Project Management in Technical Services

Practical Tips and Case Studies

Edited by Elizabeth German and John Ballestro

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Elizabeth German is the assistant director for library assessment and user experience at Princeton University Library. Previously she was an associate professor and the service design librarian at Texas A&M University Libraries, where she focused on bringing together user experience, project management, and accessibility in order to provide quality user experiences for researchers and learners. She holds a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification from the Project Management Institute.

John Ballestro is the director of collection development and acquisition services and the subject selector for graphic novels at Texas A&M University's Sterling C. Evans Library. He is an avid comic book reader, likes Kirk over Picard, and his house words could be "Winter Is Coming" but are more likely to be "Wednesday is new comics day!"

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Preface

IN 2009, THE SAME YEAR I FINISHED MY MSLIS DEGREE, MY MOTHER WROTE an article in the journal *Technicalities: Information Forum for the Technical Services Professional*. The piece was called "No One Plans to Fail, They Fail to Plan: The Importance of Structured Project Planning." In this article, she outlined an overview of project management principles, with examples from her own experience throughout her career. In the subsequent decade, as I started my career and my mother moved forward in hers, formal and informal project management practices have become commonplace within technical services and libraries as whole.

Project management, as both a skill set and a discipline, offers structure and a path forward for continual improvement and change management within libraries. Technical services are no stranger to change. From changes in staffing models to advances in technology, all while accompanied by increasing budgetary pressure, technical services units have had to find ways to adapt to these new realities. Project management creates processes that can fairly and transparently indicate how resources should be allocated and needs prioritized.

A project, as defined by the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), is a temporary endeavor to create a unique product, service, or result. According to the PMBOK, project management is "the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to a project's activities to meet the

project's requirements." In this book, we take these definitions and show how to adopt project management practices into technical services work.

The goal of this book is to help technical services professionals build their own "project management toolkit." Within the chapters, there will be examples on how to right-size your approach for you, your department, and your projects. One of the greatest challenges with regard to applying project management principles in libraries is finding the appropriate process for your context. You want to apply the right-sized management practices and processes to your project—ones that provide benefits like lower costs and greater efficiency—while making sure that those practices don't become unwieldy, to the point that their cost outweighs the benefits they bring. The chapters in this book allow the reader to pick and choose which practices work for their situation.

Finding the right-sized project management practices can vary greatly, based upon the specific needs and context. There is no correct way to implement project management, nor should the formal nature of project management practices inhibit us from reaping the benefits of using those approaches in our work. Formalized project management, as defined by the Project Management Institute and other organizations, should be viewed as a set of tools to better understand and appreciate the discipline of project management and find either formal or informal ways to utilize these practices in your work.

Part I of this book outlines implementation perspectives; these chapters are focused on how project management skills can be practiced at either the personal or departmental level. They can be categorized in two areas:

- *Personal project management*: In chapters 1–3, the authors give examples of how to integrate project management skills into your daily work.
- *Departmental implementation*: Chapters 4–6 offer examples of applying project management at a departmental level.

Part II provides case studies of projects within technical services. Rather than focusing on project management as an overall philosophy to be applied in the workplace, these chapters offer specific examples of how projects are managed using project management principles. Technical services is a broad field, and these chapters can be loosely grouped into three categories of projects:

1. *Technology*: Chapters 7–9 are focused on technology-based projects: library management system migrations, digital repository development, and electronic resource management.
2. *Space*: Chapters 10 and 11 discuss moving collections in the case of closing a library and consolidating collections.
3. *Collection maintenance*: Chapters 12 and 13 provide case studies of high-density storage and weeding projects.

I hope that you enjoy this book and learn from the insights and experience of the chapter authors so you can grow and develop your own project management toolkit.

—ELIZABETH GERMAN

Implementation Perspectives

We Need to Make a Plan

A Journey and Guide to Project Management

Robyn M. Gleasner

"WE NEED TO MAKE A PLAN." I HAVE HEARD THIS STATEMENT EVERY YEAR since I started working at the University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center (HSLIC). First, it was to migrate to a new integrated library system (ILS); then it was to shift materials on the fourth floor to make space for a new classroom; then to develop an inventory project; next to add formerly suppressed items back into the catalog and find space for shelving; and finally to remove all the material from the library's third floor to create space for a learning commons.

"We need to make a plan" sounds simple enough, but how? How does one begin the process of making that plan, let alone accomplishing the goal itself? Each assignment we had was challenging and would have been doomed to fail without that initial statement and desire to create a plan. This chapter will outline how project management and planning came to fruition for the Resources, Archives, and Discovery Unit (RAD) at HSLIC and helped achieve the goals of the projects, and it will also offer some of the lessons learned along the way.

