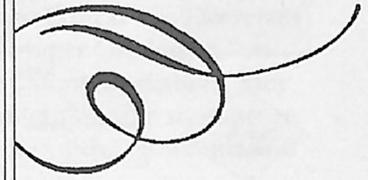# PREPARING AN ITEM FOR CIRCULATION WHILE STREAMLINING THE WORKFLOW BETWEEN THE ACQUISITIONS AND CATALOGING OFFICES

by Muriel Godbout

ABSTRACT

Recognizing the need for more efficiency in the workflow between the point of receipt of a library item and the point of shelving that item, the Wells College staff began an assessment project. Also included in this assessment were the training and introduction of a new staff member to operations in the Acquisitions Office. To facilitate better communication and increase productivity, the staff members assessed the workflow between the Acquisitions Office and the Cataloging Office. The first steps were to create a Charter, signed and approved by Head Librarian Jeri Vargo; a glossary of terms designed to eliminate possible confusion; and finally a Parking Lot where ideas for future projects could be placed. As a result of this project, the process is more efficient. The time between the first step and the final step in the process decreased, and communication between offices improved.

INTRODUCTION

Wells College is a small liberal arts college located in the village of Aurora in the Finger Lakes region of central New York. It is situated on more than 300 scenic acres overlooking Cayuga Lake. Wells offers a rigorous academic environment with 17 majors and 39 minors, in addition to individualized programs. Formerly a women's college, Wells became coeducational in 2005.

In the fall of 2006 the Library staff, in response to a campus-wide assessment initiative, participated in the New York 3Rs Continuous Assessment and Continuous Improvement statewide series of workshops for libraries. The process improvement project team was composed of three librarians—Frankie Anderson (reference/information literacy/interlibrary loan), Muriel Godbout (serials/systems), and Elsie Torres (access/circulation). Their charge was to identify a process in the Library that needed improvement. The acquisitions manager was new to the position, and the workflow between acquisitions and cataloging needed streamlining. The process to be assessed began with the receipt of materials in the acquisitions office and ended with moving the ready–to-be-shelved materials from the cataloging office to the circulation desk. Once the process was identified, the cataloging librarian, Julie Kabelac, and the acquisitions manager, Kim Nolan, became an integral part of the process improvement project team.

