

Library Administrative Core Duties: an Annual Guide for Planning and Sequencing Events

Lisa M Smith & Libby E Ingram

Abstract

Library Administrative duties are varied and complex. While a very large portion of duties require administrators to respond to unique and disparate projects and to develop novel programming and new tasks, a portion of administrative duties are cyclical and can be anticipated on an annual basis. Creating a macro level list of tasks and commitments by utilizing a GANTT chart will allow administrators to more effectively operationalize strategic plans. Additionally, this organizational tool will allow departmental project planners to track staff and funding availability in order to ascertain when additional resources will be available for programming. While the GANTT chart we provide here is not exhaustive, we believe it highlights many of the core tasks and duties performed on an annual, cyclical basis and can serve as the granular planning tool to assist administrators in effectively operationalizing institutional strategic plans.

Introduction and Literature Review

A key role of Library Administrators is to guide the strategic planning of the institution. Once the strategic plan is solidified, operational planning must be undertaken to ensure the successful implementation of the macro level plan. In preparation for strategic planning it is advantageous to first draft a list of administrative core action items that are undertaken annually. This list of budgetary timelines, funding cycles, purchasing timelines and other considerations allows those engaged in the planning process to review project timelines and the need for resources to ensure newly conceptualized programs will align with annual availability of funding and allowable purchasing timelines. It is not uncommon for project opportunities to arise, only to learn that the target date for offering the service falls outside of the existing budget cycle or procurement timeline. Incorporating the budgeting cycle into annual planning is the most important first step in strategic planning and a 2008 survey of members of the Institute of Management Accountants concerning budgeting and strategic planning revealed that “the majority of respondents indicated budgeting is useful for functions such as strategic planning” and

“can be a part of the strategic management process of an organization” (Shastri and Stout 2008, 19).

While the duties and sequence described here are unique to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Library, most university library administrators will find these recurring duties are required to be managed annually at their home institution. This overview, depicted in GANTT chart format may also serve as a guide or functional checklist for new administrators or managers in determining tasks to anticipate on an annual basis, how to sequence planning and staffing and to assist in determining when to allocate human resources throughout the year. Utilizing basic tracking tools, like the GANTT chart, allows managers to track and progress towards completing action items. Basic tools such as this can be quickly adopted and utilized by staff. When tasked to determine if the American Society for Quality Control was “optimally positioned for the future,” the Consensus Management Group suggested that basic tracking tools can assist in monitoring progress and recommended that “a simple one-page form with columns for goal, person accountable, strategies that person will use, date to be complete, cost and progress to date” was sufficient for most program tracking (Perlov 1995, L69). Additionally, this macro level planning tool is helpful to those managing projects and research indicates that managing projects is a core component of many librarians’ job duties. Librarians surveyed by Guimaraes, et. al found that a majority of respondents to their survey indicated that project management is “outlined in their official job description” and that most respondents were presently managing four (4) or more projects (Guimaraes 2021, 647). While project managers utilize the GANTT chart in addition to very complex project tracking tools, the GANTT chart remains a mainstay for tracking progress. In a survey with 750 project managers, the GANTT chart was the fourth most used tool out of 70 tools and techniques associated with project management (Geraldi and Lechter 2012, 578). Most project managers view a process as successful “when time, budget and performance goals are met” (Shenhar et. al 2001, 699). Using these metrics we can see why it is imperative to ensure the project timeline is congruent with human capital availability within the library and access to financial resources and funding.

Utilizing this guide to build a template unique to each institution can also serve as a planning tool to assist managers in determining the time/effort needed to complete the task, the human resources needed to assign to relevant roles, and the preferred sequencing of projects to ensure timely distribution of resources. Additionally, advanced planning and sequencing of these events will allow administrators to plan for any needed professional development or seek training that may increase team member success when participating in these projects. This timeline is

meant to provide an overview of annual tasks and should not replace extensive project planning associated with each task.

Methods

Library Administration communicated with internal library departments to obtain annual task lists, departmental deliverables, external reporting expectations, budgeting timelines, and program goals. An initial list of action items was created, and new items were added to the list as they were encountered throughout the fiscal year. A GANTT chart was constructed containing the task list and an extensive review of preferred task sequence was undertaken. Weekly administrative team meetings were held to review, add to, and update this organizational tool on a continual basis. The tool was developed from January 2020 through May 2021. It is currently reviewed on a weekly basis and utilized to guide decision making, project sequencing, and planning. It is anticipated that the review and update of this management tool will be a recursive project.

