Remote work in technical services:

What have we learned? Where are we going?

North Carolina Serials Conference
April 8, 2022. Slides: https://go.uncg.edu/ncsc2022

HELLO!

Anna Craft

she/her/hers

Coordinator of Scholarly Communications

UNCG University Libraries

arcraft@uncg.edu

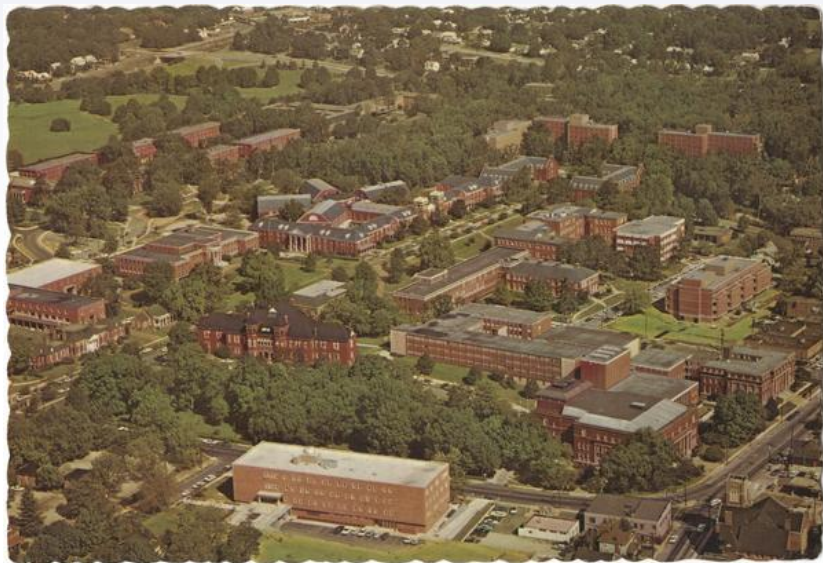Slides: https://go.uncg.edu/ncsc2022

Land acknowledgement

Image credit: "Aerial view of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro" in 037: Campus Views - Aerial (1950–1989), Special Collections and University Archives, University of North Carolina at Greensboro. 1972.

I acknowledge that the land we are gathered on has long served as the site of meeting and exchange amongst a number of Indigenous peoples, including the Eno, Keyauwee, Occaneechi, Saura, and Shakori. We also want to acknowledge the long history and lasting legacies of slavery on these lands.

What's this about?

Remote Work in Library Technical Services: Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the Developing COVID-19 Pandemic

Anna R. Craft ✉ (Contributor) iD

❝ Download citation   ⬈ https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658   Check for updates

📄 Full Article   🖼 Figures & data   📖

https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658

OA version: https://go.uncg.edu/sr2020

1 First, some questions

Share your thoughts:

Go to: **https://www.menti.com/**

Code: **7174 7851**

2 Next, some context

UNCG University Libraries

- The UNCG University Libraries include the Walter Clinton Jackson Library and the Harold Schiffman Music Library

- The University Libraries are staffed with approximately 90 FTE

- The Libraries are leaders of collaborative, inter-institutional projects, including the Carolina Consortium and NC DOCKS

"Technical services" means different things to different people (and to different institutions!)

Tech Services at UNCG: What do we do?

▶ **Acquisitions**: buying, ordering, approval plans, etc

▶ **Cataloging and metadata**: all formats, for special, general, electronic, and other collections, including collaborative work with the Digital Projects Unit

▶ **Electronic resources**: licensing, vendor relations, managing access to databases, ebooks, ejournals, streaming media, etc

▶ **Scholarly communications**: management of institutional repository, open journals (OJS), and other open access initiatives, including outreach and education

▶ **And more! (Plus collaborative, interdepartmental work!)**

Technical Services at UNCG

- **"Technical services" at UNCG can mean a group of people, a suite of activities/services, and a specific location**

- **One large, open workspace**

- **17 full-time personnel**

  - 11 staff members

  - 6 tenured or tenure-track faculty

  - 1 temporary worker

- **Mission, goals, and more info**: https://go.uncg.edu/ts-goals

Before the pandemic, almost everyone in Technical Services at UNCG worked exclusively in-person in our open office work area in Jackson Library

UNCG University Libraries, Pre-COVID

- In-person work culture; remote work only allowed in limited circumstances (both in the Libraries overall and in Technical Services)

