

INTRODUCTION

Have you found your journal collection gathering dust? Or are your online journals suffering from lack of use? Creating a customized core serials list may revive an otherwise under used collection. What follows is a method, in development, for creating a customized core journal list for specialized or small academic library collections. Developing a local ranking system based on qualitative and quantitative evidence can be useful for libraries serving a newly-created program or evaluating an established one. Ranking and weighting local needs alongside external measures like standard lists and peer comparisons are important components in a serials collection evaluation plan. The method, which has been used to evaluate a niche academic branch collection, is ideally suited to solo librarians or others who have little time and few resources. By using this method to make logical collection development decisions through diligent application of gathered evidence, librarians can communicate the reasoning behind collection development decisions to stakeholders.

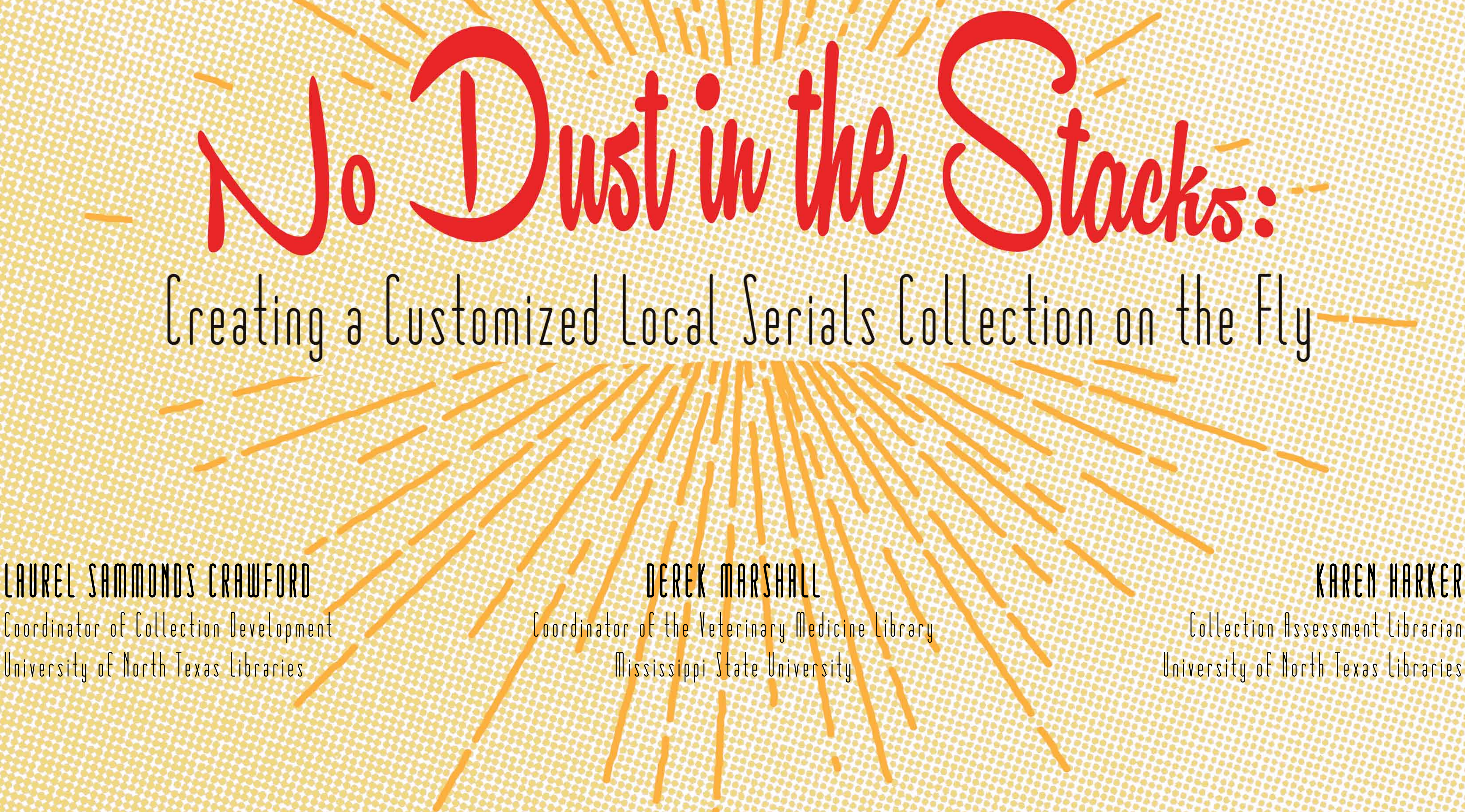
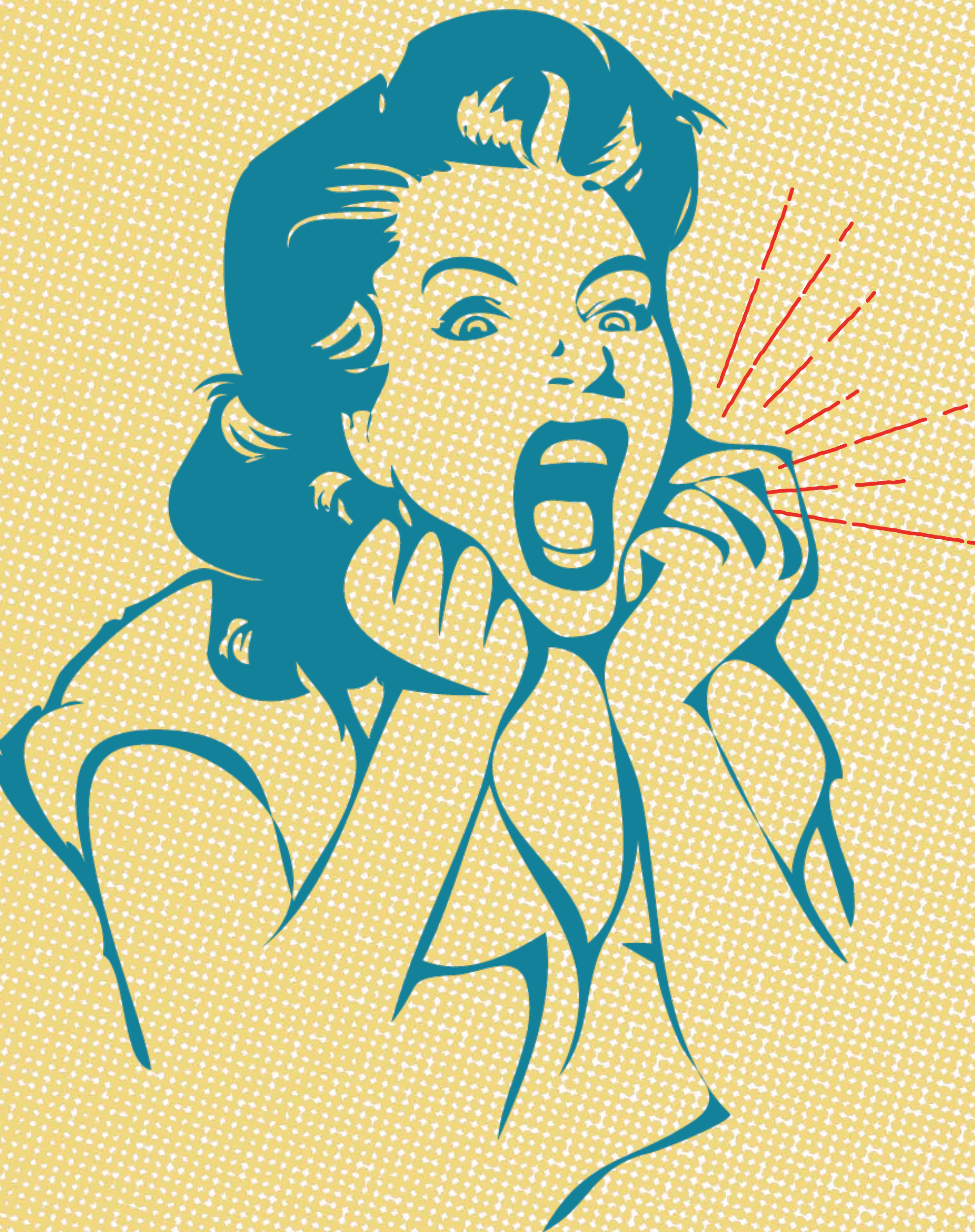
INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

The College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) Library is a branch library of Mississippi State University Libraries that supports the educational programs, veterinary research programs, and the Animal Health Center at the College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine offers the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree (DVM), a four-year graduate degree, as well as graduate programs for MS or PhD degrees in selected areas of specialization. The college also offers a BS in Veterinary Medical Technology.

WHY CREATE A CORE LIST?

- Budget cuts
- Seeking additional funding
- Decision-making at renewal time
- Enable thorough contextual assessment of requested materials before purchasing



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EVALUATION CRITERIA

It may be important to not only evaluate titles to which the library is currently subscribed but also to titles relevant to the subject area for future use. For each title, record the bibliographic, order, and local holdings information, including access dates, when applicable.