Process of building the tool

Budget cycle:

Funding and financial resource availability affects all aspects of administrative oversight. This organizational tool will reflect budget action items that occur once during the year in addition to tasks that are required to be performed on a recurring basis.

To appropriately sequence administrative events and tasks within the year, it is necessary to begin by aligning the budget cycle for the library with the broader campus budget cycle. Denoting both of these budget cycles first will allow administrators to view the sequence of planning within the larger context of the institution that will be needed to appropriately request funds for the fiscal year, anticipate when the funds are available for programming, and understand when the funds must be expended within the fiscal or calendar year.

Expense reconciliation:

Ongoing tracking and monthly disbursement of funds should be denoted. Expense reconciliation, payroll and supply ordering are additional monthly activities that fall within these categories and should be recorded on the task list. Additionally, any accounts that allow for revenue generation (ex: photocopy accounts, interlibrary loan accounts) should be denoted and reviewed monthly to monitor accrual of funds or unexpected reductions in anticipated revenue.

Included within the task list are independent projects with cost associations that occur annually. These will include development and review of annual information technology inventory and systems for library patron and common spaces requiring funding for equipment purchase, resource management review in anticipation of contracting with vendors and to anticipate inflation rates, personnel annual review processes for potential salary adjustments, strategic planning initiatives, promotion & tenure cycles, and external statistics reporting cycles.

Payroll:

Payroll processes are strictly time delimited tasks that should be denoted on the annual calendar. Internal library processing of time/effort should be aligned with campus timelines. Campus payroll data submission dates require strict adherence to ensure timely payment of personnel.

Salary Adjustments:

Working with campus administration and human resources to determine the availability of merit, performance, cost of living, bonus, or annual salary increases will allow managers to determine which options are available, when they can be offered, and from which budget or fund center resources will be made available. Additionally, the mechanism for determining availability of funds released from unfilled positions, or open positions should be identified to determine the recipient of unexpended funds (eg. campus administration, or library).

Revenue generation cycle:

Identifying and recording the cycle of revenue generated allows managers to allocate revenue to appropriate expenses, track trends in fund balances, and determine the allowable use of any additional funds generated.

Facilities Technology Equipment plan:

Libraries that maintain the budget and develop the information technology plan for library spaces and to support staff technology needs will create project plans to identify appropriate technologies and software for acquisition and replacement. Budgeting cycles, requirements for obtaining quotes, acquisition, and installation cycles should be tracked via project management tools. Additionally, planning and budgeting for photocopy or multifunction device plans should be integrated into this process.

Facilities Maintenance Planning:

Planning and budgeting for the repair and maintenance of facilities should be integrated into the annual planning cycle to ensure spaces are well maintained. Many libraries plan for an ongoing maintenance cycle which may include painting, window cleaning, carpet repair and refurbishing a portion of library facilities each year.

Resource Management - Product review and purchasing cycle:

The resource management timeline is the most complex task list to appropriately sequence due to the need for forecasting of fund availability prior to each fiscal year. Other items to be considered when developing the resource budget cycle include inflation projection, advance commitment of funding, multiyear planning, product review, purchase commitment cycle, fund encumbrance, contract negotiation, contract construction, and routing. Commitments to purchase products are often required prior to the fiscal year in which the product will be activated and contracts for products often span multiple fiscal years. Product consideration review timelines and contract cycles should be developed to ensure funds are committed for purchasing products in the appropriate budget year.

Supply purchasing:

When possible, it is advantageous to demarcate a timeframe to consider expensive, non-standard supply orders for capital equipment and other items they may need to be considered for purchase during the year. Institutions have a fiscal close out period which should be identified and purchases should be made and funds committed prior to fiscal close out of the financial records for the year. Many institutions require that items be received onsite prior to fiscal close, so procurement policies at each institution should be reviewed to appropriately order materials during the timeline required by the institution.

Contract management:

In addition to contracts associated with resources acquired to support research collections, some libraries may provide fee-based research and support services to external agencies. Contract management with these entities require monitoring the annual negotiation cycle, building a contract drafting timeframe, including time for internal contract routing, and denoting the cyclical invoicing for services.

Employee performance cycle:

Classified, non-classified, and faculty performance cycles may have distinct timelines and processes. Time allocated to conduct personal self-assessments, supervisor assessment and formal review meeting times should be included in the planning process.

Faculty promotion & tenure cycle:

The faculty promotion and tenure review cycle is a lengthy process that often requires cross departmental input and oversight. Internal library processes, promotion and tenure committee, and faculty affairs departmental guidelines must be reviewed when building the timeline and checklist needed to successfully shepherd a candidate's application through the system. Additionally, the results of the process may affect budgeting if faculty promotions occur with an associated increase in salary.

