staff established collegial relationships among various departments within

the Libraries. Staff shared their knowledge and expertise, learned from one another, and strengthened their interpersonal relationships with colleagues across the Libraries. Moving forward, the department will continue to seek new partnership and collaboration opportunities in the ARS community, across campuses, and with other libraries in the future. We will continue to scale up ARS services to better serve users.

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About the author

Xuan Pang is the Chair of Access and Resource Sharing Department at George A. Smathers libraries at the University of Florida. Her role is to support the teaching and research goals of University of Florida faculty, students, and staff, by facilitating access to resources in circulating collections, and through interlibrary loan and document delivery services, print and electronic course reserves, and consortia resource sharing partnerships.