Transfer of Collections - Effect on Circulation

With recent major collection transfers on campus, we have a unique opportunity to look into circulation figures and trends before and after shifts. Although it is tempting to ascribe the changes solely to the impact of the new shelving locations, we should recognize that, in addition to location, many other variables may affect borrowing (aging of materials, changes in research areas and instruction, increased electronic access to materials, etc.).

So, although we refrain from attributing all changes to location, it appears that location and convenience of access is one major element in circulation trends.

To examine location’s role in circulation, we looked at the number of general-use circulation transactions and the number of unique titles circulated during equal periods of time before and after transfer of collections. The three cases we studied are:

- Transfer of Fine Arts volumes to the Annex (Nov. 2010) – approximately 28,000 volumes
- Transfer of Engineering volumes to Uris (July 2011) – approximately 22,000 volumes
- Transfer of Uris volumes to the Annex (July 2011) – approximately 6,000 volumes

Summary of findings:

- The Fine Arts move is unique in that a large number of volumes needed temporary storage at the Annex until the planned Rand Hall building renovation was complete. Publication date played a larger than usual role as a selection criterion, although historical usage was also considered. Before their transfer, the volumes could be used (browsed) in the library as well as checked out. After their transfer, volumes had to be requested from the Annex for pickup at Fine Arts (or at another library), which meant that all usage was recorded through checkouts. Accordingly, the transferred volumes showed a marked increase in circulation (23% more checkouts in the 25 months after the transfer than in the same period before transfer), and a 15% increase in the number of individual titles circulated. This increase supports the conventional wisdom that there is heavy browsing use in Fine Arts. Unfortunately, no numbers are available to quantify on-site browsing.

- In the 18 months following the transfer of the most heavily-used Engineering books to Uris Library, the total general collection circulation of these volumes went down by 25%. Additionally, the number of distinct volumes checked out fell by 20%. The circulation decrease was significantly more than what could have been expected based on usage trends during the prior three fiscal years (an average annual decrease of 6.2%).

- Despite the significant decrease in their circulation, Engineering titles contributed to a significant increase in overall Uris circulation.

- The Uris volumes selected for transfer to the Annex were extremely low-use books and ceased or cancelled serials. But after their transfer to the Annex, these low-use volumes saw an increase in circulation (from 162 to 283 checkouts), and the number of distinct volumes circulated increased by 46%. This may suggest the books had unrecorded browsing usage while in Uris.

- There are multiple differences between these three libraries and situation: arts vs. sciences, rate of growth for e-books, and also the availability of a pickup location near the school. Is it possible that the lack of a nearby pickup location is a bigger impediment to use than having to plan ahead and request items from the Annex?
The circulation trends for Uris, Fine Arts, and the Annex contrasted with the general-collection circulation trends for CUL as a whole. The results show a somewhat less steep decline in circulation for these libraries than for CUL as a whole.

### Circulation Before and After Transfer – Engineering, Fine Arts and Uris transferred books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Transfer date for majority of volumes</th>
<th>Amount of time before/after transfer</th>
<th>Volumes Transferred</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engr</td>
<td>Uris</td>
<td>7/1/2011</td>
<td>18 mo.</td>
<td>21,786</td>
<td>9,819</td>
<td>7,346</td>
<td>6,935</td>
<td>5,583</td>
<td>0.4774</td>
<td>0.3228</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>-25.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAL</td>
<td>Annex</td>
<td>11/17/2010</td>
<td>25 mo.</td>
<td>27,797</td>
<td>2,059</td>
<td>2,526</td>
<td>1,783</td>
<td>2,048</td>
<td>0.0741</td>
<td>0.0908</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uris</td>
<td>Annex</td>
<td>7/1/2011</td>
<td>18 mo.</td>
<td>6,326</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>0.0256</td>
<td>0.0447</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### General Collection circulation by Fiscal Year – Engineering, Fine Arts, Uris, Annex, and CUL

The graph below shows circulation trends by unit library. To get the CUL line on the same graph for comparison, the CUL number is represented at one-tenth of actual value.

![General collection circulation graph](Figure 1)
The following bar graph takes another look at Uris Library’s circulation, this time going back further in time than the previous line graph. These are checkout figures regardless of what was housed in Uris at the time (including the collection that is now at Tsinghua. Latest years include volumes transferred from Olin and Engineering).

![Uris Library general collections checkouts](image)

Figure 2

The following bar graph shows the circulation history of Engineering titles that were moved to Uris in fiscal year 2011/12. So the collection is the same, but the shelving and circulation location was Carpenter Hall up to FY2011, and Uris from FY 2012.

![Engineering transferred collection checkouts](image)

Figure 3