BEGINNINGS

In 2014, I was assigned my first library project: to migrate all of the library's data to a new ILS. This included all current patron and circulation records, bibliographic and item records, and acquisitions records and purchasing notes, and it meant ensuring that the public-facing side of the catalog was searchable.

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HSLIC chose to migrate from III Millennium to OCLC's WorldShare. OCLC provided us with scope notes that outlined what was expected of us and what we could expect from them during the migration process. These scope notes were essentially a project plan that outlined the tasks needed to be done, and a timeline with set deadlines for the migration to run smoothly.

Having that documentation as a guide solidified my appreciation for planning and reminded me that projects run more smoothly with a plan and a set outcome or goal in mind. Without a plan, without knowing the expectations for the project, and without at least a completion deadline, teams and project managers can easily lose sight of the purpose of a project.

PROJECT PLANNING

Shortly after the migration project was successfully completed in 2015, I was given the task of shifting books on the library's fourth-floor shelving location to accommodate space for a new classroom. I was told, of course, that "we need a plan." This was my first project without the help of a vendor, so there were no scope notes to rely on other than those I created myself.

There was a job to be done within a short three months, so I began to research the topic of shifting books. I started with what had been done in the past at HSLIC. There was a folder containing informal notes and e-mails about a shift that had happened ten years earlier, when serials prior to 1980 were moved from the third floor to off-site storage. Shifting projects like that had been done in the past at HSLIC, but without a formal project plan. The notes I studied contained estimates of the time it took to move and shift the materials in that project, which provided a nice starting point for the current shifting project.

How to plan for project management? There are a number of freely available blogs and even some trainings through Lynda.com that provide general steps for project management. Most of these focus on the corporate world, with a strong emphasis on budgeting. Nevertheless, their general ideas are useful. These include variations on the following:

1. Identify the goal
2. Research

3. Develop a team
4. Identify stakeholders
5. Set goals
6. Determine a budget
7. Define deliverables
8. Set a timeline

While not written down on paper, most of these had already been accomplished for the fourth-floor shifting project before a plan was developed:

1. The goal was identified as making space for a classroom on the fourth floor.
2. Research was done on project planning, shifting projects, and shelving best practices.
3. A team was developed that included members of RAD, as well as volunteers from the Service Point (circulation) and Administration units.
4. Stakeholders were identified as the patrons using the physical library, along with library employees.
5. Goals would be set after more research was done.
6. There was no budget for this shifting project.
7. Milestones would be created for when material from certain ranges had been shifted.
8. The administration determined that the project must be completed in three months.

With these key elements determined, I was able to focus on how to set the goals and determine the process for executing the plan. Wells and Young's book *Moving and Reorganizing a Library* provided guidance for planning and designing a moving project, from training and selecting staff, to reviewing the collection, calculating shelving space, and accounting for future collection growth.[1] The book demonstrated the many different steps that go into a moving project and provided the formulas for calculating and projecting the space needed to accommodate collections. Similarly, Steven Fortriede in his book *Moving Your Library* described how to move specific types of material and provided alternative methods for measuring items, as well as information on interfiling collections. He also recommended making the following decisions:

- When is the move?
- Who is to move the books?
- What is the budget?
- Should you hire a moving professional or a consultant?
- How should your own staff be involved?[2]

These were excellent questions to start any planning process, basically asking who, what, where, and when? These happen to be the core questions to ask in any journalistic story; the answers are also the key to developing a successful project plan.

More information was needed on "how" everything would be accomplished. I needed to learn more about the task at hand: shifting. I found an excellent blog post called "Basic Library Procedures: Shelving and Shelf-Reading Procedures" in a blog called *Living in the Library World*. This post discusses the terminology of bookshelves, different types of shelving, and shelf reading in addition to the physical act of shifting, all of which would be useful information in outlining the steps needed to accomplish the goal.[3]

Developing the Project Plan

Based on all this information, a project plan was drafted that included the following headings:

1. *Executive Summary*—This statement served as the purpose of the project.
2. *Organizational Objectives*—This included the library's mission statement to show how the project fit into the overall mission of the library.
3. *Goals*—This included the overall goal, as well as steps to achieve the goal.
4. *Project Scope*—This broke the project down into smaller, more manageable pieces with set deadlines.
5. *Timeline*—This provided an explanation of the project's scope and the specific time needed to accomplish tasks.
6. *Definitions*—This defined terminology so the team would have a shared vocabulary.
7. *Procedure*—This outlined the expectations for individual team members to accomplish the overall goal.
8. *Process*—This provided details on the tasks mentioned in the procedure.
9. *Milestones*—This created stages in the development of the plan.