They began by creating a top-down flowchart, which indicated each progressive step of the workflow as it existed. As they proceeded, they realized that some of the steps in acquisitions varied depending on the particular item, e.g., books, videos, and books that are part of a volume set. At this point, they identified the variant steps by distinguishing them in the flowchart with a diamond rather than rectangular shape. These variant steps were points where decisions had to be made and therefore, points where possible mistakes could result. The objective was to identify, eliminate, or change, if possible, the variant steps.
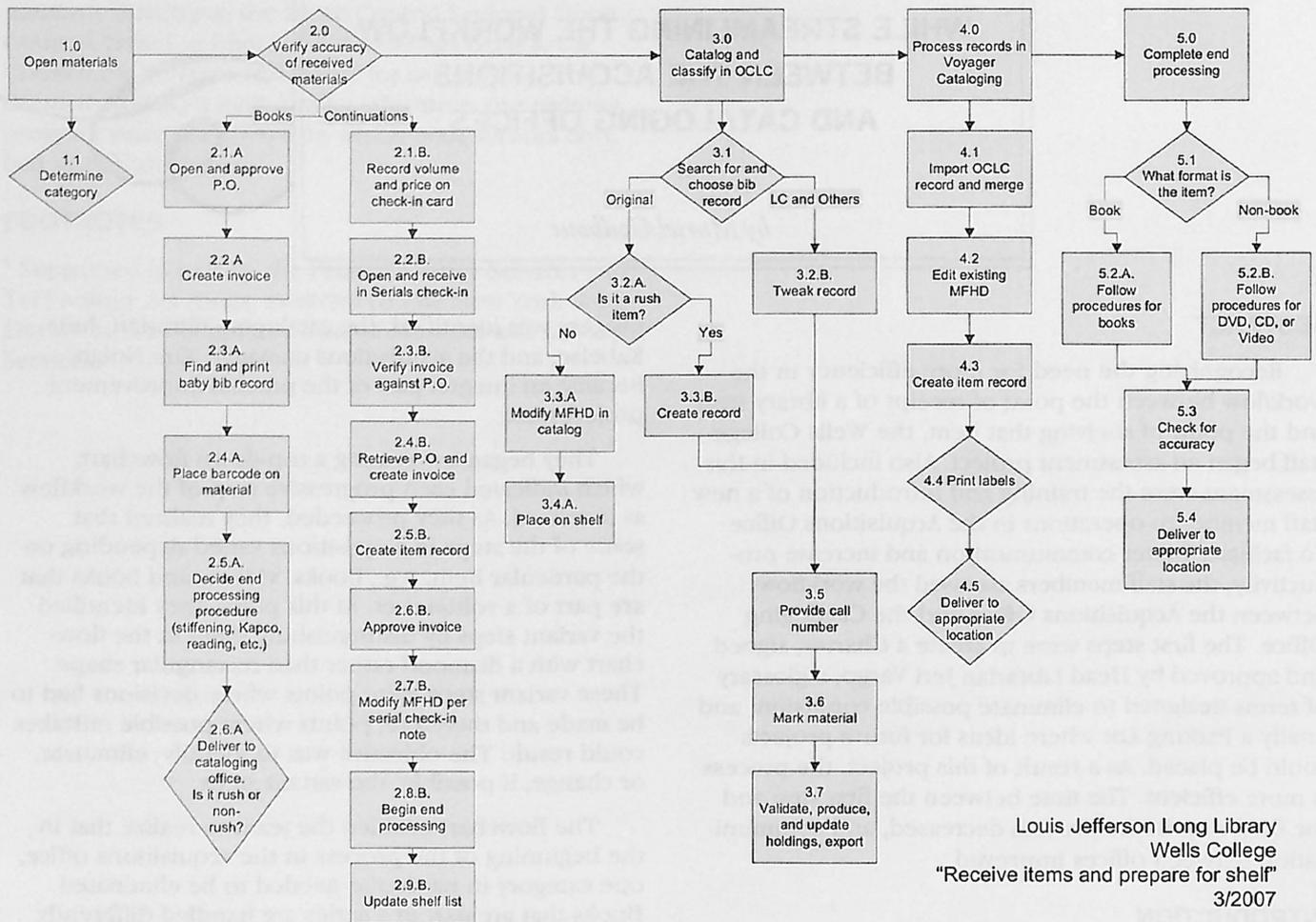
The flowchart enabled the team to realize that in the beginning of the process in the acquisitions office, one category in particular needed to be eliminated. Books that are part of a series are handled differently and these steps are complicated; therefore, it needed to be assessed separately. The team referred to these books as "continuations." Continuations were placed in the Parking Lot for future assessment (Figure 2).[1]

As these steps were eliminated, the team realized it needed to add another variant step to the flowchart. This step, which involved additional processing, covered such items as paperback books that needed "stiffening."

METHODOLOGY

In order to avoid an unstructured approach that might contribute to the team's inability to measure success, the team decided to use the tools provided by the Continuous Assessment/Continuous Improvement for Libraries workshop. Some of the tools have been mentioned previously such as the Flowchart, but other tools used were Customer and Supplier Screens, Key Steps Worksheet, and Deployment Flowchart. The team employed measurement tools, including the Process Behavior Chart (Run Chart), Cause & Effect Diagram (Fishbone), Cause Analysis Worksheet, and Pareto Chart. They also used data from system-generated reports.