Grant submission:

Grant opportunities often are discovered on an ad hoc basis and submitted as needed, but many academic health science libraries consistently apply for funding via the Network of the National Library of Medicine. Reviewing the NNLM application cycle, grant review timeline, and project period of performance and integrating those dates into the timeline will assist libraries in allocating team member time and effort, administrative and clerical support needed, and determining when program partner solicitations should occur to align with planning and grant applications.

Reporting Requirements:

Campus offices charged with overseeing institutional strategy and measurement often request data in support of accrediting body data gathering requirements (ex: LCGME). Including a list of reporting entities and dates for submitting data allows libraries to plan for data collection, synthesis, and reporting to campus entities needing the data. Additionally, external agencies, such as the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries, request data from libraries on an annual basis to support benchmarking efforts nationwide. The internal library departments that must be consulted to obtain this data can be extensive so creating a data collection timeframe that accounts for adequate time need to collect and analyze multiple data sets is imperative.

Strategic Planning:

The preferred strategic planning cycle varies from institution to institution. Many planning cycles are dependent on the institution-wide planning cycle and library plans are drafted to cascade downward to the departmental level while simultaneously supporting institutional goals and objectives. Planning for deliverables that must be submitted to campus administration should be prioritized first because they will set the parameters required for the more granular library planning cycle. Strategic planning best practices would sequence planning in the following order: campus-wide strategic plan construction, cascading campus plans to inform the development of library-wide strategic plans, subsequent construction of library unit-level goals & objectives, and finally library staff personal goal construction. It is common practice that this sequence must be altered to support campus-wide budgeting constraints, timelines, and planning cycles. Identifying the local practice at each institution is essential and “planning to plan” around the university strategic planning cycle is key to creating departmental strategies that can be operationalized at the ground level.

Notable dates:

Notable campus calendar dates should be included to allow managers to view the timeline with associated campus dates that may overlap, conflict, or require rescheduling of project timelines to accommodate campus initiatives. Examples include holidays, academic calendar milestones for the colleges and schools on campus, and accrediting body site visits to campus. Additionally, annual meeting and conference dates should be included to review possible project and task conflicts.

Results

The annual timeline for the UAMS Library to manage these core tasks is depicted via a GANTT chart to allow for visual analysis of each project or task. Customizing this chart to focus on the task, sequence, and project duration will assist new managers in creating an annual planning cycle for their team, establish time and effort expectations, and distribute work load. Additionally, this administrative calendar is meant to serve many other supportive purposes. It can be utilized as a planning tool or annual to-do list for library administrators while simultaneously serving as a program planning tool that will allow managers to ensure newly-devised projects will align with resource availability. It serves as an operational planning tool and listing of annual action items that must be accomplished to manage the business of libraries. Administrators can utilize the list to serve as a training checklist for new administrative personnel. Managers may

also review the list to determine highest needs for staff availability for competing projects. A review of funds availability and the proposed disbursement cycle can be tracked using this tool. In anticipation of action items, professional development can be sequenced to ensure managers and team members are provided training to acquire the skills needed to accomplish the tasks that will arise during the year.

Table 1.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Administrative Master Calendar					
2			January			
3	Task	timeframe	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
4	Library Budget Cycle					
5	Begin budget discussions	November				
6	Preliminary Library Budget due to campus administration	January				
7	Administrative review of budget request	January				
8	New fiscal year begins	July				
9	Final budget notification for next year's budget received	April				
10	Travel proposals submitted to dept head for next FY	July				
11	Dept head submits travel requests to Budget Manager	July				
12	Budget Manager develops travel spreadsheet, submits to Director	July				
13	Proposed travel reviewed, approved by Director	July				
14	Proposed purchases before current FY budget close	July				
15	Submit revenue projects for consideration (i.e. copier contracts, contracts with hospitals)	December				
16	Sweep unspent balances in accounts and reallocate funds elsewhere	December				
17	ex: Unspent salaries / staff recruitment funds / professional development					
18	Expense Reconciliation					
19	Review Variance Report monthly (3rd wk)	3rd wk of month				
20	Review Financial Report monthly	2nd wk of month				
21	Request Budget report from Academic Affairs Budget Office (to reconcile expenses)	2nd wk of month				
22	Review Contracts Revenue report monthly (2nd wk of month)	2nd wk of month				
23	Travel Card reconciliation	2nd wk of month				
24	Foundation Fund Expenditure Review					
25	Balance foundation fund accounts	2nd wk of month				

