# IF WE CAN, YOU CAN!

ALCTS Technical Services Workflow Efficiency Interest Group
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Hello everyone! My name is Jessalyn Zoom. First I'd like to thank the IG co-chairs for the opportunity. I am currently supervisor for the History and Military Science Section responsible for processing Copyright and CIP program receipts for monographs at the Library of Congress.

We all have been to presentations on effective working skills as a supervisor, manager, or a staff member. I'd like to spend the next 15 minutes to share with you on how we are utilizing the skills learned to conduct the work in my section in order to accomplish production and quality work. I hope you will be able to take away one or two ideas at the end of the presentation and give it a try at your own work place.
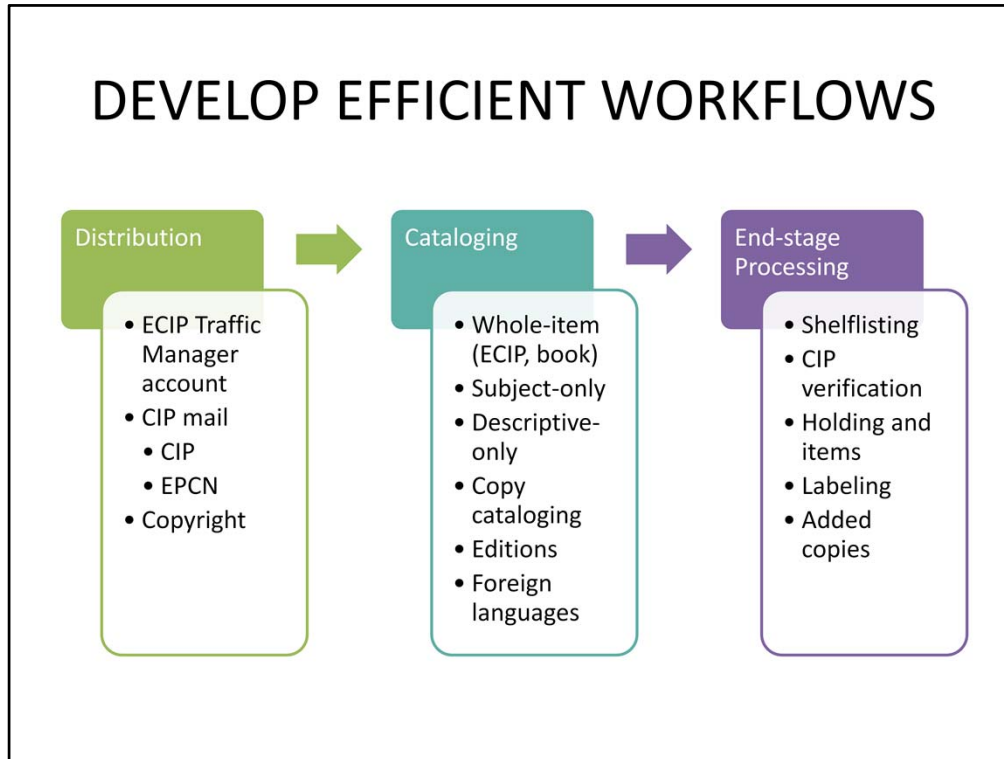
Develop efficient workflows

We all have workflows. But is it working well and does it need improvement? This is a question I keep in mind all the time. Our workflow involves 3 stages, receiving work from distribution including online via ECIP program, performing cataloging, and completing end-stage processing.

One of the lessons I learned in planning workflows is to minimize the numbers of times a book is being touched before it is completed in the section. The fewer times the more efficiency it achieves. Here are three examples I'd like to share on developing efficient workflows in our areas of work.

- In the distribution workflow chain, my team make sure to screen incoming material promptly and thoroughly and identify out of scope materials, e.g., serials. This avoids the potential delay of processing the material.

- In the cataloging workflow chain, I'd like to share two examples. The Library requires timely bibliographic control for incoming material. We have a shelf for books which do not have initial bibliographic control (or IBC) records in the Library's Voyager cataloging module and a separate shelf for copy cataloging books. When I realize that the IBC shelf also contain books which have copy cataloging records found in OCLC, I decided to put those books directly on the

copy cataloging shelf. The result is increased copy cataloging output, and lower volume of non-IBC records needing initial bibliographic control.

- One positive experience we have had is to review the established procedures. The example here is on handling edition books. Books of edition come in to the section should have been selected to add to the collection. However, what we experienced was that still a good numbers of editions come in without the routing slip with selection officer's signature. Once we identified that this has been an issue, we held a meeting with all who involved in this workflow outside of the section. The section responsible for referring edition books for review found that some of their staff did not follow the proper workflow. Now the total numbers of books for which we have to forward for selection before cataloging has come down dramatically.

Note: CIP sourced material includes books received from both CIP Program and EPCN Program (which is part of CIP Program) Copyright material comes from Copyright Acquisition Division. Sort books into different work streams, based on tasks performed

UTILIZE STAFF'S STRENGTHS AND
SKILL SETS

Utilize staff's strengths and skill sets

As a supervisor, I try my best to motivate staff members to do the best they can. Every staff member has unique experience and strengths in certain areas of work they have developed over the years. For our catalogers, their educational background in history or military history have also helped them become a subject expert. My goal is to develop every staff member to become an expert or go to person in at least one area by providing appropriate assignment for them to work on and to build and strengthen the expertise. If you have staff who are strong in certain areas especially relevant to your area's work, find ways to get the juices flowing.

