

## **Overview of Kingston and ordering**

Kingston University is a former polytechnic with around 20,000 students and 2,000 staff across 5 sites. The Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) at 4 sites are staffed by a FTE of 96 staff. We have 17 staff in Collections and our Library Management System (LMS) is Alma (we went live in June 2014).

Our subject teams place orders and are responsible for selecting records and if possible, to specify a classmark. Most items arrive shelf-ready. On arrival the items are received by the Acquisitions strand of Collections. The items are then shelved or passed to Cataloguing. Items needing cataloguing or classification are identified by a note placed by subject teams when ordered.

## **Gathering data**

Prior to 2013 we didn't track throughput. We do have a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) around the percentage of books that must be on the shelf within 1 working day of receipt, but other than that there's no target as to how many books we must catalogue in a day/month.

In mid-2013 we considered purchasing direct from the vendor platforms for our 2 main suppliers, rather than placing orders in the LMS.<sup>1</sup> As part of the preparation we started to look at where we were getting information from when cataloguing items (whether we could download a new record or use e.g.: WorldCat for information). We noticed a lot of items were coming to Cataloguing unnecessarily and wanted to get a better idea of why this may be.

From February 2014 we recorded:<sup>2</sup>

- Source of record / information (for cataloguing)
- Records only needing a classmark (no cataloguing required)
- Only minor fixes (ie: typos)
- Didn't need to come to us
- Duplicate records
- Complete mess<sup>3</sup>
- Reclassification (either requested or from a Dewey 23 reclassification)
- Item fixes (ie: changing the loan period)

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<sup>1</sup> We did do this, but abandoned it 6 months later due to a variety of reasons.

<sup>2</sup> Not all data is included here. For further information please contact me.

<sup>3</sup> Items with multiple things 'wrong' i.e: 2 different records at 2 different classmarks...

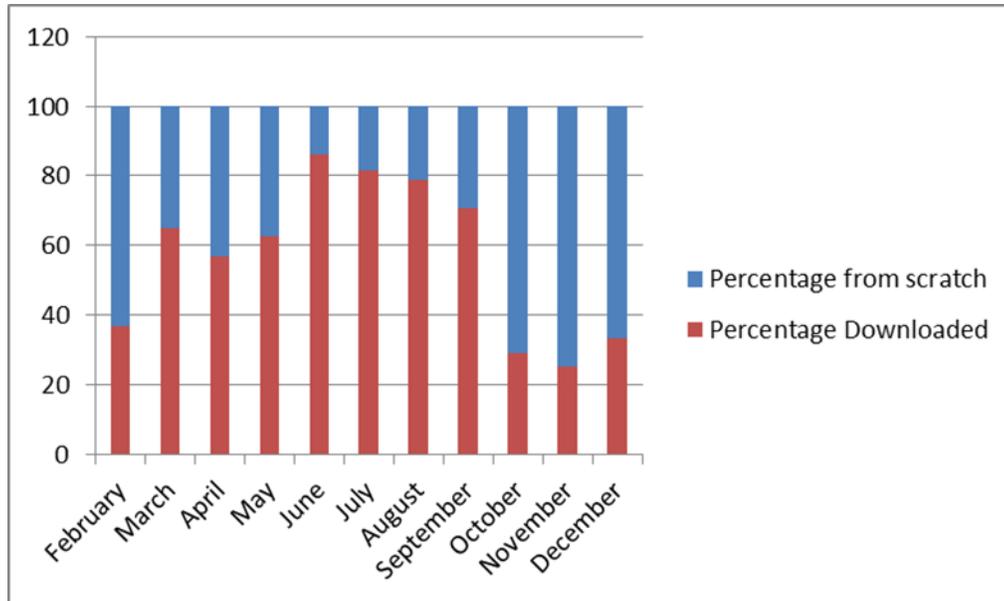


Fig 1: Record source at point of cataloguing – not initial downloading - 2014

Figure 1, above, shows how records were completed when Cataloguing dealt with them (not at point of order). Three things to note..

- 1 – Added British National Bibliography (BNB) as a record source in Aleph, the impact of which cannot be underestimated – in one afternoon my colleague cleared 3 shelves of books!
- 2 – Move to Alma with a wider range of sources for records - noted as a measurable benefit of moving to Alma.
- 3 – In October we started to get items coming in that had been ordered in Alma rather than in Aleph. As these often had a record, we could focus on more specialist cataloguing.

Not all items handled were catalogued (Figure 2, below). On its own these figures don't reveal much. Figure 3 (below) shows in detail what these other interventions were.