26	Custodian Fund Reconciliation				
27	Treasurers office custodian fund reconciliation (last day of month)	<i>last day of month</i>			
28	Treasurers office daily deposit	<i>daily</i>			
29	Payroll				
30	Classified / Nonclassified Payroll Processing	<i>biweekly</i>			
31	Vacation / sick time balance verification	<i>last week of month</i>			
32	Faculty Time / Effort Reporting (2 x annually)	<i>Feb ; August</i>			
33	Salary Adjustments / reconciliation				
34	Archives Department Salaries - transfer any foundation funds allocated for salaries	<i>2nd wk of month</i>			
35	Determine if performance raises allowed / eligible	<i>Dec</i>			
36	Determine if cost of living raises to be permitted / issued	<i>Dec</i>			
37	Revenue generation cycle				
38	Photocopy revenue - review qtlly revenue, break even status	<i>2nd wk of month</i>			
39	EFTS revenue - review revenue, disburse funds	<i>last week of month</i>			
40	Bookstore revenue received from administering online bookstore	<i>April</i>			
41	Facilities & Staff Technology Equipment Plan				
42	Equipment Plan Developed	<i>Sept</i>			
43	Submitted for approval	<i>Jan</i>			
44	Equipment budget integrated into Library Budget	<i>Jan-Feb</i>			
45	Approval received for plan	<i>April</i>			
46	Equipment Ordered to prepare for Fall	<i>July</i>			
47	Equipment Installation	<i>August</i>			
48	Photocopy Equipment / Contracts				
49	Analyze need, use and revenue generated by copier contracts	<i>May</i>			
50	Review lease agreements to integrate any needed changes in service	<i>June</i>			
51	Renew contracts	<i>July</i>			

52	Facilities / maintenance planning				
53	Managers & Administration develop facilities, maintenance repair wish list	<i>July - Sept</i>			
54	Quotes for projects, materials received	<i>October</i>			
55	Facilities budget constructed (for upcoming year)	<i>Nov - Dec</i>			
56	Approved items ordered	<i>July</i>			
57	Resource Management: Product Review and Purchase				
58	Contracts spanning July - June annually				
59	Email vendor contacts to request new quotes	<i>February</i>			
60	Product review and critique	<i>March-April</i>			
61	Contract negotiation	<i>May-June</i>			
62	New subscription cycle begins	<i>July - June</i>			
63	Contracts spanning January - December annually				
64	Email vendor contacts to request new quotes	<i>August</i>			
65	Product review and critique	<i>Sept - Oct</i>			
66	Contract negotiation	<i>Nov - Dec</i>			
67	New subscription cycle begins	<i>Jan</i>			
68	Contract Management				
69	External Library Service Contract - fiscal year renewal				
70	Begin contract discussions with contracted libraries	<i>January</i>			
71	Finalize contract agreement	<i>March</i>			
72	Complete contract (firm due date)	<i>May</i>			
73	Invoice for services rendered (created 10th of each month)	<i>monthly</i>			

74	Employee Performance Cycle (non-faculty)				
75	<i>performance period to be assessed: September 1 - August 31st</i>				
76	Employee writes self assessment	<i>September</i>			
77	Employee self assessment due to supervisor	<i>September</i>			
78	Supervisor writes employee evaluation	<i>October</i>			
79	Supervisor & employee hold in-person meeting to review the evaluation	<i>November</i>			
80	Final signed evaluations due in human resources	<i>November</i>			
81	Faculty Performance Cycle				
82	<i>performance period to be assessed: July 1 - June 30th</i>				
83	Faculty member writes self assessment	<i>August</i>			
84	Faculty member self assessment due to supervisor	<i>August</i>			
85	Supervisor writes faculty evaluation	<i>September</i>			
86	Supervisor & faculty member hold in-person meeting to review the evaluation	<i>October</i>			
87	Final signed evaluations due to human resources	<i>October</i>			
88	Faculty Promotion process				
89	Candidates' documents submitted for Promotion Committee review	<i>August</i>			
90	Committee review of promotion packet	<i>October</i>			
91	Promotion Committee routes recommendations to Associate Provost	<i>November</i>			
92	Associate Provost notifies Committee and applicant of decision	<i>November</i>			
93	Associate Provost submits recommendation to Provost	<i>January</i>			

