

Overwhelm: Deciding to do less with less

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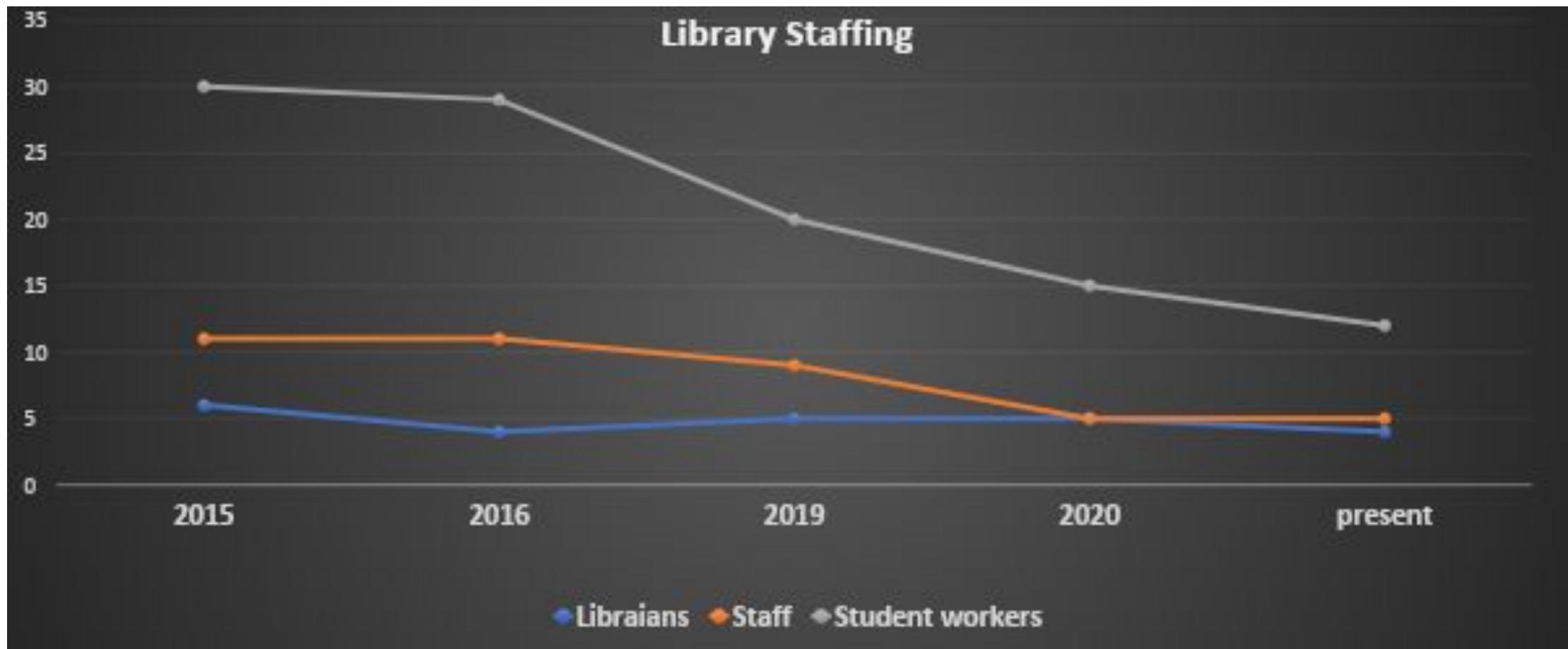
Southwest Baptist University

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A bit about us

- SBU is a small, private university with four campuses.
- Librarians' jobs are multi-faceted.
 - Position-specific duties.
 - Liaison duties.
 - Acquisitions for assigned departments.
 - Information literacy sessions for assigned departments.
 - Reference for assigned departments.
 - Faculty duties.
 - Faculty committees.
 - University responsibilities.
 - Service to church and community.
- There is a collegial atmosphere with get-togethers outside of work.

How we got overwhelmed



2016-2019 “Doing More with Less”

The Positives

- Creativity is sparked by “how can we do this?”
- Expanded student work to help with book processing, weeding, marketing, book displays, outreach, and basic reference.
- Sense of camaraderie.

The Negatives

- Work is not done as well.
- Trouble determining priorities.
- More work is piled onto less and less people with fewer resources.
- Resentment can build among and between staff.
- Stress and overwork.

2019 – We are tired. And broke.