CVM Faculty Publications - Scopus		
Journal Title	Number of Faculty Publications	
Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association	36	
Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation	29	
Journal of Aquatic Animal Health	18	
Pigs One	17	
Toxicological Sciences	16	
Avian Diseases	15	
Poultry Science	15	
Veterinary and Comparative Orthopaedics and Traumatology	14	
Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association	13	
Veterinary Microbiology	12	
International Journal of Poultry Science	11	
Journal of Parasitology	10	
BMC Bioinformatics	10	
Journal of Veterinary Dentistry	10	
Diseases of Aquatic Organisms	9	

RELEVANCE

- Evaluation of whether the material fits into the scope of the collection, based on the Collection Development Policy.

LOCAL NEEDS

- Faculty publications

- Requested titles (by faculty, students, researchers, and clinicians)
- Departmental requirements (required/recommending reading lists based on academic departments and coursework)
- Journal evaluation rankings within department or university

USEFULNESS

- Electronic use data
- Circulation statistics
- ILL requests

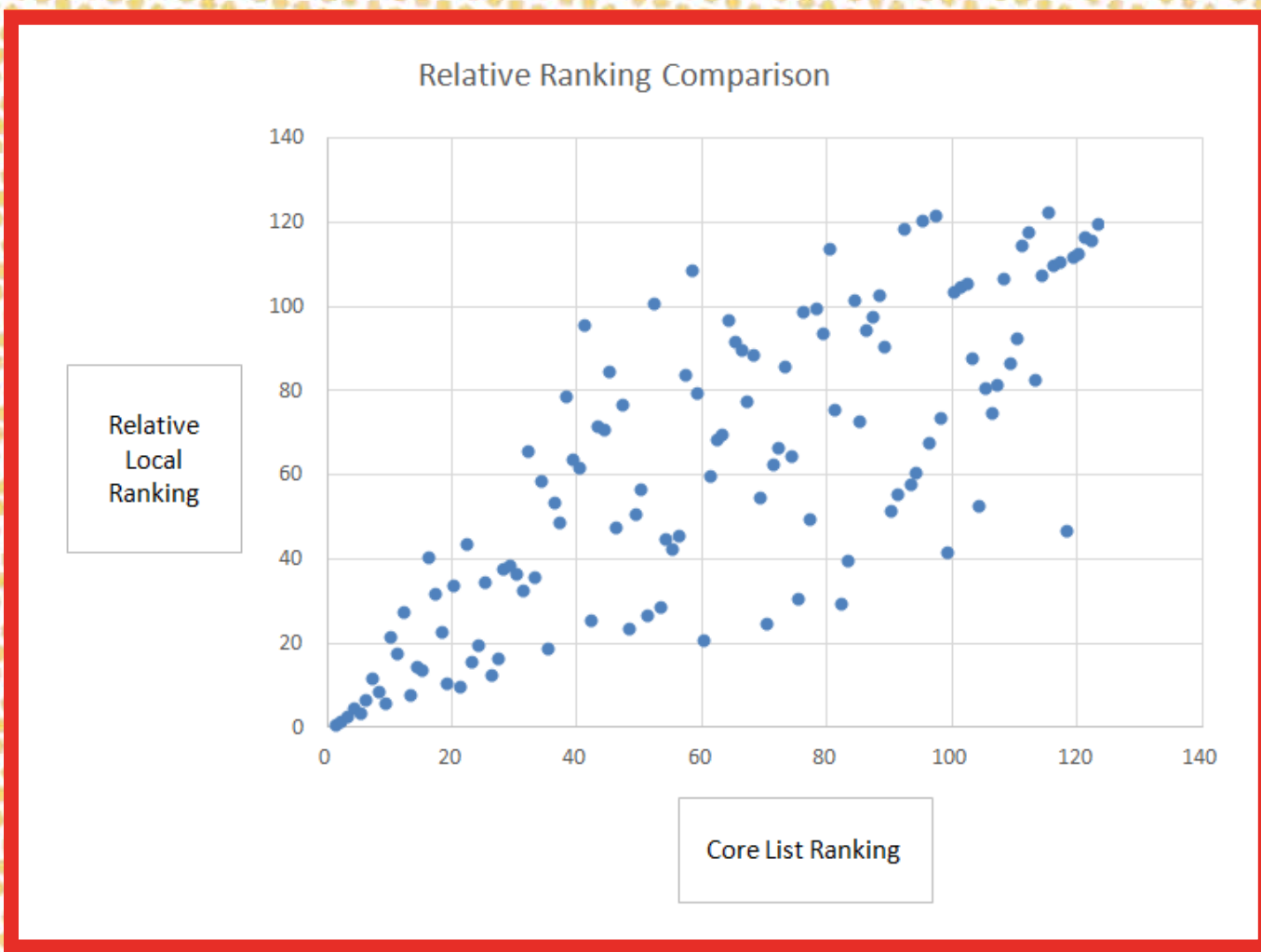
CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

Fancy software or programming is not required! Using a simple spreadsheet to compile the data in a logical fashion is an easy way to evaluate your evidence.