94	Grant Submissions				
95	Network of the National Library of Medicine NNLM Grant submission cycle				
96	Formulate program proposal, explore partnerships	<i>Jan - Feb</i>			
97	Write grant, obtain letters of support, notify campus grant office of intent to apply	<i>March - April</i>			
98	Submit grant application to campus grant office	<i>April</i>			
99	Campus grant office formally submits grant application to NNLM	<i>May</i>			
100	If awarded- grant period of performance, program offerings	<i>June - April</i>			
101	Invoices & status reports due to NNLM (to be determined, monthly or quarterly)	<i>TBD</i>			
102	Final report due to funding agency, and final invoice	<i>May</i>			
103	Library Administration conduct 'burn-rate' audits with Grant PI's	<i>quarterly</i>			
104	Reporting to external agencies				
105	Association of Academic Health Science Libraries (AAHSL) Statistics reporting period				
106	AAHSL data information collected from library departments	<i>August - Sept</i>			
107	AAHSL data due to Library Administration	<i>September</i>			
108	AAHSL stats due/submitted by Director	<i>November</i>			
109	Association of College & Research Libraries ACRL - Facilities Survey	<i>April - May</i>			
110	Arkansas Library Association (ArLA) annual academic libraries survey	<i>April - May</i>			
111	Strategic Planning				
112	Library planning for next Fiscal Year	<i>October</i>			
113	Budgets submitted for administrative review	<i>December</i>			
114	Approved budget received from administration	<i>January</i>			
115	Develop final Library Action Plans (for FY spanning July - June)	<i>Jan - Feb</i>			
116	Submit cascaded action plans into larger AA document	<i>March</i>			
117	Status updates to strategic plan due to Associate Provost	<i>quarterly</i>			

118	Miscellaneous					
119	Camus newsletter submissions due (bi-monthly)	<i>bi-monthly</i>				
120	Internal Time Effort Reporting for Faculty	<i>Feb; Aug</i>				
121	Review employee vacation time balances to ensure usage by year end	<i>March ; Sept</i>				
122	Inventory of library physical assets for campus recordkeeping	<i>March-April</i>				
123	Interlibrary Loan revenue invoices generated (as needed)	<i>ongoing</i>				
124	Dissertation / Theses processing - receipt and cataloging	<i>April- May; Nov-Dec</i>				
125	Notable Dates					
126	Higher Learning Commission (HLC) campus visit (not an annual event)	<i>March</i>				
127	Annual Meetings					
128	Medical Library Association (MLA) Annual Conference	<i>May</i>				
129	South Central Chapter of MLA Annual Conference	<i>September</i>				
130	Electronic Resources and Libraries (ER&L) Conference	<i>March</i>				
131	Charleston Conference	<i>November</i>				
132	University Holidays					
133	Holiday Break: New Year's day	<i>January</i>				
134	Holiday Break: MLK Day	<i>January</i>				
135	Holiday Break: President's Day	<i>February</i>				
136	Holiday Break: Memorial Day	<i>May</i>				
137	Holiday Break: 4th of July	<i>July</i>				
138	Holiday Break: Labor Day	<i>September</i>				
139	Holiday Break: Veterans Day	<i>November</i>				
140	Holiday Break: Thanksgiving	<i>November</i>				
141	Holiday Break: Christmas	<i>December</i>				

Discussion

Managing administrative projects and tasks requires the support of team members in disparate roles throughout the library. Creating an annual planning guide assists managers in preparing for these projects and obtaining support needed from appropriate departments. Building the guide also assists administrators in offering managerial oversight of complex projects and this functional tool should aid administrators in amassing the human and financial resources needed to provide stewardship for each of these essential projects. While events listed here are depicted in the calendar year, libraries may wish to align the GANTT chart with the fiscal year to assist in their planning. Additionally, a portion of these activities are unique to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, but the majority of activities discussed here should aid new managers or administrators in creating a list of considerations when operationalizing plans throughout the year.

References

- Geraldi, Joana, and Thomas Lechter. "Gantt Charts Revisited: A Critical Analysis of its Roots and Implications to the Management of Projects Today." *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business* (2012).
- Guimaraes, Anastasia, Lea Briggs, Kirsten Clark, Wendy Tressler Jasper, and Zheng Wang. "State of Project Management in Libraries." *Journal of Library Administration* 61, no. 6 (2021): 644-658.

Perlov, D. "The Strategic Plan." *Association Management*, 47, no. 1 (1995): L69.

Shastri, Karen, and David E. Stout. "Budgeting: Perspectives from the Real World." *Management Accounting Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (2008).

Shenhar, Aaron J., Dov Dvir, Ofer Levy, and Alan C. Maltz. "Project Success: a Multidimensional Strategic Concept." *Long Range Planning* 34, no. 6 (2001): 699-725.

Lisa M Smith (lsmith42@uams.edu) is Library Director at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences – Library and **Libby E Ingram** (ingramlibbye@uams.edu) is Associate Director, User Experience and Operations at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences – Library

Published: March 2022