- Meetings held almost exclusively in-person

UNCG, mid-March, 2020

- ▸ Residential halls closed

- ▸ Face-to-face classes suspended, moved to virtual

- ▸ Campus buildings closed

- ▸ Events canceled

- ▸ Transition to remote work for most employees, almost overnight

To make an understatement, this was a huge change

Remote Work in Library Technical Services: Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the Developing COVID-19 Pandemic

Anna R. Craft ✉ (Contributor) (iD)

66 Download citation 🔗 https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658   Check for updates

📄 Full Article   🖼 Figures & data   📄 Re

https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658

OA version: https://go.uncg.edu/sr2020

To be clear, I'm not an expert on remote work

(I'm interested, and I've been making an effort to learn in this area)

Why did I write this column?

It was spring 2020:

- My library had recently transitioned to remote work, services, and instruction

- My department was having a lot of conversations about how to handle our work in the remote environment

- My *Serials Review* column deadline was approaching, and it was hard to think about anything other than the pandemic

Since I was thinking so much about the pandemic and remote work,

I decided to look into connecting those topics

Before I could propose the column idea, I had to look at what had already been written.

Was there literature about remote work in library technical services?

And if so, was it enough to turn into a literature review?

Initial parameters and ideas

- My regular column for Serials Review is called "Electronic Resources Forum"

- I'm not an e-resources librarian, so I usually take a broad interpretation of e-resources, sometimes opening up the focus to include technical services

- My main interest was in remote work and its impact on library personnel and TS departments—not library users

- I wondered if existing literature on remote work in TS could inform our experience of remote work in the pandemic

What I was *not* trying to do:

- Understand the entire history of remote work in all types of libraries and library departments

- Tell people/departments how to "do" remote work

- Get into the history of pandemics

- Examine other public health issues that have affected libraries

- Predict the future of how the pandemic would ultimately affect libraries and technical services

In early 2020, what did you find if you searched for articles on *remote work in library technical services?*

In short,

Not a lot
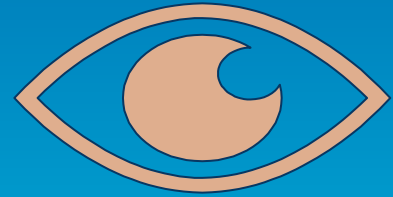
About 1,480,000 results (0.10 sec)

Any time
Since 2021
Since 2020
Since 2017
Custom range...

Sort by relevance
Sort by date

☐ include patents
☑ include citations

✉ Create alert

Remote Work in Library Technical Services: Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the Developing COVID-19 Pandemic

AR Craft - Serials Review, 2020 - Taylor & Francis

The concept and practice of **remote work** in **library technical services** is not new, but the scale and speed of the transition to **remote work** for many libraries due to the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented. This column provides an overview of pre-pandemic literature …

☆ 99 Cited by 4 Related articles All 2 versions

[PDF] **Remote library users—needs and expectations**

R Cooper, PR Dempsey, V Menon, C Millson-Martula - 1998 - ideals.illinois.edu

… Likewise, their technology backgrounds may be more limited, and they may have less access to **technical** computer support (Rosenquist-Buhler, 1996) with the bulk of their experience gained in the **work** setting … Page 4. COOPER ET AL./**REMOTE LIBRARY** USERS 45 …

☆ 99 Cited by 142 Related articles All 10 versions »

Remote locations for technical services: An exploratory survey

MJ McGurr - Technical Services Quarterly, 2011 - Taylor & Francis

… Falling in and out of Love: The Impact of Moving to a **Remote** Location on … Isacco, "**Work** Spaces, Satisfaction, and Productivity in Libraries": 27–30 … Harvard College **Library Technical Services** Resource Web Site http://hcl.harvard.edu/**technicalservices**/ (accessed March 22, 2010 …

☆ 99 Cited by 2 Related articles

[PDF] **Service perspectives for the digital library remote reference services**

B Sloan - 1998 - ideals.illinois.edu

remote work technical services library

Select a Field (optional) ▾

Search

AND ▾

Select a Field (optional) ▾

Clear ?

AND ▾

Select a Field (optional) ▾

⊕ ⊖

Basic Search   Advanced Search   Search History ▸

Search Results: 1 - 1 of 1

Relevance ▾   Page Options ▾   Share ▾

Note: Exact duplicates removed from the results.

