

Aligning Technical Services for the Future: Examining Trends in Organizational Structures and Collection Data



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Objective

Research libraries are under increasing financial/economic, pedagogical, and technological pressures. Perhaps most importantly, user expectations are evolving to include new activities and ignore long-standing services. Many research libraries are in the process of transforming in numerous ways in response to these pressures and changing expectations. Acquisitions, cataloging, preservation, and other traditional technical services (TS) operations are integral to the successful delivery of services and research information but are often large, well-established and complex. For these reasons TS units are considered by many to be focal points in efforts to transform research libraries.

The objective of this study is to offer guidance to library administrators considering a redesign of TS operations in their institutions by providing a model for analyzing their own collections and organizational structures. The central question of this study is, how do institutions with a high percentage of electronic resources organize their TS operations? Answering this question is important because the nature of the materials processed by TS units are a primary factor in determining the skills and workflows necessary to effectively and efficiently acquire, describe, organize, and make available the resources needed by faculty, researchers, and students.

Phase I: Organization Charts

The rapid growth in electronic resources in many research collections has prompted some libraries to create new units to manage these resources. Phase I of this research project had two purposes. The first was to analyze publicly available organization charts of selected research libraries' TS units to identify which institutions have units dedicated to electronic resources. Twenty-eight (28) institutions, many represented in the current ARL Leadership and Career Development Program cohort, were chosen for the project. The second purpose was to identify institutions that integrate TS with other operations at the Associate University Librarian/Associate Director (AUL/AD) level in the organization structure. Initially staff and librarians numbers within these units were also counted but this proved to be difficult to do accurately and consistently. Organization charts were not available for six of the selected institutions. Despite these absences, the information gathered was beneficial, as these highlights indicate:

- Twelve (12) of the twenty-two (22) selected institutions have units whose primary focus is some aspect of electronic resources management (e.g., licensing, cataloging, access).
- Seven (7) institutions integrate TS units with information technology (IT) units at the AUL/AD level. This was lower than expected.
- While 'Collections' was the most common term in AUL/AD titles (8 times), 'Technical Services' was present for four (4) institutions.