10. *Constraints*—This emphasized things that could potentially go wrong during the project and affect the timeline.
11. *Project Team*—This listed who was responsible for which part of the project so all team members knew what was expected of them and who they should contact with questions.
12. *Items/Equipment Needed*—This listed the items needed to complete the project.
13. *Communication*—This strategized how to communicate the progress of the plan with both internal and external stakeholders.

These headings became a template to use for subsequent shelf-management projects that came to RAD. And while the process was never formalized institutionally, the template served as a starting point for planning when the RAD unit had no idea where or how to start.

ACHIEVING GOALS

Framing the project in this way helped determine the steps and information under each heading and ultimately contributed to accomplishing each one. While "we need to make a plan" was the directive, we also had to implement the plan in order to achieve the overall goal. It is important to have a plan "that is complete, covers all possibilities, has backups for the backups, and includes every important detail and most of the unimportant ones" while not over planning.[4] This advice was imperative in developing the project plans. Having detailed steps helped the team stay focused, meet deadlines, and communicate success.

Focus

In the project plan for the book-shifting project, including the overall goal as well as the steps to achieve that goal showed team members not only the prize at the end of the race but also the path of how to get there. While these were a general explanation of the steps required, some team members also benefited from understanding why they were doing particular tasks and what these accomplished in the project. For example, the following was taken from the "Goals" section of the Fourth Floor Shift Project Plan:

Goals

1. Shift items from ranges 21–27 into ranges 1–20, Second Floor reference, and the annex to create space for a classroom.
2. Steps to achieve goals:
   a. Measure linear feet of the collection for each range to determine how much free space exists and where the space is located.
   b. Determine which call numbers experience the most growth in the collection. (To do this, examine processing statistics from the previous year.) This will help estimate growth in that particular area.
      i. Flag the series in which growth is not needed.
   c. Weed VHS from the media section. Move the remaining DVDs to Reference—Second Floor.
   d. Weed duplicates and past editions from Books—Fourth Floor.
   e. Move Directories, Abstracts, and Indexes to the Annex.
   f. Integrate the Atlas section into general collection.

If the goal is whatever lies at the finish line and the steps to achieve that goal are the path to get there, then the procedures are the relay runners' team strategy. In other words, the procedures are the overarching guidelines for team members to follow. For example:

Procedures

Project team members will work in teams of two for two hours at a time and should plan on working at least one shift a day. No back-to-back shifts will be allowed. Scheduling will be done using Outlook. When a shift is finished, members will mark where they left off with a colored piece of paper, so that the next team member can pick it up.

1. Shift will begin with range 1A.
2. Top shelves should be left empty.
3. Bottom shelves should be filled unless marked.
4. 12 inches should be left at the end of each shelf unless otherwise marked.
   a. Some series don't require growth, so empty space at the end of each shelf is not needed. These series will be marked with a blue piece of paper that says "no growth" at the beginning and end of the run.
5. If items are in need of repair, please mark them with a pink flag that says "repair." These items will be pulled after the shift for repair.
6. Items that are over 30 centimeters in height or length should be pulled and put on a cart for a newly created Oversize section.

The "Process" section (see below) is part of the procedures but contains more specific and detailed instructions in how team members interact and collaborate with one another to complete the project. For example, the following excerpt was taken from the process of the Fourth Floor Shifting Project Plan:

Process

1. Team member 1 will take books off shelf and put on cart.
2. Team member 1 will move cart to where team member 2 is shifting items.
3. Team member 1 will return to where books were previously shelved and dust the shelves.
    a. Wipe shelf with a Clorox wipe. (Make sure to have a trash can nearby to throw away when done.)
    b. Dry shelf with microfiber cloth.
4. Team member 2 will dust the books. (Dust with microfiber cloth.)
5. Team member 2 will shelve books in new location.
6. At the end of the case, team member 2 will make sure that the books are in call number order.
7. At the beginning of each day, the project manager will create a temporary sign for new call number ranges and assess progress.

Having this level of detail helped team members stay focused on the task at hand, while also understanding the project as a whole.