1. **Remote Work** in **Library Technical Services**: Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the Developing COVID-19 Pandemic.

By: Craft, Anna R.. Serials Review, Jul-Sep2020, Vol. 46 Issue 3, p227-231, 5p; DOI: 10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658, Database: Library Literature & Information Science Full Text (H.W. Wilson)

Academic Journal

Subjects: Library technical services; Academic **libraries**; COVID-19 pandemic

Did you mean...?

Related searches

library technical services **communication and collaboration**

remote **locations** technical services

technical services **managers** library **association**

remote work **instruction librarians**

change in technical services

remote **students** library services

remote library **users**

library **instruction for** remote **learners**

library **resources and** services

service **perspectives digital** library

library technical services **york university**

library technical services **abu dhabi**

remote work **theoretical and applied approaches**

relocation or dislocation technical services

exploratory survey technical services

distant students library services

Goooooooooogle ›

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10   **Next**

Many of the top results were about:

- Remote work in non-library settings

- Library services for remote users / distance learners

- Remote access to electronic library collections

- Remote locations for technical services

- Remote reference services

- Libraries in remote locations

- Library services for remote communities

Only a very small number of articles addressed both remote work *and* library technical services

So, what did I find?

Let's break it down by:

- Types of literature available

- Dates and terminology

- Type of technical services work

- Remote work planning considerations

- Remote work challenges

- Remote work benefits

What types of literature informed this column?

Case studies

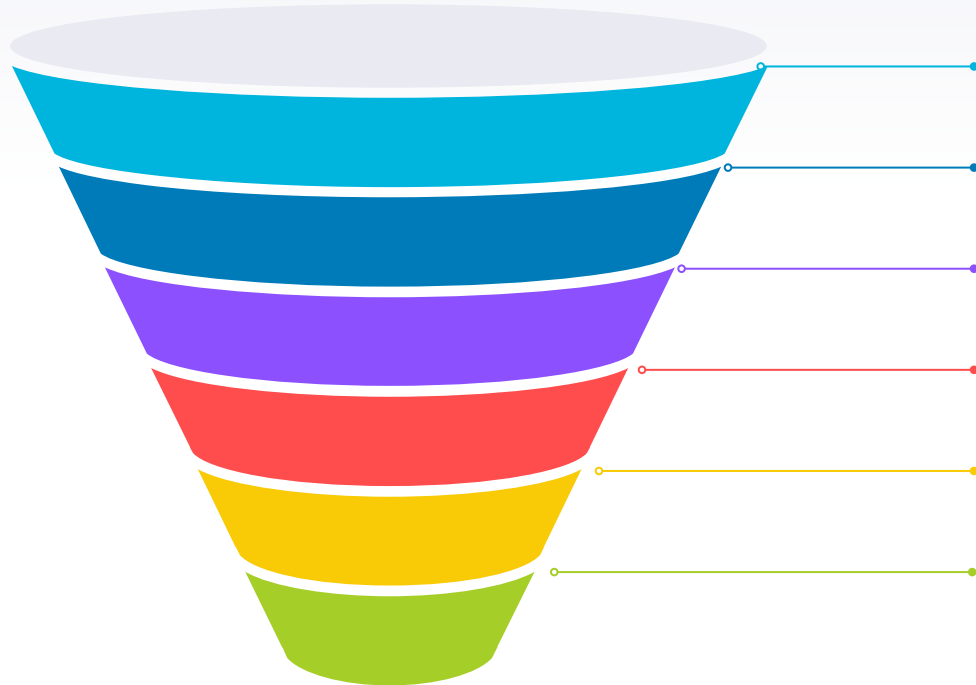Documenting TS remote work involving one person or one dept

+

Reports

From conference discussions about TS remote work

+

"Other"

Generalist (not solely TS) literature about remote work(ers) in libraries

The literature only reflects what is *published*, which doesn't include all perspectives

Not all library personnel write, present, and/or publish about their work experiences; so the literature only tells part of the story.

Other literature limitations

- Full-text online access wasn't available for some articles that sounded promising, and print collections weren't available due to closures

- The literature I did find was focused on academic libraries

- Also, I may have missed some things!

