Using library stocktaking data to make evidence-based decisions about library procedures and policies

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Introduction

A stocktake prior to a move to a new library ensures that collection matches the new building – neat, tidy and in excellent condition. Whitireia Community Polytechnic at Porirua, New Zealand, did this before its move to Te Kete Wānanga, the Learning Centre.

Aim of the stocktake

1. Identify amount of loss since 2000 (the last stocktake)
2. To match shelves with the catalogue prior to the move

Characteristics of the collection and the old library

1. The separation of audio-visual material
2. Old location records which began with a z
3. Increased borrowing between campus libraries
4. Music CDs restricted to two loan items
5. Security gates

Preparation for the stocktake

1. A thorough shelf check
2. The replacement of faded barcodes
3. A search for comparative data

Results

Missing rate

- The missing rate was 3% over a four year period
- Subject areas with the greatest losses, which reflected their proportion of the collection, were nursing, art and computing.
- Smaller subject areas with disproportionate losses were Maori, Samoan and early childhood education.
- Unlike previously, there were no significant losses in the audiovisual area

Problems

- Items from other campuses on the shelves
- Audio-visual items were in the non-fiction collection
- Some items without records
- Some records with no items
- Some location records were difficult to include

Minor problems

- Items shelved incorrectly
- Items where data had been entered incorrectly
- Some new items not found – later found at another campus

Benchmarking data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Loss rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Method

- The stock take was done electronically
- It took place over the quiet Christmas period
- The system produced two reports – Shelf and Catalogue
- The shelf report compared branch, collection and location of items with the items on the shelves
- The catalogue report compared items with the catalogue
- Evidence was then appraised and evaluated in terms of other data from within the library system e.g. the previous stocktake, number of items in the collection and intra-campus loan data
- Where possible, results were benchmarked against other academic libraries

Exclusions

- The stocktake did not include invoiced items

Recommendations and changes

- The four year cycle of stocktaking should continue, although high-use and high loss areas could be sooner
- Direct printing of spine labels should be investigated
- Colour coding of branch spine labels and electronic reminders of branch information should be investigated
- z’s should be removed from item records
- Audio-visual items should be inter-shelved with non-fiction
- Where possible, lending copies of Maori and Pacific material should be purchased
- All items should be issued or have an indicative status e.g. use phantom borrowers such as transit, hold and mending
- An electronic tidying of records should be done on a regular basis to prevent problems with weeded items
- Loss prevention guidelines should be further developed

What next.....

A new building, so new security issues. Space is shared, there is an outside deck, security cameras are installed. Another stocktake.......