Figure 1: Flowchart


```
1.0                2.0                      3.0                    4.0                      5.0
Open materials     Verify accuracy          Catalog and            Process records in       Complete end
                   of received              classify in OCLC       Voyager                  processing
                   materials                                       Cataloging

1.1                      Books    Continuations          3.1                   4.1                  5.1
Determine                                                 Search for and        Import OCLC          What format is
category           2.1.A            2.1.B                 choose bib            record and merge     the item?
                   Open and approve Record volume         record
                   P.O.             and price on    Original     LC and Others  4.2           Book          Non-book
                                    check-in card                                Edit existing
                   2.2 A            2.2.B            3.2.A           3.2.B        MFHD          5.2.A.        5.2.B.
                   Create invoice   Open and receive Is it a rush    Tweak record              Follow        Follow
                                    in Serials check-in item?                    4.3           procedures    procedures
                   2.3.A            2.3.B            No        Yes   3.3.B.       Create item   for books     for DVD, CD,
                   Find and print   Verify invoice                   Create record record                    or Video
                   baby bib record  against P.O.     3.3.A                        4.4 Print labels  5.3
                                                     Modify MFHD in                                 Check for
                   2.4.A            2.4.B            catalog          3.5                            accuracy
                   Place barcode on Retrieve P.O. and                Provide call  4.5
                   material         create invoice   3.4.A.          number        Deliver to       5.4
                                                     Place on shelf                appropriate      Deliver to
                   2.5.A            2.5.B                             3.6           location         appropriate
                   Decide end       Create item record               Mark material                 location
                   processing
                   procedure        2.6.B.                           3.7
                   (stiffening,     Approve invoice                  Validate, produce,
                   Kapco,                                            and update
                   reading, etc.)   2.7.B.                           holdings, export
                                    Modify MFHD per
                   2.6.A            serial check-in
                   Deliver to       note
                   cataloging
                   office.          2.8.B.
                   Is it rush or    Begin end
                   non-rush?        processing

                                    2.9.B.
                                    Update shelf list
```

Louis Jefferson Long Library
Wells College
"Receive items and prepare for shelf"
3/2007

Figure 2: Parking Lot

Payment process for invoices

Gifts

Mystery orders

How to deal with new continuations

Problems with continuations (title change, multiple bibs vs. one bib)

Continuation swaps when new volume, edition, year arrives (current to Ref, rest to stacks)

Process for returning unordered materials

Setting Voyager client preferences and settings to SysAdmin

Receipt of and filing of OCLC card packs

Keeping of statistics

Purchase order set-up for copy 2+, replacements, volume 2+ of a multi-volume set

The Customer and Supplier Screens were used to identify steps important to the internal and external customers, as well as suppliers, of the process. By completing the Screen for internal customers, the team found that many points under Flowchart Step 2.0 (for acquisitions) and Flowchart Step 3.2B "Tweak bibliographic record," (for cataloging) were tied together.

The key points in the Screen for external customers indicated that the step "Create item records" was consistent with Flowchart Steps 4.1-4.3 (Figure 5).

The last Screen was for the suppliers, which the team determined to be the U. S. Postal Service, UPS, vendors, Voyager ILS, bookstore, gifts, Government Printing Office, IT Department, and publishers. The step at which supplies were most critical was Flowchart Step 4.0, "Process records in Voyager Cataloging." As team members finished the Key Steps Worksheet, they took notes on steps that they might be able to improve later. They asked a novice to try out the Flowchart and Key Steps Worksheet (see Figure 6).

Figure 3: Internal Customer Screen

Internal Customer Screen: Acquisitions

W. J. Long Library/Wells College
Process: Receive items and prepare for shelving

Internal Customers:

Library staff
Library student workers

How strongly does the Step affect the Internal Customer Need?
5 = Critical to meeting the internal customer need
2 = Some impact on meeting the internal customer need
0 = No impact on meeting the internal customer need

Process Steps Most Important to Meeting the Needs	Internal Customer Needs								
	Materials received in timely manner	Acquisition payment cards up to date	Condition evaluated accurately	Accurate data (cost, P.O., etc.	Cataloging shelflists to update	Physical material that matches paperwork	Material modified per MFHD check-in note	Continuation tem records created in Voyager	*TOTAL*
Verify accuracy of received materials (2.0)	5	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	*12*
Open materials (1.0)	5	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	*12*
Find existing paperwork in office (2.0)	0	0	0	5	0	5	0	0	*10*
Gather supplies (Done throughout process)	0	2	0	5	0	0	5	5	*17*
Complete end processing (5.0)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	*5*
Open and approve P.O. (2.1.A)	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	2	*12*
Verify invoice against P.O. (2.3.B)	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	2	*12*

Figure 4: Internal Customer Screen

Internal Customer Screen: Cataloging

W. J. Long Library/Wells College
Process: Receive items and prepare for shelving

Internal Customers:

Library staff
Library student workers

How strongly does the Step affect the Internal Customer Need?
5 = Critical to meeting the internal customer need
2 = Some impact on meeting the internal customer need
0 = No impact on meeting the internal customer need

