

2011

# Making waves: Library IT as a disruptive force

Erin White

*Virginia Commonwealth University*, [erwhite@vcu.edu](mailto:erwhite@vcu.edu)

Thomas McNulty

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

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# Making waves

Library IT as a disruptive force

Erin White

[erwhite@vcu.edu](mailto:erwhite@vcu.edu)

Thomas McNulty

[tmcnulty@vcu.edu](mailto:tmcnulty@vcu.edu)

LITA Forum 2011

# What we'll cover

- Systems-initiated project at our library
- Blueprint for IT as innovation shop
- Discussion: innovation @ your institution

# Questions to ponder

- Who/what/when/why/how does your organization pursue innovation and change?
- What's your role as a change agent?
- How do you sell change?

# Systems-initiated project at VCU: Discovery system

Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May  
**2010 -**  
**2011**

# VCU

- Large public university in Richmond, VA
- Two libraries on two campuses
- VCU and VCU Health System
- Libraries serve ~32,000 students and ~10,000 faculty/staff

# VCU Libraries Information Systems

- IT shop within the Libraries
  - desktop support - public and staff
  - digital collections
  - ILS
  - web team
  - 14 FTE

Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May

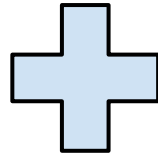
- Discovery system a long time coming
- Systems librarian was hired in 2008 to work on a discovery or federated search tool
- By 2010 not much movement librarywide
- Internal discussions within Systems department



Aug **Sept** Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May

## Graduate student

- Self-contained project, mutually beneficial collaboration
- Needed to make sure it was sustainable after graduation



## Perceived need within systems for advancement on discovery system or OPAC

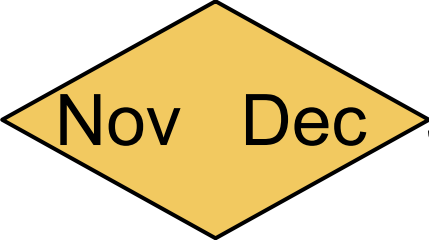
- Needed a doable proof of concept that didn't cost \$\$
- Project could at least serve as a way to get the ball rolling

VuFind

Aug Sept  Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May

## Initial setup of VuFind

- Most work done by Systems Librarian and graduate student ( < 1 FTE total )
- 3 weeks implementation time
- Open communication with library staff

Aug Sept Oct  Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May

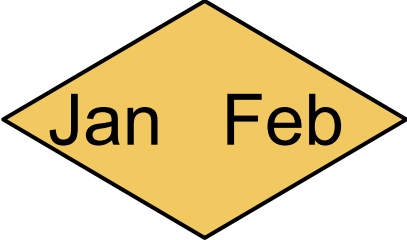
Open for testing by staff

## Open Feedback Sessions

- Reviewed Vufind's functionality and interface
- Also used as an opportunity to take temperature on attitudes of Discovery Services
- Systems saw VuFind as a bandaid

## Private sessions for technical services

- Built buy-in
- Kept technical details away from larger discussions

Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec  Mar Apr May

## Project taken to library management council

- Project tabled as more faculty discussion was deemed necessary

## Mixed reception

- Some confusion, some excitement, some meh
- Misunderstanding of what was being discussed
- Interest, but tacit belief that we didn't have funding
- No consensus reached

## Suddenly – money appears

- Administrative buy-in
- Approval to proceed with a discovery system

Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb  Mar Apr May

## Discovery Task Force convened

- Tasked with summary of options

## Four presentations from major vendors within one week

- All librarians encouraged to participate

## Final report given to Administrative Council

- Included final survey on librarians' attitudes on different tools

Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr  May

Primo selected as VCU's discovery interface

Contract negotiated

Cross-library Implementation Task Force created

# Project outcomes

- Discussion of discovery systems vs. next-gen OPACs
- Enhanced awareness of discovery
- Selection of discovery service



# Blueprint for IT as innovation shop

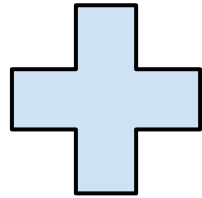
1. Gain administrative support
2. Bolster perceptions and build consensus
3. Initiate change
4. ?
5. Profit!



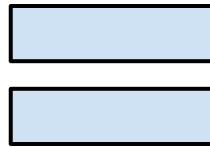


# Gain administrative support

Library culture/attitudes re: change



Administrative tolerance for risk



Innovation mandate

# Bolster perceptions, build consensus

## Communicate and translate

- Show your work
- Manage expectations
- Encourage dialogue

## Transparency

- Document the process, make it available
- Set visible goals and priorities

## Innovation vs. operation

- Demonstrate that you keep the trains running
- Balance maintaining the old, building the new

# Initiate change

## Launch a pilot/proof of concept

- Have something to show
- Make sure it's sustainable

## Demonstrate need

## Outline the project

- Deliverables, resources needed
- Show the plan and the cost

Don't be afraid to push...or to ask for money

# 20/20 Hindsight

- Clearly define the problem you are trying to solve
- Make sure people know what they're looking at
- Don't be afraid to have your idea transformed in the process
- Know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em
- Think like a startup

# Discussion

Group therapy?

- In your library – where do change requests typically come from?
- How do you perceive your role re: change?
- Do you consider a mandate for change necessary in your place of work?
- Do you have an innovation mandate?
- How do you successfully promote change?

# Best practices (from discussion after presentation)

- keep a list
- have an open house
  - posters and post-its
- set up grants for IT projects
- find a project owner
- regularly assess priorities
- ask for input from across your library
- establish trust, IT as expert
- decide who decides priorities
- have a project submission process
- train project managers across the library
- prioritize efficiency
- don't reinvent the wheel / outsource if you can
- track the operational requests
- build maintenance into your estimates
- help staff understand which projects are realistic
- cultivate a relationship with your parent IT organization
  - understand pressures to be efficient
  - find neutral ground
- publicize your wins

# Best practices

- work with your campus IT (sharing project managers?)
  - build trust
- heads of Library IT interest group - check it out

# Thanks!

Erin White

erwhite@vcu.edu

@erinrwhite

Thomas McNulty

tmcnulty@vcu.edu