What we kept

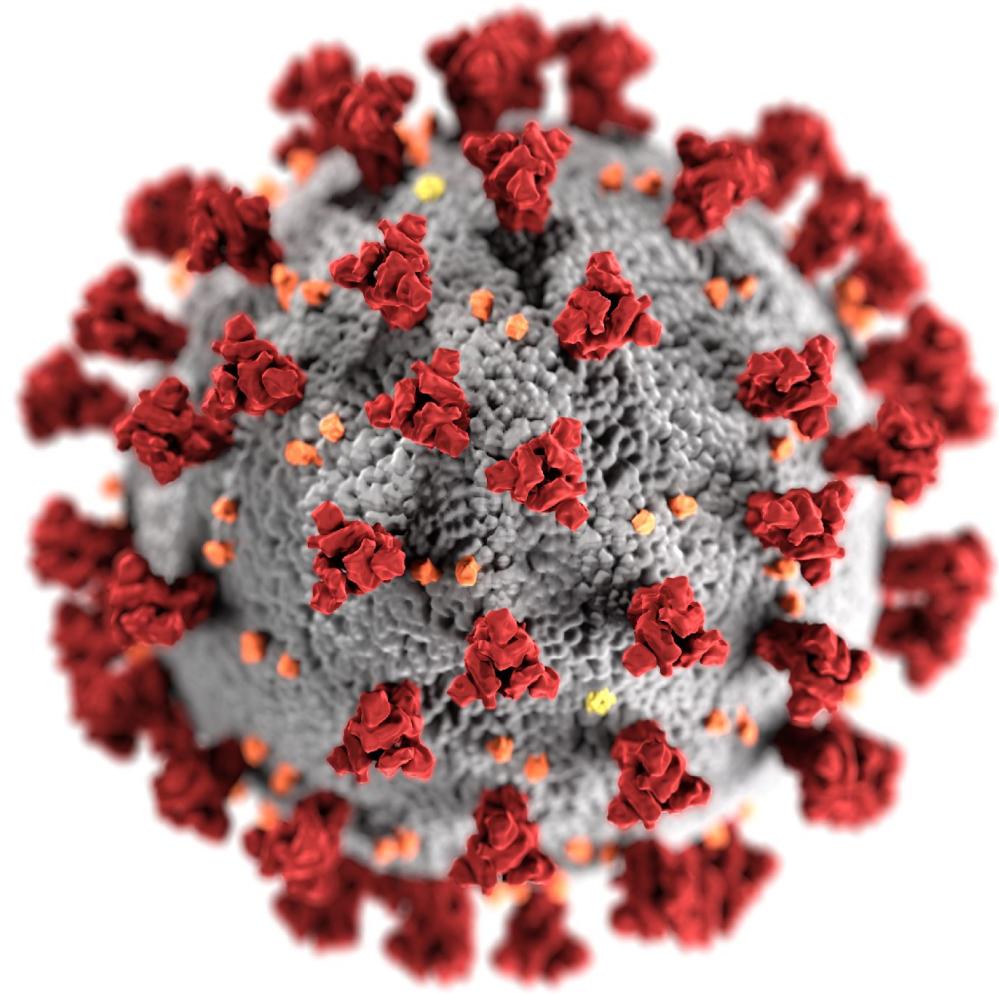
- Liaison librarians
- Final's week activities
- Outreach to new students during Welcome Week
- All our normal workloads