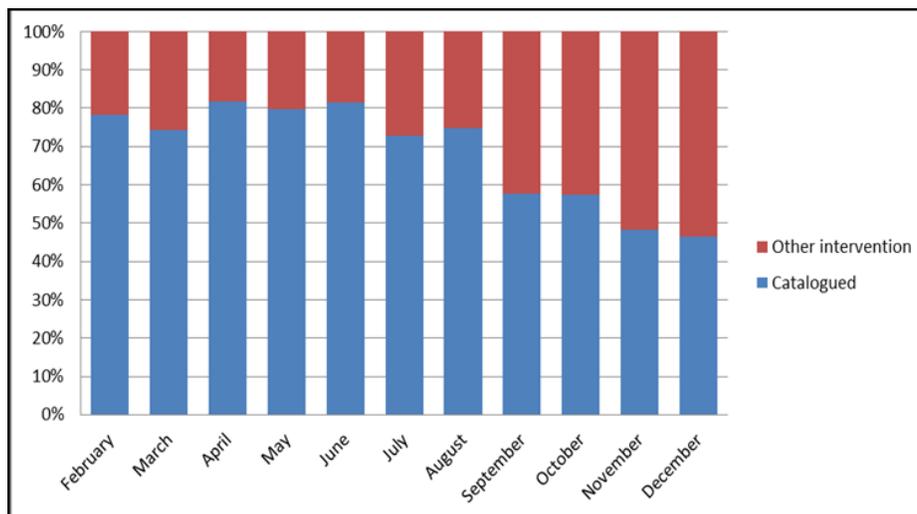


Fig 2: % of items catalogued versus 'other' intervention - 2014

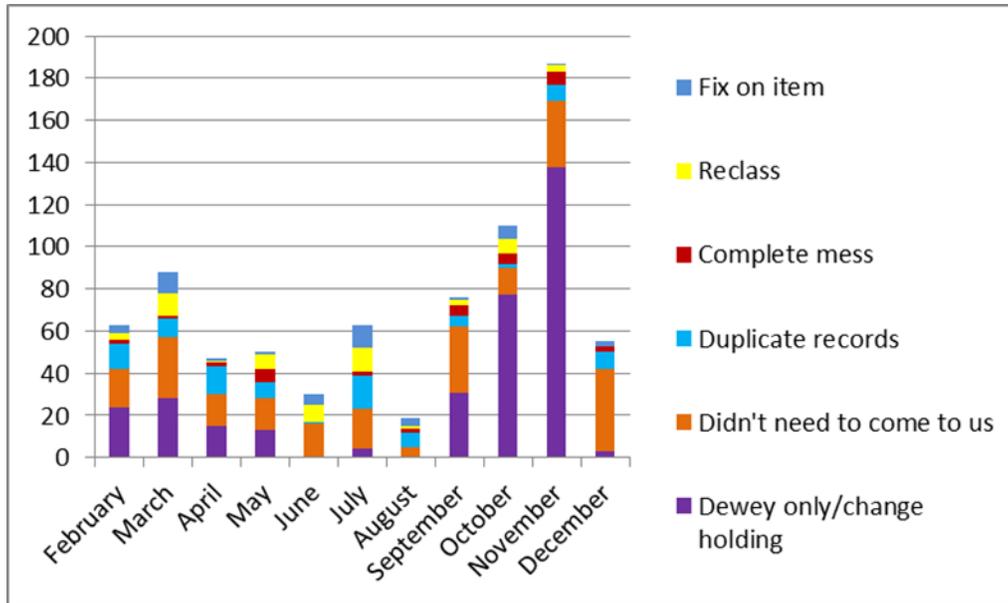


Fig 3: 'Other' interventions – breakdown by type - 2014

By the end of the year more items only needed a classmark or didn't need to come to us. Whilst this justified any grumbles about "Why on earth did *this* get passed to Cataloguing?" we needed to look at it in more depth.

**Into 2015:**

In 2015 we focussed on 3 key areas.

- Items only requiring classmarks – grouped by faculty
- Duplicate records – to try and trace when the extra record appeared.
- Didn't need to come to us – noting down *reasons*.