	Internal Customer Needs									
Process Steps Most Important to Meeting the Needs	Materials to work with	Baby bib	Instructions and notes from acquisitions	Print and online records to work with	Manuals (local and other)	Condition evaluation when extracting data	Produce shelf list	Accurate exporting of OCLC bibs	Proper merge	***TOTAL***
Provide call number (3.5)	0	0	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	***15***
Import OCLC record and merge (4.1)	2	0	0	5	5	5	5	0	0	***22***
Export OCLC bibs (3.7)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	***10***
Create item record (4.3?)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	***5***
Import OCLC record and merge (4.1)	0	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	5	***15***
Edit existing MFHB (4.2)	0	2	5	5	2	0	0	0	2	***16***
Create item record (2.5.B and 4.3)	0	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	***10***
Follow-up on instructions and notes (Throughout process)	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	***7***
Check for accuracy (5.3)	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	2	***7***

To see how well the process was performing, the team decided to measure elapsed time in two phases. System-generated data was already available for two of the three measurements in the process. For the third measurement, Flowchart Step 5.0, "Complete end processing," the team would have to gather data manually, knowing that it would require a much more detailed examination. They had to settle for the available data to get an idea about the process' performance. They created a Process Behavior Chart of the total time from Flowchart Step 1.0 to Step 4.1 and from Flowchart Step 4.3 to 5.4. Based on system-generated reports covering a distinct time frame, they were able to calculate an average processing time of 18.6 days. (Figure 7)

Figure 5: External Customer Screen

External Customer Screen

W. J. Long Library/Wells College
Process: Receive Items and Prepare for Shelving

External Customers:
- Faculty
- Students
- Staff
- Area residents
- Alumnae
- Researchers
- Other libraries

How strongly does the Step affect the External Customer Need?
5 = Critical to meeting the external customer need
2 = Some impact on meeting the external customer need
0 = No impact on meeting the external customer need

Process Steps Most Important to Meeting the Needs	Items ready to circulate	Notification as requested	System indexing/findability online in OPAC	Online accessibility of material	TOTAL
Create item record (4.3)	5	0	5	5	15
Complete end processing (5.0)	5	0	0	5	10

By using a Cause-and-Effect (Fishbone) Diagram and a Cause Analysis Worksheet, the team was able to explore the most significant possible causes of processing delays and identified them as interruptions, lack of documentation, scheduling staff and student workers, and lack of communication (Figures 8 and 9).

With this information in hand, they made some changes that reduced the average time to 5.33 days (Figure 10). The changes were simple. The team developed a new schedule of stiffening twice a week rather than once every two weeks. This change eliminated a bottleneck. They also scheduled two hours per day for cataloging. The team decided that it was not necessary to wait until the book truck was full before cataloging. Two simple changes made a significant difference that would not have been easily noticed had it not been for the assessment of the process.

CONCLUSION

The changes were implemented immediately, and the results were favorable to the end goal—there was a measurable productivity improvement. In addition to improved communication between offices, the process and methods for this exercise improved communication with the whole staff. Two added lessons were learned. Even though only certain members of the staff were directly involved in the process, it was essential to include *all* staff. Also, allowing for flexibility due to daily interruptions in the process was crucial.

Placing the Continuations in the Parking Lot identified them as separate future projects.

The entire process was documented. These measures will serve as a baseline for future assessment.

Figure 6: Key Steps Worksheet

Process: Receipt of materials to ready to shelve or access   Date: 11/06
Team name: subset of library staff   Date to be rechecked: 1/17/07

