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The Cost of Stewardship

Employing the OCLC tool to change the
conversation between special collections and donors



- Welcome and Problem Statement
- Brief overview on Cost of Stewardship tool
- Case study: the Sophia Smith Collection of women's history and the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)
- Outcomes and lessons learned
- Q&A

Problem Statement

Materials gifts to special collections can sometimes come with financial gifts. Estimated costs of collection stewardship are often best guesses. Financial gifts can result in preferential treatment for the materials and can generate pressure to accept materials unsuited to the institution, both of which raise ethical issues.

Acquisitions



Cataloging

Processing & Description
Preservation & Conservation
Digitization & Reformatting
Storage & Maintenance

Staffing

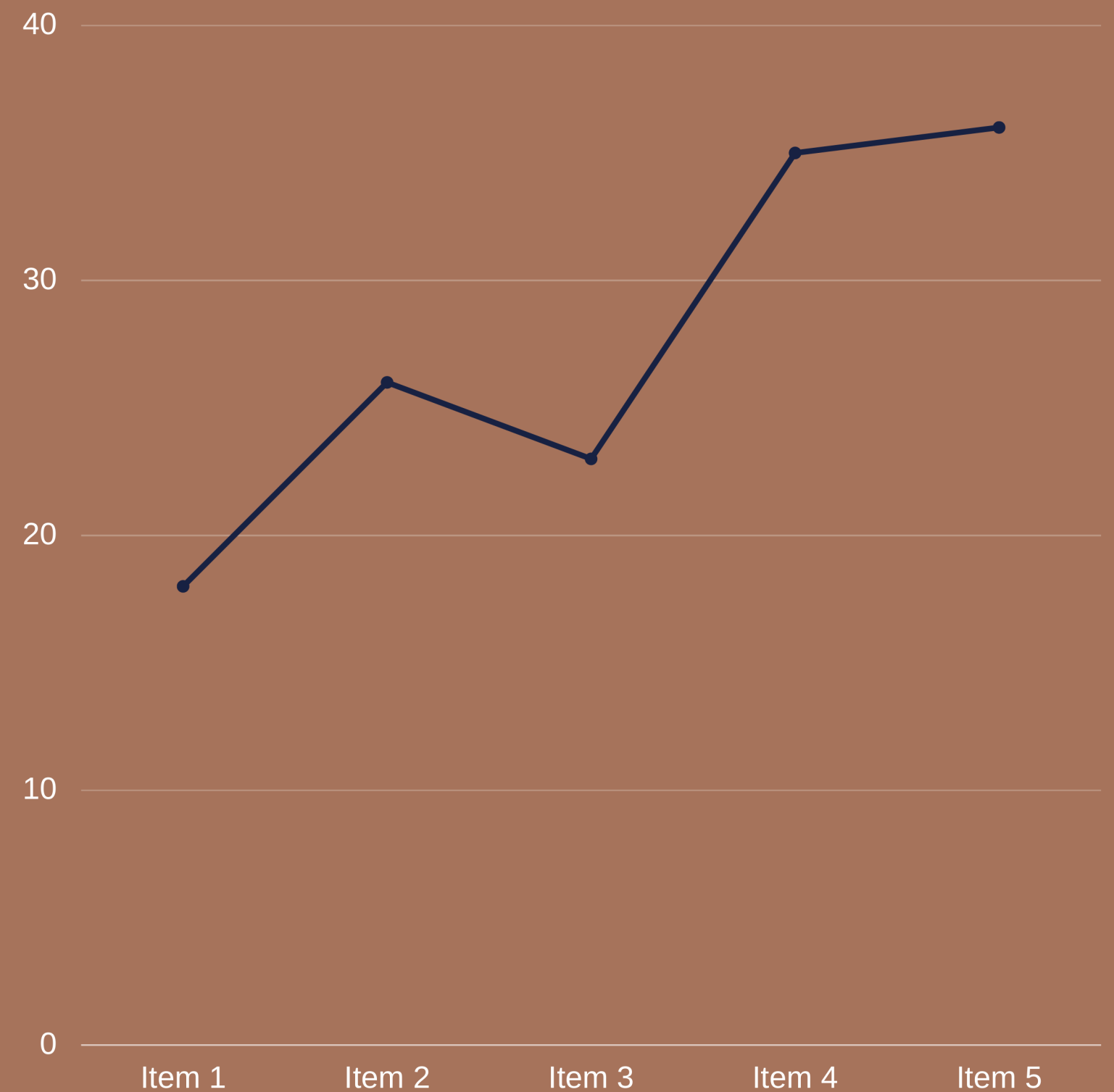
Technology Infrastructure
Public Programming
Physical Infrastructure