What we stopped doing or cut back on

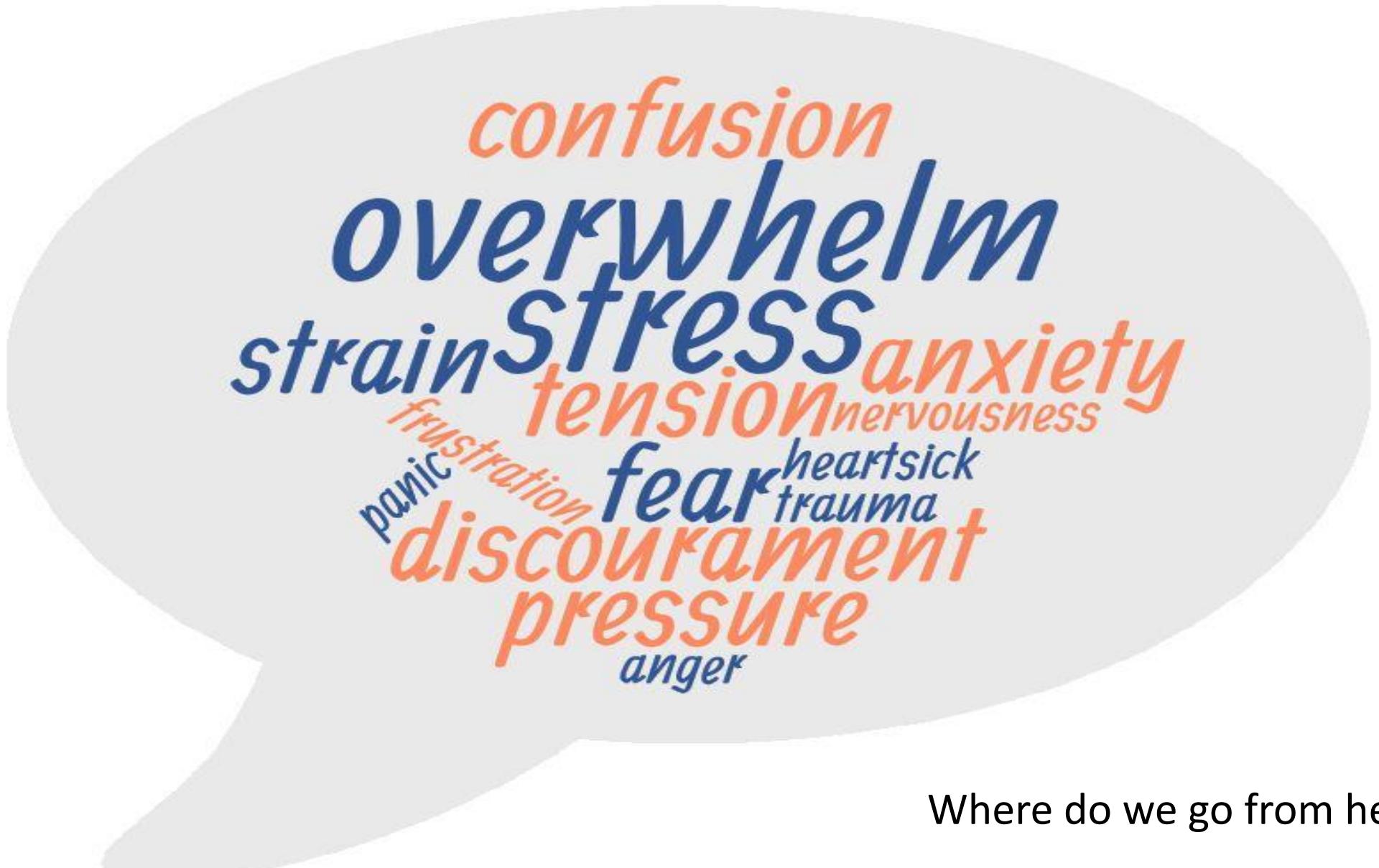
- Activities like game night
- Most marketing
- Focus groups to improve services
- Lots of journals

And then...2020

- We took another \$50,000 budget cut.
- Four more staff people were fired and one retired.
- We were told that this could just be the first round of cuts.
- We were given five weeks to “downsize” a branch campus library.
- The university totally reorganized its structure.
- Oh. Yeah. And there was a PANDEMIC going on.



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confusion
overwhelm
strain
stress
tension
anxiety
frustration
panic
fear
discouragement
pressure
nervousness
heartsick
trauma
anger

Where do we go from here?



“It’s challenging to do less with less in a profession that’s as focused on service as librarianship...We want to say yes...”

Maura Smale
“Doing Less with Less”

First Steps

1. Decide on priorities.
2. Decide if there is a way to shift responsibilities.
 1. Does anyone have time or energy to take on more things?
 2. Who can help with what?
 3. Can some of the things that need doing be outsourced? At what cost?
3. Decide what things can we stop doing.
4. How do we keep up morale when it seems we are not valued?

Our Priorities

What do we have to do?

- Keep the doors open.
- Help students and faculty with research.
- Provide resources.
- Keep the website and online resources accessible.
- Maintain our mental health.

What is optional?

- Everything else.

Shift Responsibilities

- Moved copy cataloger to circulation to maintain hours of operation.
- Closed media services:
 - Moved equipment to circulation.
 - Moved most of material out to open stacks.
 - Stopped services like lamination and printing.
- The acquisitions librarian:
 - took over the tasks of the acquisition clerk.
 - took over some of the tasks done by the copy cataloger.
- Continue to pay for chat service when we are not in the library.
- Outsource most of our cataloging by using “shelf-ready” processing.

Just stop...

- Events. Besides the pandemic, there is no money for these.
- Conferences.
- Buying physical content for our branch libraries that lost staff.
- Using lots of different sources for materials.
- Having separate faculty/staff meetings (YAY!).
- Ordering non-academic content.
- Book repair.
- Archives.



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Tech Services: the brunt of the changes

1. We set up “shelf ready” processing with our jobbers.

1. Pros:

- Books arrive with labels, date due slips, barcodes, and covers.
- Records are easily downloaded into our ILS.

