Top Concerns of Technical Services Staff

Richard Lammert, Technical Services and Systems Librarian, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

ABSTRACT: The annual conversation group sponsored by the Technical Services Interest Group provides an opportunity for library workers in technical services areas—or in any area of library work—to discuss anything that anyone considers a top concern for technical services staff. Participation by persons other than those in technical services area is encouraged because the work in technical services ultimately influences work in all other areas of the library. Because the main concerns of individuals vary from year to year, the topics discussed also change—although there are some perennial topics. This year, the main topic was migrations of integrated library systems.

Nine people attended the Tuesday evening technical services conversation group, "Top Concerns in Technical Services": two in-person in Baltimore and seven online. This year, the top concern was system migration.

Although no library was in the midst of an integrated library system (ILS) migration, several libraries are starting to consider a migration from their current system. Participants in the conversation group asked for advice. Among advice offered by attendees was the following: Talk to someone currently using a system to get the "real" story about the pros and cons. Use Marshall Breeding's "Library Technology Guides" (*https://librarytechnology.org/*) to find libraries currently using one's proposed system. Determine what did not go smoothly in the last migration, and make sure that the problems encountered in that migration do not remain problems with a new migration. Do not depend on future roadmaps to provide what is missing if the proposed system does not offer what a library needs—future developments are never guaranteed, so one should base migration decisions only on what is currently functioning in a particular system. Consider all the functions wanted in a new system (for example: cataloging and accessibility of all types of

materials, monographs, serials, and electronic resources; staff functions and requirements; discovery system integration with the ILS or interoperability with a separate discovery system), and choose a system based on the right mix for one's library. Determine whether the library wants to install and maintain the ILS itself, or contract for software as a service.

Two other topics considered briefly were the cataloging of electronic resources and the Official RDA Toolkit. The accuracy and utility of available cataloging of electronic resources has always been a problem; no new solutions were offered. The Official RDA Toolkit will be implemented no sooner than October 2022, although a later date is quite likely. There should be available training (free of charge) from the Program for Cooperative Cataloging by the fall of 2022.