According to the literature, remote work in library technical services was being discussed, tested, and implemented in the 1990s (on a limited basis)

Articles published in:

2 **1995**

4 **1996**

6 **1998**
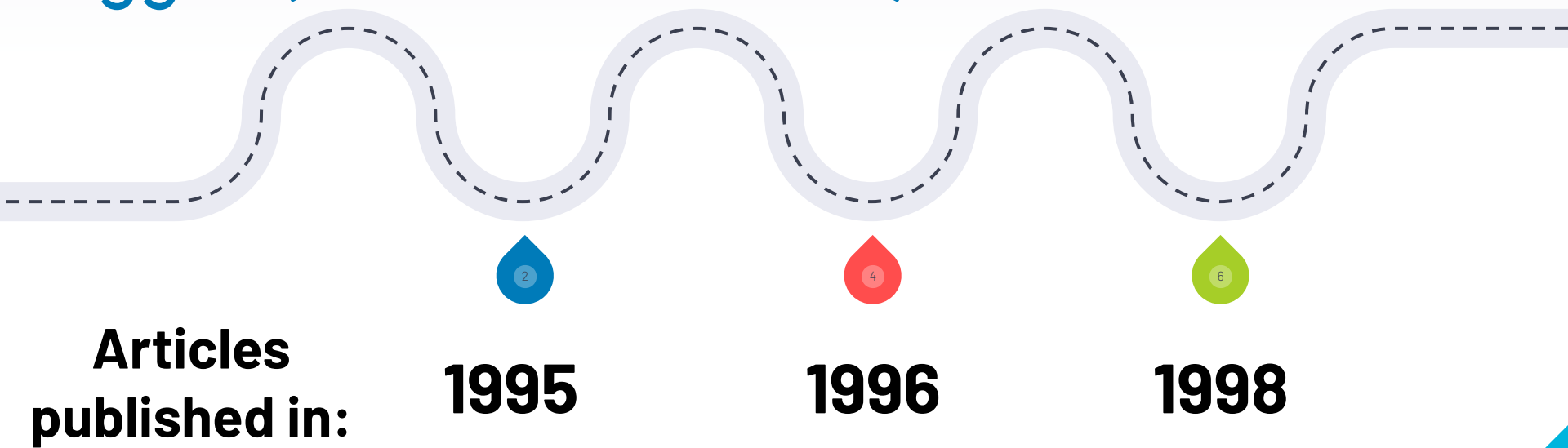
The literature reflects one particular area within technical services as testing (and publishing about) these early implementations of remote work.

Any guesses as to which area?

The early-adopter award for piloting (and publishing) about remote work in technical services goes to...

Cataloging!

Terminology changes over time

What terms and strings appeared in the titles of relevant literature?

- "Telecataloging"

- "Telecommuting"

- "Cataloging coast to coast"

- "Flexibility in the management of cataloging"

- "Flexible staffing"

- "Working from afar"

What else can we learn from the literature?

Planning for remote work

- Institutional / departmental policies

  ▷ Liability considerations

- Technology

  ▷ What is needed, what will be provided, and by whom?

- Agreement on tasks, schedule, time frame, performance evaluation, etc

  ▷ Some institutions require an MOU or MOA
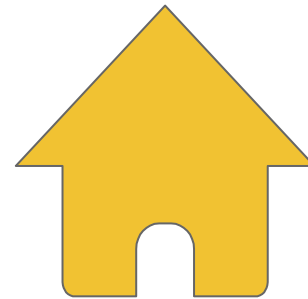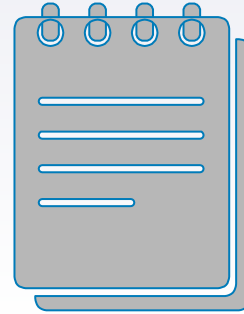
Remote work challenges

- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Socialization
- ▶ Work-life balance
- ▶ Equity

Remote work can be an equity issue

- In institutional settings, organizations usually provide physical facilities, technology, internet access, and other job-related needs

- Not all organizations provide hardware, software, and/or internet access (or financial support for such) to personnel working remotely

- In such situations, remote work may essentially be reserved for personnel who can provide these resources themselves
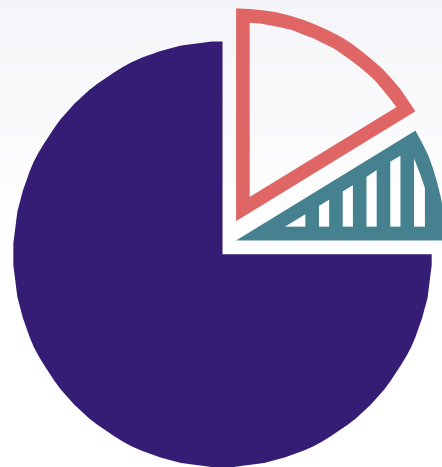
Potential remote work benefits

- Offer flexibility for employees

- Improve employee morale

- Increase efficiency

- Improve employee retention

- Opportunity for employers to rethink physical spaces (and attain savings on such)

What has been published on this topic in the meantime?