Phase II: ARL Collection Data

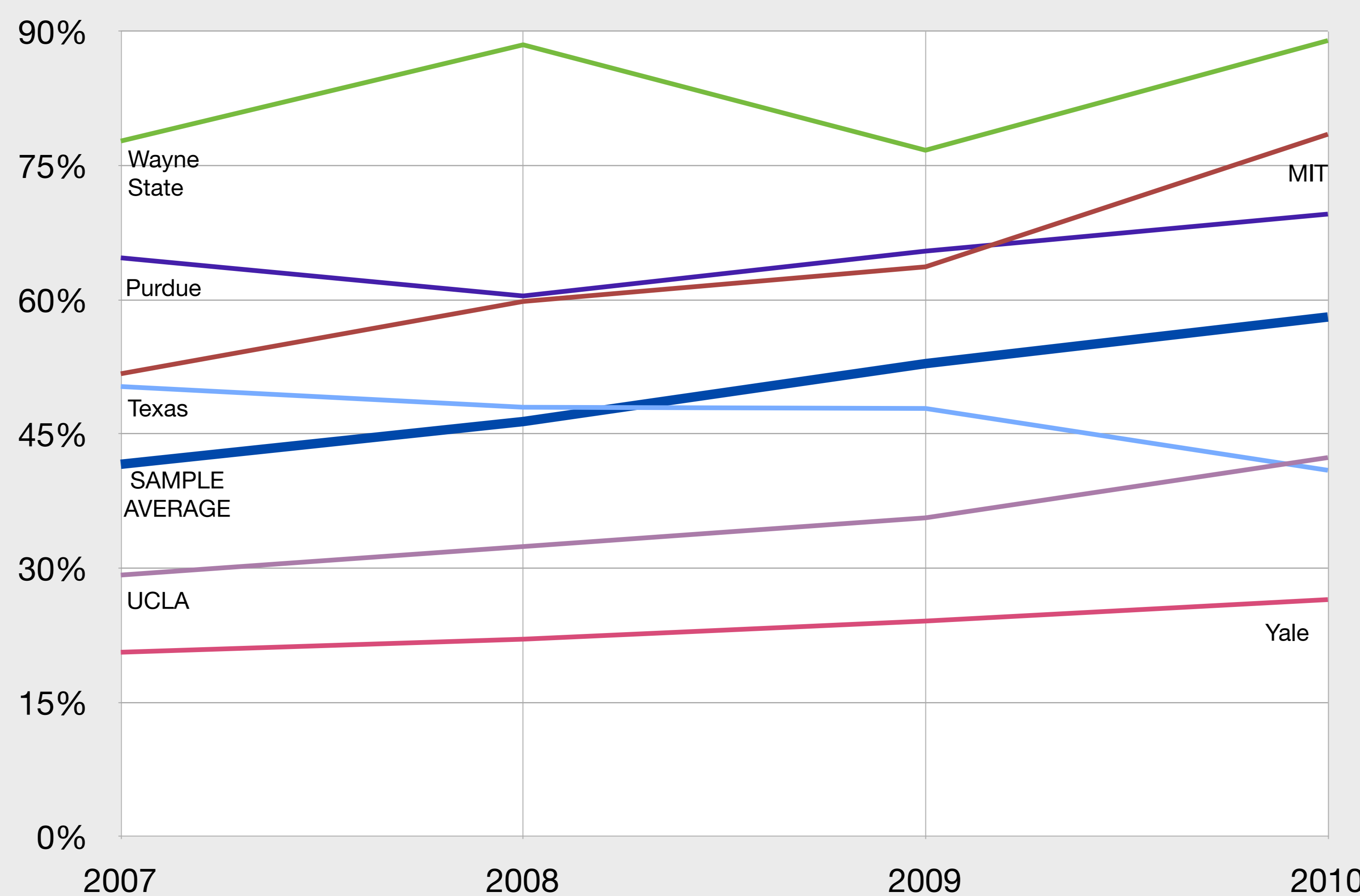
Phase II focused on gathering, analyzing, and occasionally transforming ARL annual survey data from all twenty-eight study institutions for the years 2007-2010. Originally 2011 data was to be included but the annual ARL report had not yet been finalized. Collection data was the primary focus but staff and operating expenditure data was also reviewed to develop a better understanding of each institution. The following steps were performed to analyze the data. Some of this data is illustrated in the chart on the right.

- Created index for rankings based on 2010 e-resource expenditures and percentage of materials budget committed toward e-resources.
- Created groupings based on size of staff, total volume count, ebooks held, and ejournals held to identify possible relationships to organization structure.
- Reviewed data for institutions that integrate TS units with other library operations to identify similarities or trends.

Selected 2010 Data for Integrated TS Structures

This chart highlights some of the data from institutions with TS units organized alongside other library operations.