1. Determine relevant criteria
2. Determine the relative importance of each
3. Gather data and record in spreadsheet
4. Optional: assign weights to each criterion by using a whole-number multiplier to enhance the effect of one or more criteria
5. For each criterion, insert an adjacent column and use the PERCENTRANK.INC function to rank each title among its peers based on that criterion alone
6. Use the AVERAGE function to create a composite score for each item based on the percent ranks for all criteria
7. Sort by composite score to create ranked list

COMPARING RANKINGS

MSU CVM focuses mainly on small and large animal medicine, and supports a research program that spans the breadth of biological sciences. CVM emphasizes agricultural and fish medicine, but does not stress avian, primate, or lab animal medicine. We also have a growing vet technician program. Would local information re-shuffle the accepted Core title ranking? Or would the original Core List have sufficed for our decision-making?



The chart above shows only the titles ranked in the Core List of Veterinary Serials, and compares the Core List ranking to the relative local ranking. The top journals, such as the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, are not in dispute and rank highly on both lists (lower left corner). Moving away from those indisputable leaders (toward the upper right), the relative importance on a local level becomes very debatable. Local data boosted the ranking of some less-important titles related to CVM's specific programs, including Veterinary Technician, British Poultry Science, and Fish and Shellfish Immunology. Other, arguably important journals were reduced in rank for no discernible reason: Revue Scientifique et Technique and the Journal of the South African Veterinary Association. In our test case, 177 of titles moved at least 30 places up or down from their original place in the Core List ranking. This gave us an indication of the relative importance of journal titles to the local users and enabled the creation of a customized, local core list based on the needs of our population. Using the original Core List would have given us a generic collection not well-tailored to local needs.

CONCLUSION

Taking the time to develop your own local ranked core list not only enhances your ability to make wise collection development decisions, but also enhances your ability to support your decisions with stakeholders.

- Better utilized collection
- Collection more appropriate for subject area
- Student and researcher needs are met
- Use qualitative and quantitative evidence for decision making
- Transparency - communicate reasoning behind collection development decisions to stakeholders
- Faculty involvement - faculty investment
- Plan for the future - once information is consolidated, the criteria used to evaluate the collection can be compiled into a collection development plan for future use.
- Budget, Budget, Budget
 - In the case of budget cuts, or static budgets in a world of increasing costs, evaluation of the collection will give you a proactive approach to collection development.
 - If the budget happens to increase, an evaluation of titles requested has already been conducted.
 - Support decisions on faculty requests with data along with cost and other evaluation criteria.

Table 2 Ranked list of journals	
Rank	Journal
1	Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association
2	Journal of Veterinary Medical Research
3	Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine
4	Veterinary Pathology
5	Journal of Small Animal Clinical Medicine
6	Equine Veterinary Journal with Supplements
7	Veterinary Clinician of Small Animals: Equine Practice
8	Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association
9	Journal of the American Veterinary Association
10	Veterinary Record
11	Journal of Veterinary Medicine and Small Animal Clinician
12	Veterinary Research
13	Journal of Veterinary Diagnostic Investigation
14	Journal of Veterinary Pathology and Therapeutics
15	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
16	Journal of Veterinary Pathology and Therapeutics
17	Veterinary Journal of the British Veterinary Association
18	Journal of Veterinary Pathology and Therapeutics
19	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
20	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
21	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
22	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
23	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
24	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
25	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
26	Journal of Veterinary Pathology
27	Journal of Veterinary Pathology

QUALITY

- Evaluated title lists published in the literature (Veterinary Medicine libraries are lucky to have a core list published in Ugaz, Ana, Trenton Boyd, Vicki Croft, et al. Basic list of veterinary medical serials, third edition: using a decision matrix to update the core list of veterinary journals, J Med Libr Assoc. 2010 October; 98(4): 287-292.)

- Core lists of journals supplied by accrediting bodies (in our case, the American Veterinary Medical Association)
- Exam board lists or other criteria available for subject area

COST

- Raw cost
- Cost/use

OTHER

- Other criteria dependent upon collection or subject area