Key Step #	Key Step Name	Best Known Way	Tricks of the Trade	Consequences of doing it wrong
1.0	Open materials	Manually. Check playability of media materials and condition of print materials before continuing with receiving.	-All included materials remain together. -Keep label/packing slip/etc. to identify source if no paperwork is included.	-Can't identify source. -Sits on the Problem shelf. -Could damage material if overzealous in opening. -Damaged material is received and processed leading to possibility of not being able to return material.
2.1.A	Open and approve PO	In Voyager Acquisitions, pull up PO by number. Highlight line item and click Details. Place appropriate figures and details into Quick Line Item field. Approve PO.	-Record PO#, price, fund, requester information in same location (highlight line item – Details) when item is ordered.	-Inaccurate information can result in material not being ledgered correctly or delivered to proper requester. -Inaccurate PO# can delay process by forcing operator to search for correct PO.
2.3 A	Find and print baby bib record	While PO is open, highlight appropriate line item and click MARC. Cataloging must be open for this to work. Toggle to Cataloging and record is viewable – print it.	-Transfer any relevant notes from Acq line item detail to baby bib (hold for x, notify x, place in x collection, 14-day, rush for x, Reserve x, replacing copy at x call number, requester name, etc.). -Sometimes it may not be a baby bib, it may be the bib already in database, particularly for replacement copies, multi-volume sets that don't arrive in one installment, additional copies. If this is the case, attach with the existing sl and existing material to new material with a rubber band. -If a multi-volume set, just provide 1 baby bib. Cataloger will decide on one bib or multiple bibs route.	-Material not placed in previously discussed location. -Material not delivered to intended person/area after end processing. -If incorrect baby bib or full bib is sent with material, problems with merge procedure later and time spent investigating.
2.4 A	Place barcode on material	Do not barcode RBR or Archives materials. Books and Videos: barcode placed on front cover or case, upper left. DVDs: barcode placed inside on right side of case, bottom under the disc.	-Do not barcode material that needs Kapco-ing. -Do not place barcode flush with top of book as it could be destroyed. -Generally one barcode per item. If for example a two-volume video set and in	-Inconsistency for staff and student desk workers in knowing where to look for barcode. -Minimally question if material went through process up to the point of delivery to Cataloging, especially if no

Title					
Days to Completion					
Moving range					

Individuals

UPL = 35.6

Average = 18.6

LPL = 1.6

Moving Range (2)

UPL = 20.9

Average = 6.4

Figure 7: Process behavior chart showing average days to receive and prepare items for shelving, and upper and lower process limits (UPL and LPL). The top chart is a picture of the process's performance; the bottom chart is a picture of the variation in the process.

Methods
- Acquisitions paperwork
- Continuations
- Documentation
- Workflow varies
- Continuations
- Book formats
- Scheduilng
- Staff & Student Training
- Error feedback
- Method of review
- Review/revisit key steps
- Variables in workload

Persons
- Training
- Personality
- Communication
- Stress
- Attitude/Morale
- Interruptions

Rework and/or major delays in processing

Environment
- Configuration of workspace
- Security of work areas
- Location of workspaces
- Sink in mending area

Material
- Stiffening
- Care of supplies
- Quality of supplies
- Paper cutter
- Brushes
- Kapco
- Label protectors
- Continuations
- Books
- 14-day processing and presentation
- OCLC label program and local practice
- DVD labels
- Script I

Machine
- New server
- Lock down
- Disconnected printer
- Software compatibility
- Version Voyager
- Version browser

Figure 8: Cause-and-effect diagram used to brainstorm possible causes of rework and delays.

Figure 9: Cause Analysis Worksheet

Potential Cause	Frequency Few 1 Many 10	Severity Low 1 High 10	Detectability Hard 1 Easy 10	Score (F*S*D)
Lack of documentation	7	8	8	448
Scheduling	7	7	9	441
Acquisitions paperwork	2	9	9	162
Lack of staff/student training	3	7	5	105
Variation in workflow	10	2	9	180
Variation in work load	4	3	9	108
Lack of communication	4	10	10	400
Interruptions	9	9	9	512

*These categories are extracted from the Methods and Persons categories on the Cause and Effect Diagram; the team felt unable to measure Personality, Stress, Attitude/Morale.