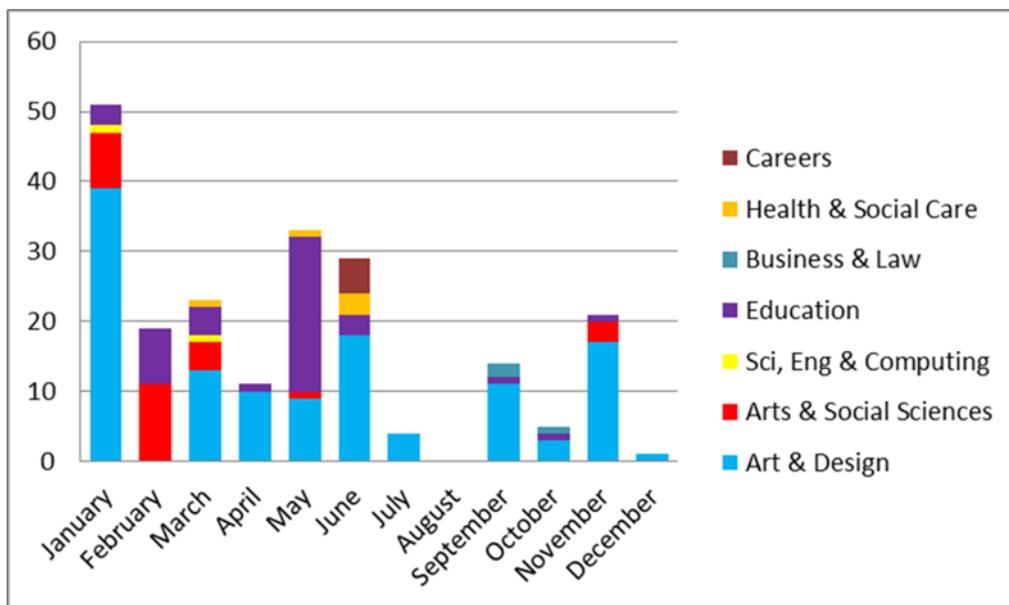


Fig 4: Items only requiring Dewey numbers - breakdown by Faculty

Each faculty had, at some point, an item that just needed a classmark (Figure 4, previous page), the majority though were in Art and Design and Education. This fitted with what we thought and was largely because we believed vendors that supplied those books didn't do shelf-ready.

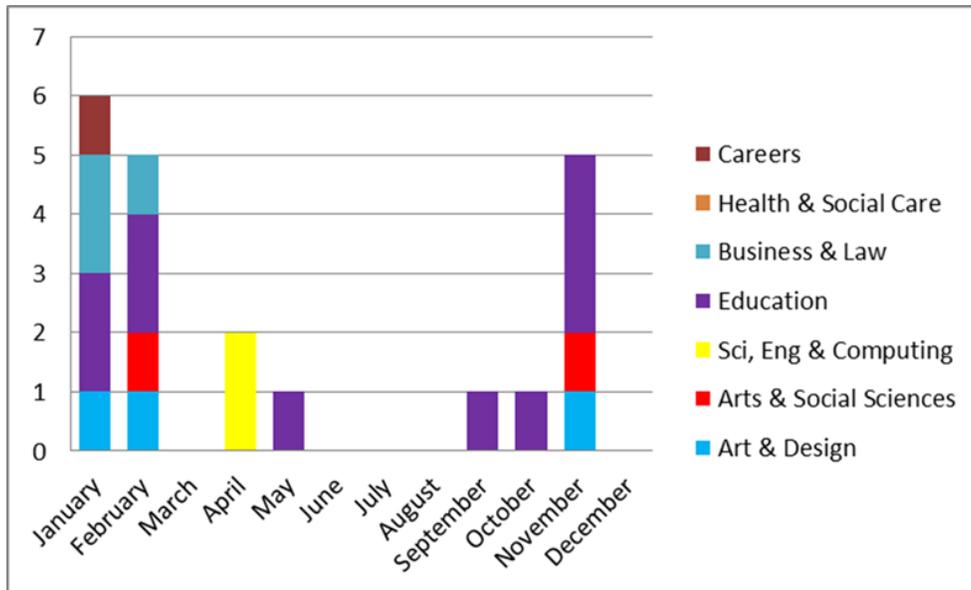


Fig 5: Items with duplicate records - 2015 - breakdown by Faculty

The numbers of duplicate records (Figure 5, above) was much lower than anticipated. With Alma we can see who placed orders and could approach them to see where the confusion lay.

The most interesting results, to me, were always going to be the reasons behind items being passed to us that didn't need to be (Figure 6, below).