Left panel (search results)

Remote Work in **Library Technical Ser**
Perspectives to Realities of the Develop
AR Craft - Serials Review, 2020 - Taylor & Francis
The concept and practice of **remote work** in **library**
scale and speed of the transition to **remote work** for
pandemic is unprecedented. This column provides a
☆ 🗍 Cited by 4 Related articles All 2 version

[PDF] **Remote library** users—needs and
R Cooper, PR Dempsey, V Menon, C Millson-Martula
… Likewise, their technology backgrounds may be n
to **technical** computer support (Rosenquist-Buhler,1
in the **work** setting … Page 4. COOPER ET AL./RE
☆ 🗍 Cited by 142 Related articles All 10 ver

Remote locations for **technical service**
MJ McGurr - **Technical Services** Quarterly, 2011 - T
… Falling in and out of Love: The Impact of Moving t
Satisfaction, and Productivity in Libraries": 27–30 …
Resource Web Site http://hcl.harvard.edu/technicals
☆ 🗍 Cited by 2 Related articles

[PDF] **Service** perspectives for the digital
B Sloan - 1998 - ideals.illinois.edu

Right panel (Google Scholar)

Google Scholar

remote work technical services library

Articles

About 1,870,000 results (0.11 sec)

Any time
Since 2022
Since 2021
Since 2018
Custom range...

Sort by relevance
Sort by date

Any type
Review articles

☐ include patents
☑ include citations

✉ Create alert

Remote work in **library technical services**: Connecting h
to realities of the developing COVID-19 pandemic
AR Craft - Serials Review, 2020 - Taylor & Francis
… of **remote work** in **libraries** and **library technical services** units … of l
work in non-**library** settings, this … **libraries**, and particularly those that ac
☆ Save 🗍 Cite Cited by 24 Related articles All 6 versions »

Remote locations for **technical services**: An exploratory s
MJ McGurr - **Technical Services** Quarterly, 2011 - Taylor & Francis
… **library**. The purpose of this study is twofold: to begin exploring the topic
services, … for institutions, such as the author's own **library**, currently expe
☆ Save 🗍 Cite Cited by 2 Related articles »

Adapting to **remote library services** during COVID-19
L Howes, L Ferrell, G Pettys, A Roloff - Medical reference **services** …, 2021
… University Medical **Library** utilized new technologies and implemented ne
models in order to improve internal communication, and to continue providing
☆ Save 🗍 Cite Cited by 16 Related articles All 9 versions »

[HTML] Team structure: Establishment and evolution within t
the University of Kentucky **Libraries**
M McLaren - … Collections, Acquisitions, and **Technical Services**, 2001 -

remote work technical services library

Select a Field (optional) ▾

Search

AND ▾

Select a Field (optional) ▾

Clear ?

AND ▾

Select a Field (optional) ▾

⊕ ⊖

Basic Search   Advanced Search   Search History ▸

Search Results: 1 - 1 of 1

Relevance ▾   Page Options ▾   Share ▾

Note: Exact duplicates removed from the results.

1. **Remote Work** in **Library Technical Services**: Connecting Historical Perspectives to Realities of the Developing COVID-19 Pandemic.

By: Craft, Anna R.. Serials Review, Jul-Sep2020, Vol. 46 Issue 3, p227-231, 5p; DOI: 10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658, Database: Library Literature & Information Science Full Text (H.W. Wilson)

Academic Journal

Subjects: Library technical services; Academic **libraries**; COVID-19 pandemic

Recent searches didn't find much new literature on this topic, but my column on remote work is getting cited – so what are those publications about?