Deadlines

Developing a project scope that included small deadlines prior to the project completion date gave the team something to strive for and gave administration a way to track our progress. For example:

Project Scope
- *February 2015*: Measure Fourth Floor Books in linear feet
- *September–October 2015*: Directories and Indexes moved to Annex/Off-site storage
- *September–October 2015*: Media moved to Reference
- *October 1–October 25, 2015*: Integrate Atlas section into general collection
- *October 26, 2015*: Begin shift
- *November 25, 2015*: Complete shift

The timeline (below) showed how these dates were determined. In a book-shifting project, it is important to know the number of linear feet being moved or shifted, the time it takes to move the material to the new location, and the time it takes to load and unload a cart. This will provide an estimated time needed to complete. This timeline was developed for the Fourth Floor Shifting Project:

Timeline

The entire collection will need to be shifted in order to incorporate the 500 linear feet into the collection. This means that a total of 2,694 linear feet will need to be shifted. This does not include the directories and indexes moved to the Annex or the media moved to Reference. The following estimates were calculated using the Shift Plan Calculator developed by the Berkman Center for Internet & Society (at http://collshift.dev.berkmancenter.org/calculations) and shows the amount of time needed for the shift:

- Estimated linear feet: 2,694
- Travel time: 5 minutes
- Feet moved per trip: 4
- Load time: 5 minutes
- Unload time: 5 minutes
- Estimated total amount of time needed: 217 hours (About 5.5 weeks if work is done 8 hours a day)
- Estimated number of trips: 627

These estimates are calculated for one person using a single-sided cart. Working in teams and using a double-sided cart may reduce the amount of time needed.

Note: In the above example, the Shift Plan Calculator was used; however, as of the writing of this chapter, this calculator no longer exists.

The project scope and timeline provided team members and the administration with a time frame in which to deliver or have pieces of the project complete. This helped keep us on track to complete the project.

Communication

In a relay race there should be a coach who cheers the team on to victory and makes suggestions along the way to reach the finish line. In project management, this role is filled by the project manager or team lead, who communicates

the small successes to the team and the administration and adjusts processes along the way as needed. Including a "Milestones" section in the project plan helped ensure that the project manager would do something to recognize the completion of smaller goals within the project. This gave the team something to look forward to and to be proud of the work they accomplished. It also showed the administration that progress was being made and that they too should be proud of these accomplishments. The plan stated:

Milestones

- Completion of Range 5
- Completion of Range 10
- Completion of Range 20

These milestones were marked with a happy hour or a lunch, as well as a glowing message in the library's daily communication e-mail to thank team members and share their progress with the rest of the library's employees. These types of recognition helped propel the team toward the finish line and complete the project.

Assessment

It can be extremely easy to get lost in the details of any project. This illustrates the old saying of "not seeing the forest for the trees." The goals, processes, and procedures in a plan are what make it successful; but it is also important to foresee (and record) what other information should be gathered about the project itself. This might include information that would be helpful for other libraries undertaking similar projects, data that might be important to collect for internal annual reports, and calculations that could assist in future projects. Communicating this assessment information can also be useful to other units in the library that weren't directly involved with the project. For example, HSLIC's Public Services unit received a number of questions about another project, the 3rd Floor Journal Removal project, such as how many journal volumes were discarded and whether or not this material was recycled. Keeping the Public Services unit informed allowed its members to communicate the information to other HSLIC users. While it is impossible to predict every question about your project that might be asked in the future,

it's important to think about what some of these might be. Deciding on a way to find the answers and creating an assessment plan before the trees take over the view of the forest will preserve this information.

For example, after the Fourth Floor Book Shifting Project was completed, I was asked how long it took teams to move a cart from point A to B and how long it took to shelve the material on that cart. I was too preoccupied with actually moving that cart from point A to B and shelving the material to even think about timing myself or team members on the process. This was information that could only be gathered in that moment, and so the data was lost. In subsequent plans, I have tried to build assessment into the processes, by having team members time themselves periodically and then take an average of the timing. If this isn't built into the plan in some way, the information will be lost.

Assessment is really twofold:

1. Tracking the progress of the project while in process.
2. Assessing what was accomplished upon completion of the project.

Tracking the Project's Progress

Almost all the resources that were consulted and mentioned previously recommended using a Gantt chart to keep projects on track. However, learning how to use a Gantt chart for a small project with a short time frame was too time-consuming. Instead, I used Outlook's Calendaring feature to schedule team members' shifts and then printed a free online calendar. Team members' names were handwritten in pencil. This was useful because the schedule changed frequently to accommodate individual team members' needs, and it could be erased and changed as needed. The calendar was posted on the wall of the RAD suite, so that team members could consult it when they wanted to know who they were working with and to confirm the times scheduled.

This also gave team members a place to gather and talk about the project informally, ask questions, and even complain about the process. I think some complaining is healthy and can even contribute to making changes in processes to make the project more successful.

I used Outlook's Task feature to track milestones and set reminders of when to send out communication to internal and external stakeholders. This feature sent me a reminder early in the morning to remind me of tasks that needed to be accomplished that day and what needed to be communicated to stakeholders.