Develop staff members and expand their horizon

Once all areas of work is fully covered, I make sure that staff has an opportunity to learn what they are not already doing. This provides staff various training opportunities to develop the skills needed to do the work and help them achieve their career goals in the long run, e.g.,

- Send staff to different cataloging training courses.
- Provide systematic training and review for different stages of the work (copy cataloging, IBC creation, MLC, editions.)
- Give new assignment to staff (they love to be regarded) once they are properly trained and let them have the opportunity to practice what they learned.
- Encourage staff to attend professional meetings and programs to keep abreast of subject expertise and new trends in technical services.
- With a balance, look out detail opportunities and assignments outside of section's work which compliment their current work responsibilities as well as develop their potentials.

Most importantly, listen to what they need and encourage them to ask questions.
One more benefit: The section has built the continuity and there is more than one person who can handle a particular area of work.

Take advantage of technology and tools. Provide staff technical assistance in a timely manners.

One of the experiences I had was working with technical staff in the Library's automation division to install a program which allows to bring in a certain type of catalog records (origres records (with LCCN #)) via OCLC. This takes some investigation and time and persuasion. But it pays off in the long run. With the program installed, catalogers have the option of bringing in the record if the quality is up to the standard and he just needs to enhance the record. This, in my opinion, is the kind of efficiency we need in technical services. There are other examples we have used. But in the interest of time, I will just move on.

Other examples:

- Assist staff in getting program update to minimize the errors caused by using a 955 macro.
- Set up shared space on the server to improve communication and maintain workflow documents.

FOLLOW UP AND REVISIT AND KEEP
THINGS ORGANIZED

Follow up and revisit and keep things organized

Like an individual, the team should be checked out periodically to solve problems and improve workflow efficiency. My section has had a long standing question on handling historical fictions and graphic novels vs. literary works. As soon as I realized that we needed some formal guidelines in this area of work, I invited a subject policy specialist and staff working with literary works for a meeting discussion with my team (in the past, individual catalogers have worked on it whenever they encountered the problem). Before the meeting, my team prepared various book examples with questions we like to ask. After the team, we documented the discussion results and general guidelines. The document is in the team's folder in a shared space for everyone to consult with when questions come up.
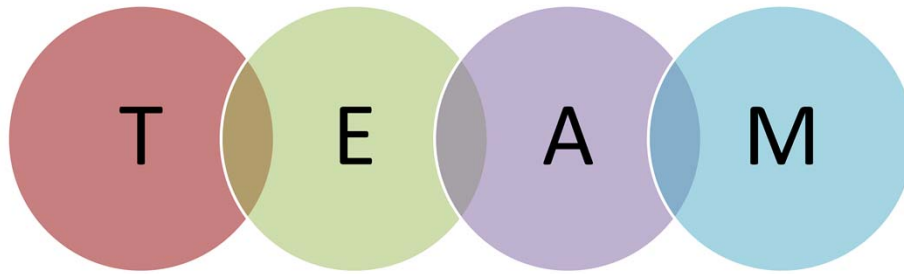
Teamwork vs Individual work

Teamwork has allowed my team to agree on established tasks to be completed, and solve problems and complete the work collaboratively. We are no longer a team with individual territory and the attitude of "it's not my problem."
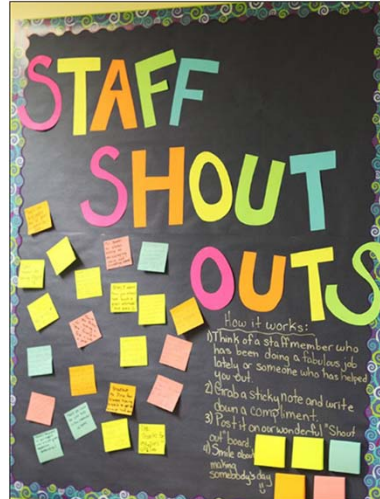
There are things we did that definitely helped team building. For example, keep everyone on the same page with the flow of information. Be fair and open-minded of different ideas and ways of doing the work. Keep everyone accountable, no more and no less. One of the easiest thing to do is to have team lunch periodically. Everyone will have a chance to talk with one and another and get to know each other better. This has fostered communication and positively impacted the quality of the work.

Let staff own their work is a big part of team building.

- Here is one way to share the good work staff do. You can create a bulletin board or use your signin/signout board to do this. Get a sticky note and write down a compliment for the help you received or someone you think has done a fabulous job on something, and post it on the board. Create the space where everyone can contribute and have some fun.

Make sure that you
- Emphasize the importance of their work and the value of their contribution.
- Take the time to recognize the work they do and the effort they give.
- Be fair and gentle. Care them as an individual, not your subordinate.
- Confidence comes with acquired skills and ability, and with the developed cataloger judgement. When the staff are confident, they will do better work.

BECOME A SUBJECT EXPERT YOURSELF

Become a subject expert yourself

I emphasize this because I have personally benefitted from the years of cataloging work experience I have had. Be sure to keep up with the changes and keep yourself relevant in the field. Learning RDA and its ongoing development is a perfect example. If you do not have subject knowledge in the area you manage, be cognizant of learning it on the go. Knowing the work or being an expert will help you better guide staff's work and make better decisions. If they know where to get help when they encounter an issue, they are likely to ask questions. Of course if you do not have the answer do not hesitate to admit. Set an example of willing to learn and adapt. Cultivate a positive environment for everyone to learn from each other, and you are one of them.

With all this mind, a better team and a high performing team will be within your reach.

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Last but not least, I'd like to thank my team at the Library for what they have taught me to become a better supervisor. Thank you.