Last, the team was able to use continuous improvement tools in another way. They incorporated a Flowchart, Customer and Supplier Screens, and a Key Steps Worksheet into their library assessment undertaken as part of the campus-wide Strategic Plan, and are pleased with the results.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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This article is the result of many hours of continuous assessment by the library staff at Wells College. The hard work was done by Frankie Anderson, Julie Kabelac, Kim Nolan, Elsie Torres and Muriel Godbout.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The Parking Lot is a list of issues and ideas that are important but must be addressed at a later date. Often created on a piece of chart paper visible to the whole group, it allows the group to stick to its agenda without wasting time on tangential issues, while still capturing good ideas and topics to be addressed later.
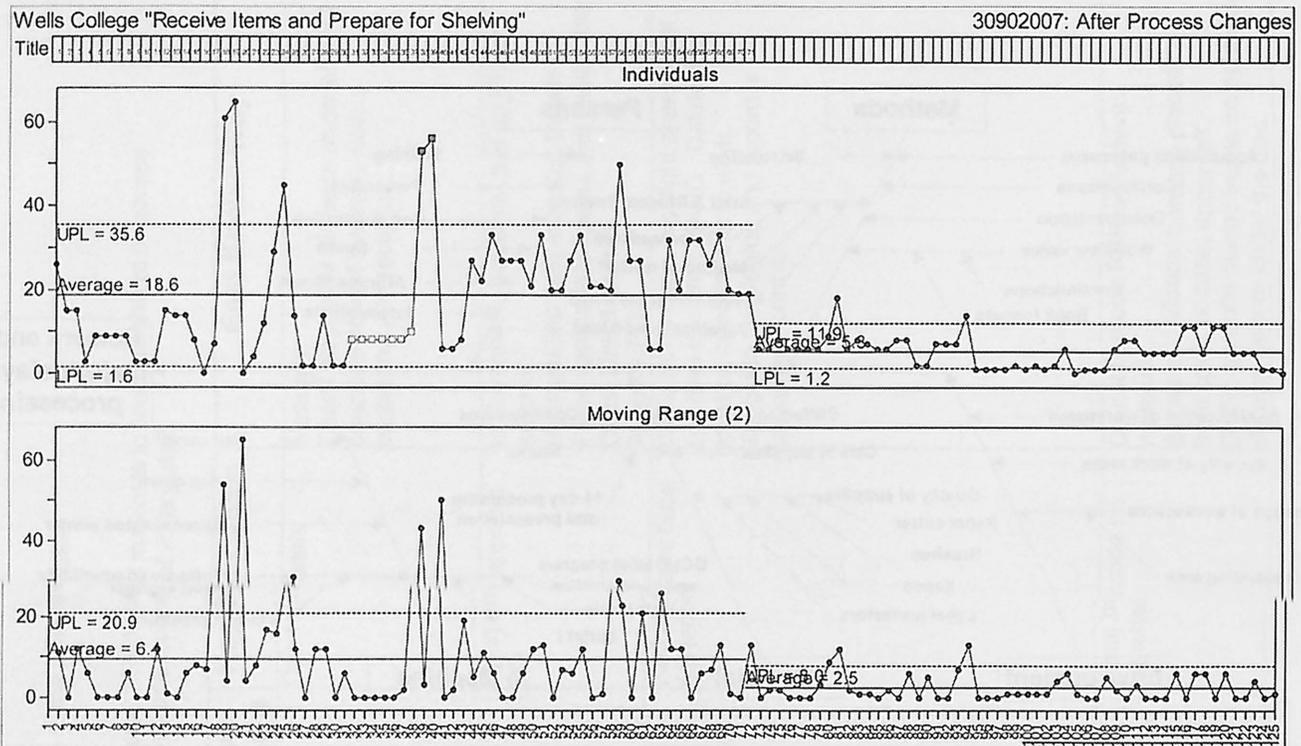

Figure 10: Process behavior chart showing improvement after process changes. Notes the dramatically decrease in the average number of days, from 25.6 to 5.3. The bottom chart also shows a decrease in the amount of variation, from 6.4 to 2.5.

DEFINITIONS

Continuations – [will revisit as a separate process]

Books – books, DVDs, Videos, CDs, etc.; anything leaving the Acquisitions Office for the Cataloging Office and end processing before heading to final shelving location

Baby bib – same as a brief bib; record created by in Acquisitions for PO using ISBN, author, title (not all even apply to all baby bibs) that is later merged with full imported OCLC record

Paperback/soft-cover – as in book

Spine label/call number label – the call number label placed on the spines of materials (excluding Archives and RBR materials)

End Processing – the physical processing of material done in Technical Services area: Bookplate, Wells stamp, Ref sticker, call number label and protector, etc.

MFHD – the mfhd is the holding record in cataloging. It indicates what we hold in our collection and where it is located.

Stiffening – the process of stiffening a soft-cover book.

TOOLS, EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES (STEP 9)

Linen strips (stiffening)

Stiffening boards

Scissors (in Mailroom, Technical Services, Acquisitions and Cataloging offices)

Box cutter

Statistics sheet for stiffening

Pens, black (particularly in Technical Services)

Sharpened pencils with erasers

Vendacard (stiffening)

Sharpened blade on paper cutter

Clean sink

Clear counter areas to work on (particularly in Technical Services)

Soap for cleaning glue brush

Paper towels

Special glue brush