| Institution | Materials Expenditures | Electronic Expenditures | % of Expenditures for Electronic | E-Serial Titles | E-Monograph Titles | AUL/AD | E-Expenditure Percentages Rank | E-Expenditure Dollars Rank |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Arizona | \$14,386,012 | \$8,555,435 | 59.5% | 84,676 | 832,443 | | 14 | 7 |
| California, Los Angeles | \$12,393,660 | \$5,249,638 | 42.4% | 55,339 | 982,907 | Collection Management and Scholarly Communication | 25 | 25 |
| California, Santa Barbara | \$4,807,044 | \$3,307,067 | 68.8% | 59,042 | 496,030 | Collection Services | 7 | 28 |
| Duke | \$17,528,304 | \$8,382,329 | 47.8% | 101,337 | 289,233 | Information Technology | 21 | 8 |
| Emory | \$16,496,488 | \$6,927,350 | 42.0% | 77,555 | 380,834 | Content Division | 26 | 17 |
| MIT | \$9,000,247 | \$7,065,482 | 78.5% | 44,713 | 184,122 | Information Resources | 2 | 15 |
| North Carolina State | \$9,782,748 | \$6,498,532 | 66.4% | 34,803 | 420,980 | Materials Management Resources and Collection Services | 9 | 20 |
| Notre Dame | \$11,837,829 | \$6,536,585 | 55.2% | 71,473 | 228,312 | Information Systems and Digital Access | 18 | 19 |
| Pittsburgh | \$15,605,569 | \$10,997,730 | 70.5% | 79,822 | 681,230 | Associate UL (no named area) | 4 | 3 |
| Purdue | \$11,244,162 | \$7,823,386 | 69.6% | 38,868 | 512,050 | Digital Programs and Information Access | 6 | 11 |
| Utah | \$6,728,095 | \$4,211,531 | 62.6% | 38,460 | 155,669 | Scholarly Resources & Collections | 11 | 27 |
| Washington | \$14,842,396 | \$8,581,484 | 57.8% | 51,550 | 469,807 | Resource Acquisition and Description/ Information Technology Services | 16 | 6 |
| Wayne State | \$8,601,311 | \$7,653,024 | 89.0% | 49,148 | 360,223 | New Media and Information Technology | 1 | 12 |



Selected E-Expenditures Percentages, 2007-2010

This chart illustrates the difference in the percentage of collection budgets committed to e-resources by the three highest and lowest ranking institutions. Analysis also produced the following.

- Identified institutions that spent the highest percentage of the 2010 materials budget on e-resources. Wayne State was the highest at 89%, followed by MIT (78.5%), Pittsburgh (70.5%) and Purdue (69.6%).
- Identified institutions with the highest 2010 dollar amount for e-resource expenditures. Columbia was the highest at \$11,926,816, followed by Texas A&M (\$11,398,282), Pittsburgh (\$10,997,730), and Princeton (\$10,487,102).
- Pittsburgh and Brigham Young ranked very high on both dollars spent and percentage of collection budget for e-resources.

Preliminary Findings

A possible relationship between integrated TS organization structures and institutions that spend the highest percentage of their materials budget on e-resources was detected. Wayne State, Pittsburgh, Purdue, MIT, and several others have blended acquisitions, cataloging/metadata, and sometimes preservation units with IT, learning & teaching technology, digital initiatives, and scholarly communication units while also aggressively committing financial resources to growing their electronic collections. Surprisingly, these integrated TS structures do not appear to include units whose primary responsibility is e-resource management. It is possible these institutions did not see a need to focus on format in naming their units because they acquire so little print. The expected relationship between total e-resource dollars and integrated TS operations was not observed.

Analysis of the organization charts and collection data for the twenty-two selected institutions also produced some unexpected results. For example, the institutions that expended the most total dollars for e-resources tend to commit 45% to 60% to electronic, suggesting that a significant portion of their collection dollars are still being spent on print and other non-electronic content.

Next Steps: Phase III

The third and final phase of this project will consist of interviews of select AUL/AD at the reviewed institutions. The interviews will be conducted during the summer of 2012. The goals of the interviews will be to gather more detail about their TS operations, confirm what influence, if any, collection trends have on decisions regarding TS organizational structure and identify other possible factors (e.g., retirements, new initiatives, budget constraints, etc.) that influence these reorganization choices.

Sample questions:

- When were technical services operations last reorganized or restructured? What was the impetus for the change(s)?
- Do you have current plans to reorganize or foresee the need to reorganize technical services operations within the next five years?
- What is the current size of your technical services operations? Are there areas in which you anticipate reallocating staffing?
- Which operations, if any, are outsourced? Are the providers commercial vendors or partners?
- Your ARL survey responses indicate electronic expenditures account for ___% of FY10 collection expenditures. How do you anticipate this changing in the next five years and what effect will this have on technical services operations?
- How are data management and data archiving integrated into library operations?
- Are there factors that are unique to your institution that prevent implementation of a different TS structure?