Library-based, but not focused on tech services

- "Library resilience and leadership in a global crisis"

- "The impact of COVID-19 on reference services: a national survey of academic health sciences librarians"

- "Transition of University Libraries to Adapt to the New Normal: A mid-and post-COVID-19 Response"

- "Evaluating research support facilities to university students during COVID-19"

- "Echoes down the corridor. Experiences and perspectives of library and information science education (LISE) during COVID-19 through an African lens"

Other fields

- "Remote work at the time of COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: A scoping review," *HR Analytics and Digital HR Practices*

- "To Change or Not to Change: A Study of Workplace Change during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*

International perspectives

Krizler Fırsat Yaratır Mı? Covid-19 Sürecinde Akademik Kütüphaneler, Yenilenmiş Bir Vizyon: "MEF Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi"

Year 2021, Volume 6, Issue 2, 232 – 270, 31.12.2021

Bahar BİÇEN ARAS ✓   Ramazan ÇELİK ✓   İpek YARAR ✓

Työnantajan keinot monipaikkaista työ tukemiseksi: Narratiivinen kirjallisuuska

N Jolkkonen - 2021 - osuva.uwasa.fi

Monipaikkaisen työn tekeminen on lisääntynyt räj teknologian kehittymisen myötä, ja suunta tulee o

☆ Save   🗭 Cite   Related articles   ≫

Бібліотеки закладів вищої освіти в умовах невизначеності: особливост організації віддаленої роботи персоналу

ТО Колесникова - 2020 - eadnurt.diit.edu.ua

UK: Невизначеність поточного навчального року та довгострокового майбутнього в закладах вищої освіти (ЗВО) України і світу, суттєві зміни у національній вищій освіті …

☆ Save   🗭 Cite   Cited by 2   Related articles   All 36 versions   ≫

Biblioteka 2020. Zderzenie wizj

R Ciesielska-Kruczek - Biblioteka i Eduk

Artykuł podzielony jest na dwie części, z przepowiednie jaki będzie świat bibliotek

☆ Save   🗭 Cite   Related articles   All

إجراءات مكتبات جامعة الأميرة نورة بنت عبد الرحمن في ظل جائحة كورونا (كوفيد-19): دراسة حالة

حنان ناصر الصنيع، حنان ناصر - بحوث في علم المكتبات ...، 2022 - sjrc.journals.ekb.eg

لقد شهد العالم أزمة صحية كبيرة بعد ظهور جائحة فيروس كورونا المستجد 2019 المعروفة إعلاميًا بـ كوفيد-19 في سبتمبر 2019. ولقد أثرت تلك الجائحة على الأرواح والمجتمعات والمنظمات وصاحب ...

☆ Save   🗭 Cite   Related articles   All 3 versions   ≫

There is undoubtedly more research and scholarship on this topic on the way

4

Where are we now?

Are we back in the office?

How has *required* remote work shaped what we're doing now?

Planning

Now we have planning opportunities and an understanding of needs that we didn't have before

- ▸ Institutional and departmental policies, guidelines, and expectations

- ▸ MOUs/MOAs

- ▸ Technology

- ▸ Procedures and workflows

- ▸ Remote work evidence

Challenges

- Navigating new and changing hybrid situations

- Balancing business needs and personal interests when it comes to remote work

What changes and challenges are you seeing in your departments when it comes to remote work experiences and expectations?

What about the future?

▶ We still don't know the full and lasting effects of the pandemic and associated changes on libraries and our work, spaces, services, and users

▶ **I don't have answers; I do have questions**

Some questions

- How did library technical services units handle the transition to remote work?

- What challenges did they face?

- What innovations were made, resources were created, or lessons were learned in supporting and managing the transition to remote work?

More questions

▶ How have libraries handled provision of technology, isolation of personnel, and other issues discussed in the literature?

▶ How will the pandemic affect library TS operations in the long-term?