Assessing What Was Accomplished upon Completion of the Project

In my experience, assessing the overall project included counting time, people/labor, space, and the collection—including items moved, items withdrawn, repairs made, and catalog records changed.

In order to track all of these things, I kept a running list of notes throughout the project in combination with pulling reports from our ILS upon completion of the project. It is important to determine which reports the ILS system can provide before starting a project in case this data will need to be collected manually. For example, while the ILS could tell us how many items were withdrawn in a particular time period, it could not report if the items were withdrawn for this project or for some other reason. We could have added notes to the records being withdrawn to determine this. However, because we didn't think of this before starting the project, we didn't have this information. Instead, we were happy to use an estimate of the date when the record was removed.

Here is an example of project notes kept for HSLIC's Fourth Floor Shift Project:

Shift Notes

- 273 directories were moved from the fourth floor to the Annex—it took about 4 hours to move material to the Annex, clean and reposition the shelving in the Annex, and reshelve the material.
- To move media to the Second Floor on shelving that houses Reference section:
    » 29 encyclopedias were withdrawn from the Reference section.
    » 16 other items were withdrawn from the Reference section.
- We withdrew 299 items from Books' Fourth-Floor shelving location that were either outdated or duplicate copies; it took about 2 hours to withdraw them and then process them for recycling (removing the bar code and call number, and desensitizing the items).
- We withdrew 84 items from the Atlas section.
- We withdrew 154 fiction titles (Call numbers P–PZ).
- We integrated 546 items from the Atlas shelving location into the Books' Fourth-Floor shelving location. (It took approximately 3 hours to scan the bar codes of these items and change the shelving location in the catalog and 14 hours to physically remove the "A" sticker and reshelve the items in their new location.)
- We withdrew 29 indexes from the Index/Abstracts shelving location.
    » We withdrew *Psychological Abstracts* (120 items).
    » We withdrew the *Cumulated Index Medicus* (20 items).
- 47 CD records were deleted from the catalog and physically combined with the book they accompanied.

LESSONS LEARNED

Every project is not created equal. Each project obviously has its own purpose, but these purposes can have different requirements. Each project can also provide learning opportunities to see what can be done differently, enhanced, or removed in future processes.

For example, while training was listed in the first plan under communication, in subsequent plans I created a section dedicated specifically to training. This emphasized its importance and helped lessen the probability that it would be lost in the details of the rest of the plan. It also helped show team members what they were getting into, so there wouldn't be any surprises regarding the amount of work that some projects require.

While I continued to include procedures and processes in the overall project plan to give the administration an overview of the work being done, I also created discrete procedural documentation for the information to stand on its own. This was to assist team members in their training, as well as serve as reminders during the process in case a step or detail was forgotten. These documents served as quick references and answered most procedural and process questions. For example, I created half-sheet documents with the essential processes in an outline format and taped them to the book carts being used for the project. Another sheet listed contact information in case there were any questions not covered on the sheet.

Communication methods for team members were also improved to account for different learning styles. I held initial in-person meetings to make sure that everyone was on the same page, sent follow up e-mails so the information from the meetings was in writing, and made myself available to answer any questions from team members as they were working on the project.

Overall, I learned the importance of being adaptable in any project. When a process doesn't work in a project, it is important to be flexible enough to change whatever isn't working in order to meet milestones and goals within the plan.

The purpose of a project shouldn't change, but the resources—the people, time, and equipment—needed to accomplish it may change as the project progresses. While plans provide us with structure and guidance when we're not sure what to do, they shouldn't be set in concrete. They should be living

documents that can change with the circumstances and in response to extraneous events and constraints that no one can predict. Ultimately, this will make the project stronger and the team members more cohesive.

CONCLUSION

UNM HSLIC's project-planning journey in the RAD unit all began with "We need to make a plan." From the early migration project to the first shelving management project, to the most recent clearing of all the materials on the library's third floor, we could not have accomplished any of these projects without a plan. And while initial planning is time-consuming and can be frustrating in the beginning stages, the work and effort are well worth it in the end when goals have been accomplished and deadlines have been met.

NOTES

1. Marianna S. Wells and Rosemary Young, *Moving and Reorganizing a Library* (Aldershot, UK: Gower, 1997).

2. Steven C. Fortriede, *Moving Your Library: Getting the Collection from Here to There* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2010), 4.

3. "Basic Library Procedures: Shelving and Shelf-Reading Procedures," *Living in the Library World* (blog), January 2009, http://livinginthelibraryworld .blogspot.com/2009/01/basic-library-procedures-shelving-and.html.

4. Fortriede, *Moving Your Library,* 9.

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