2. Cons:

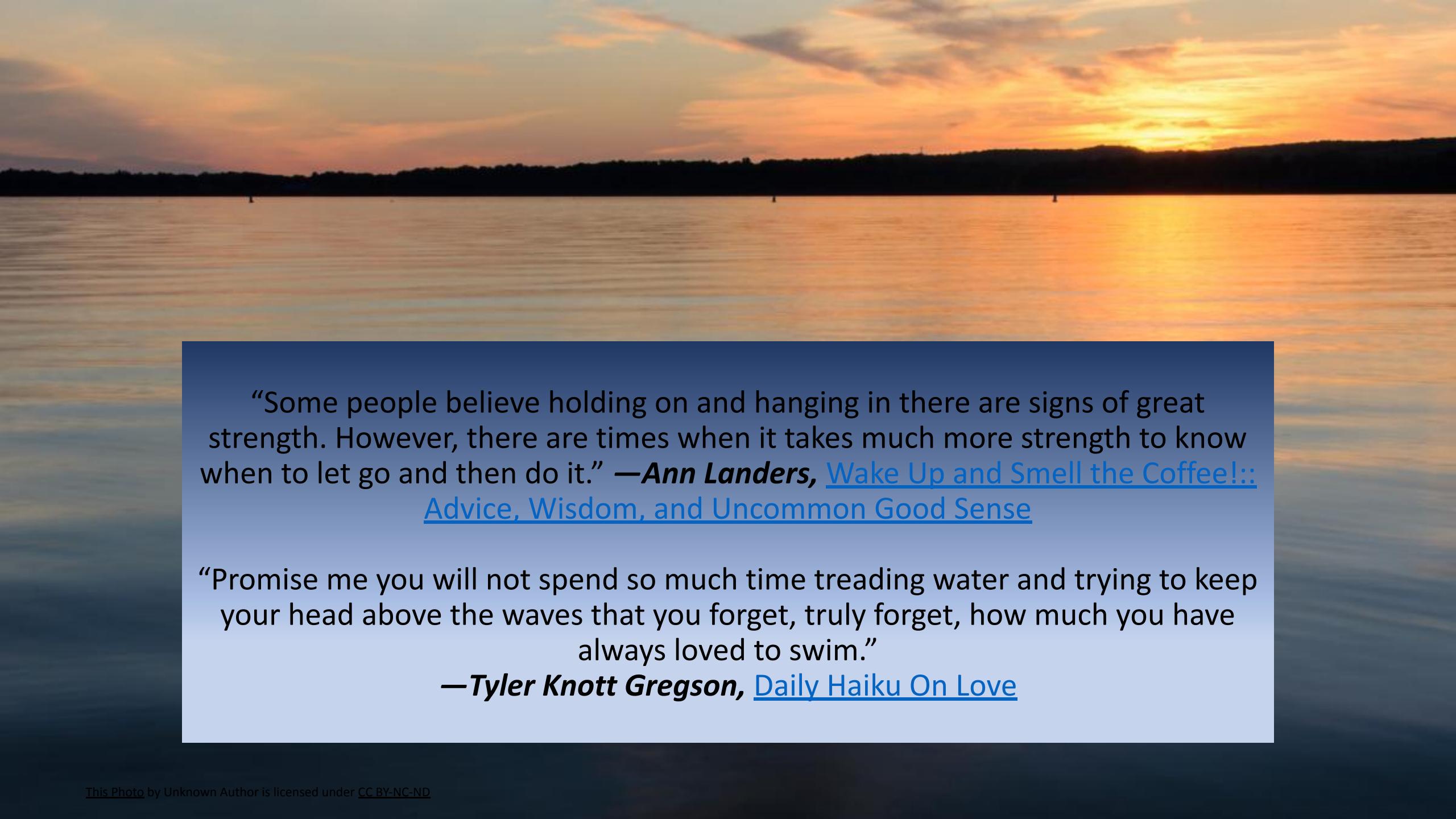
- Some records are...less than stellar.
- Hard to adjust to a new way of doing things.
- Still having trouble with label printing by one of our jobbers.

2. I rolled an additional two jobs into mine.

- More interested in easy than in “how it’s always been done.”
- Streamlined some processes to avoid duplication of effort and paperwork.
- I had done a practicum as a cataloger, so I knew the basics and was willing to learn.
- Circulation student workers do the final processing.
- I can keep projects on track and adjust priorities.

Our takeaways

- Take care of yourself and be kind to each other.
- Be patient with each other.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Don't be afraid to say, "We can't do that."
- Find your main things and concentrate on those.

The background of the image is a sunset over a body of water, with a dark silhouette of hills in the distance. A large, semi-transparent dark blue rectangular box covers the lower-left portion of the image, containing the quote.

“Some people believe holding on and hanging in there are signs of great strength. However, there are times when it takes much more strength to know when to let go and then do it.” —***Ann Landers***, [Wake Up and Smell the Coffee!:: Advice, Wisdom, and Uncommon Good Sense](#)

“Promise me you will not spend so much time treading water and trying to keep your head above the waves that you forget, truly forget, how much you have always loved to swim.”

—***Tyler Knott Gregson***, [Daily Haiku On Love](#)