▶ Will remote work remain common in TS units, even after remote work and social distancing measures are no longer required or recommended?
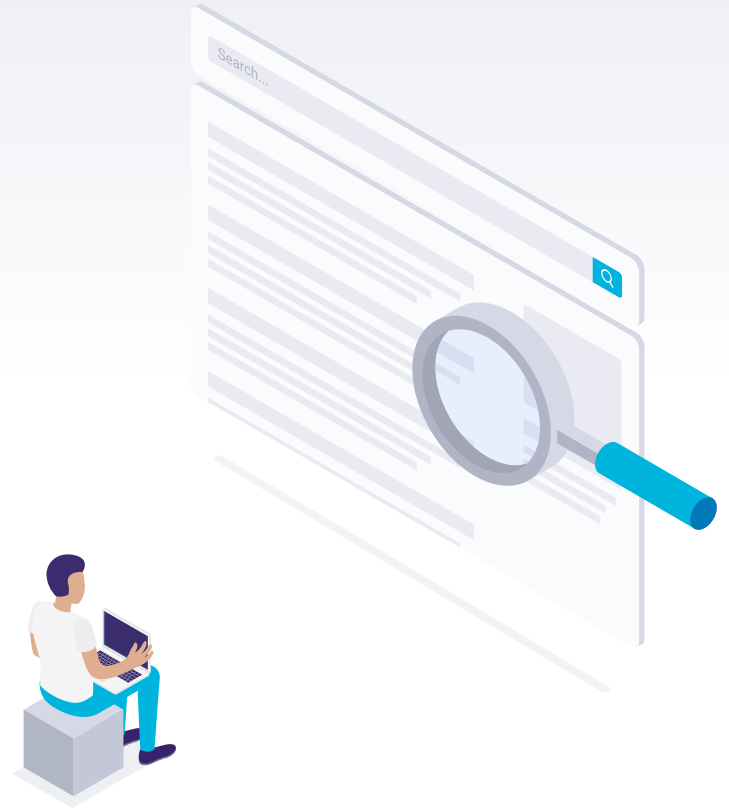
It is hard to imagine remote work in a pre-internet time

But it is *not* hard to imagine tech services personnel testing out new and different ways to get their work done

Personnel in library technical services handle change all the time!

THANKS!

Any questions?

▸ Anna Craft: arcraft@uncg.edu

▸ Slides link:
https://go.uncg.edu/ncsc2022

Article links:

Craft, A.R. (2020). Remote work in library technical services: Connecting historical perspectives to realities of the developing COVID-19 pandemic. *Serials Review, 46*(3), 227–231. DOI: 10.1080/00987913.2020.1806658

The full article is also available via open access in UNCG's institutional repository: https://go.uncg.edu/sr2020

More resources:

- Bénaud, C. L., Steinhagen, E. N., & Moynahan, S. A. (2000). Flexibility in the management of cataloging. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly, 30*(2-3), 281-298. https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v30n02_08

- Black, L., & Hyslop, C. (1995). Telecommuting for original cataloging at the Michigan State University Libraries. *College & Research Libraries, 56*(4), 319-323. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl_56_04_319

- Craft, A. R. (2019). Online documentation portals in library technical services: Shedding light on local practices and procedures. *Serials Review, 45*(3).171-175. https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2019.1645531

More resources, continued:

▶ Duncan, J. (2008). Working from afar: A new trend for librarianship. *College & Research Libraries News, 69*(4), 216-219. https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.69.4.7972

▶ Germano, M. A. (2010). Does workplace inflexibility cost libraries? *Library Worklife, 7*(3). https://ala-apa.org/newsletter/2010/03/28/does-workplace-inflexibility-cost-libraries/

▶ Hickey, D., & Tang, N. (2015). Theoretical and applied approaches to remote work for academic reference and instruction librarians. In S. Hines & M Simons (Eds.), *Library staffing for the future (Advances in library administration and organization*, Vol. 34, pp. 177-200). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0732-067120150000034008

More resources, continued:

▶ Jaskowski, S. K, Sobey, L. M., & Sutton, L. J. (2002). Cataloging coast to coast. *Technical Services Quarterly, 19*(2), 43-52. https://doi.org/10.1300/J124v19n02_04

▶ Johnson, J. L. (1998). Flexible staffing through use of telecommuting: A report of the ALCTS Creative Ideas in Technical Services Discussion Group Meeting at the ALA Midwinter Meeting, Washington, DC, February 1997. *Technical Services Quarterly, 15*(3), 82-83.

▶ Leysen, J. M., & Pelzer, N. L. (1996). Telecataloging: A consideration of present and future practices. *LIBRES: Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal, 6*(1–2). https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/libcat_pubs/6/

Credits

Special thanks to all the people who made and released these awesome resources for free:

- ▶ Presentation template by SlidesCarnival
- ▶ Illustrations by Sergei Tikhonov
- ▶ Photographs by Unsplash