Unsustainable Growth

A Longtime Trend



The ability to acquire collections based on gifts or purchases has long outstripped the resource support of archives and special collections. This results in seemingly insurmountable backlogs of inaccessible material





OCLC Takes Action

March 2021 published:

Total Cost of Stewardship: Responsible
Collection Building in Archives and Special
Collections by OCLC Research Library
Partnership's Collection Building and
Operational Impacts Working Group

Mary Kidd, Carrie Hintz, Jasmine Jones, Chela Scott Weber, Erik A. Moore, Martha O'Hara Conway, Heather Briston, Gioia Stevens, Sue Luftschein, Audra Eagle Yun, Ed Galloway, Susan Pyzynski, Andra Darlington, and Matthew Beacom

Why?

“Total Cost of Stewardship is a framework that proposes a holistic approach to understanding the resources needed to responsibly acquire and steward archives and special collections. The Total Cost of Stewardship Framework responds to the ongoing challenge of descriptive backlogs in archives and special collections by connecting collection development decisions with stewardship responsibilities.”

Key Points

Focus on human labor - specialized and skilled

Centers on staff capacity

Provides a high and low range, not absolutes. The more precise the data going in, the better the numbers coming out

Presumes and actualizes a more democratic decision making process that includes those impacted by the decision

Makes 'unseen' costs more visible

Quick Cost Estimator

Time, Staff, Supplies

Operational Impact Estimator

Time, Priorities Cost



Smith College
Sophia Smith Collection
&
International Women's
Health Coalition

A case study

Smith College Special Collections – Sophia Smith Collection (SSC)

Founded 1942, Smith College

Oldest collection of women's history in the US – focused on
collection women working on behalf of women and gender
minorities

Largest collection for women's reproductive health, justice, and
wellbeing

The Donor: International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)

Founded in 1984, NYC.

Merged with International Planned Parenthood in 2021.

Advocacy organization for women and girls rights, health, equality on a global scale, but focused on the Western Hemisphere. Programming included health education, abortion training, maternity care, comprehensive sex education, anti-sterilization lobbying, and domestic sexual violence awareness campaigns.

Operational Impact Estimator



Quick Cost Estimator



TIMELINE

DECEMBER 2021

Deed of gift executed

Conversation about
the cost of
stewardship to Smith
for the IWHC records

DECEMBER 2021

Outcome:

\$20,000 for the cost
of stewardship

\$75,000 as outright
gift

JAN - MARCH
2022

Materials arrived

278 containers +
195 gigabytes (84,000
digital files)

JUNE 2022 -
APRIL 2023

Materials lightly
processed by Claire
Clusin, Amy
Kitmacher, (students);
Carolina Quezada
Meneses and Althea
Topek (staff);
Finding Aid Available

Immediate Outcomes

No more pay-to-play funding for collection management

Increased awareness across all staff levels of the actual cost of collection acquisition, ongoing access, preservation

Increased education for advocates (third parties)

Responsible collecting means zero increase in backlog for processing

Empowered soft-pass on offers by curators

LONGTERM OUTCOME: COMMUNICATION



1

Outward : to Donors

Outward, sets clear expectations, opens up space to talk about financial gifts

3

Upward : Organization

Proof of ROI, data based reporting - advocacy for staff based on actual capacities

2


Inward : to Staff

Enable prioritization of work and data driven decision making; clear set of expectations; increased participation is empowering (the work is recognized)

4

Around : Everyone

Transparency of the acquisitions process, increased knowledge by all parties



Shift in Donor Relationship

'free' gift to mutually responsible partnership



Ethical,
Responsible
Collection



Managing
expectations
from the
beginning



Financial
transparency



Honesty about
capacities



When CoS Tools Works Best



- When there is known capacity or interest from the donor
- When the offer from the donor is clearly extraordinary from typical gifts (size, format, legal issues)
- When applying for grants to realistically estimate costs
- When considering collection management projects



Thank you!



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