**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 revitalize your academic or clinical collection. What follows is a method developed for creating a customized core journal list for the 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. Knowing and weighing 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 aligned application of gathered evidence, librarians can communicate the resulting local 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 Research Unit Leader 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 Technology.

**Why Create a Core List?**

- **Budget cuts**
- **Faculty publications**
- **Evaluation of whether the material fits into the scope of the collection, based on the Collection Development Policy.**
- **Faculty involvement**
- **Student and researcher needs are met**
- **Cost**
- **Far better collection development decisions are made**
- **Raw cost**
- **Better utilized collection**
- **USERFULNESS**
- **OTHER**
- **Evaluation of whether the material fits into the scope of the collection, based on the Collection Development Policy.**
- **Faculty involvement**
- **Other criteria dependent upon collection or subject area**

**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 areas for future use. The above table cross-references the bibliographic, order, and local holdings information, including access dates, when applicable.

**Crunching the Numbers**

Fancy software in 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. **Reference 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 indicate 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.**

**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.**
- **Stakeholders are involved.**
- **Student and researcher needs are met.**
- **Far better collection development decisions are made.**
- **Raw cost**
- **Better utilized collection.**
- **Other criteria dependent upon collection or subject area.**
- **Collection Assessment Librarian**

**Comparing Rankings**

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 to scale (and rank highly on both lists (lower left corner). Moving away from those indisputable leaders toward the upper right, the relative importance of journal titles becomes more debatable. Local data showed the ranking of some less-important titles varied by branch and subject. Table 3 indicates the evaluation of titles ranked in the top 50 percent of titles ranked at least 30 places up or down from their original placement 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.

**What follows is a method, in development, to revitalize under-used collections. What follows is a method, in development, to revitalize under-used collections.**