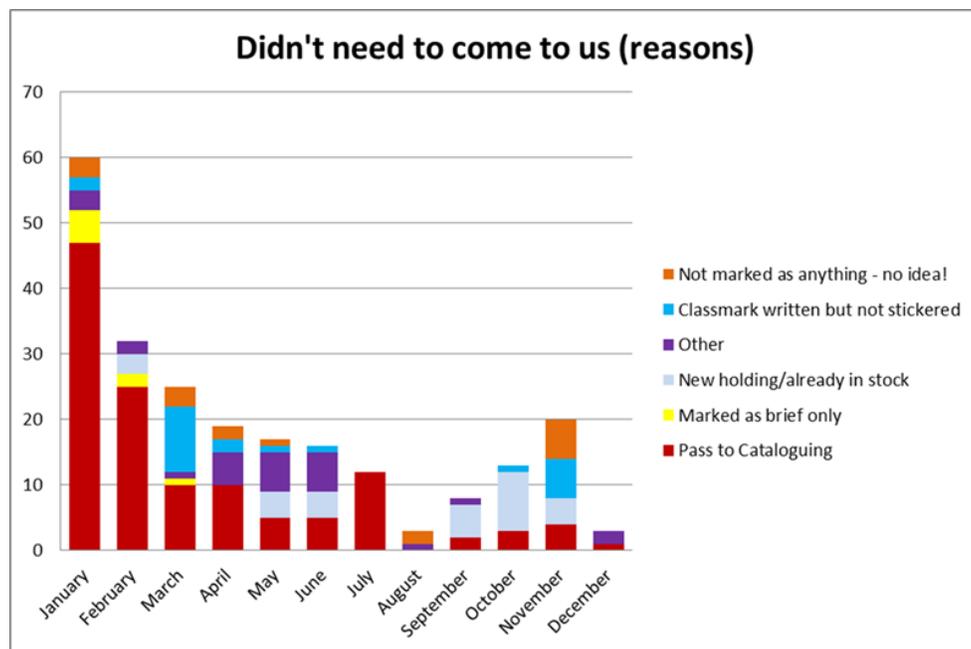


Fig 6: Items that didn't need to come to us – 2015 - breakdown by type

The main reason was items marked as 'Pass to Cataloguing' at point of order, despite having a good record and classmark specified, indicating an area for further training.

## So what now?

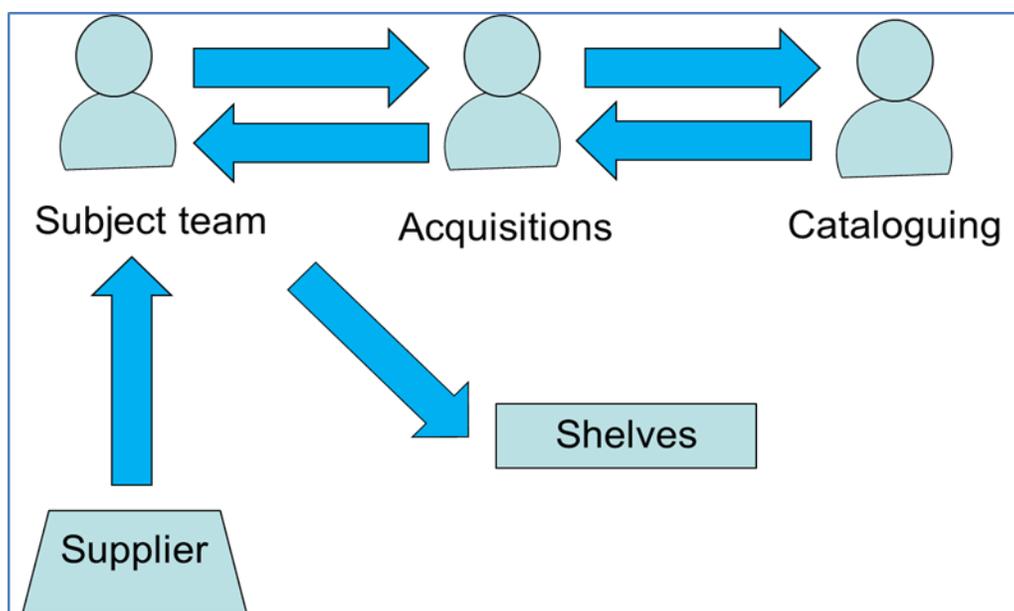
### Classmarks and workflows

We realised we could specify classmarks for everything ordered, regardless of whether vendors could supply shelf-ready or not. Most of our items are fairly simple to classify, the 'Note to vendor' field is visible to acquisitions staff and having the note for non-shelf-ready vendors doesn't cause any problems. We retrained all staff involved in ordering and provided guidance in selecting classmarks.

Discussions with another library revealed the main supplier we used for Art and Design items could provide books with spine labels and, after discussions with the supplier, this was instigated.

We took the opportunity to evaluate how we handled items arriving in bulk from a supplier where the orders are created on arrival. These were for Teaching Resources Collection – a mixture of books and physical resources such as puppets or musical instruments.

The old system:

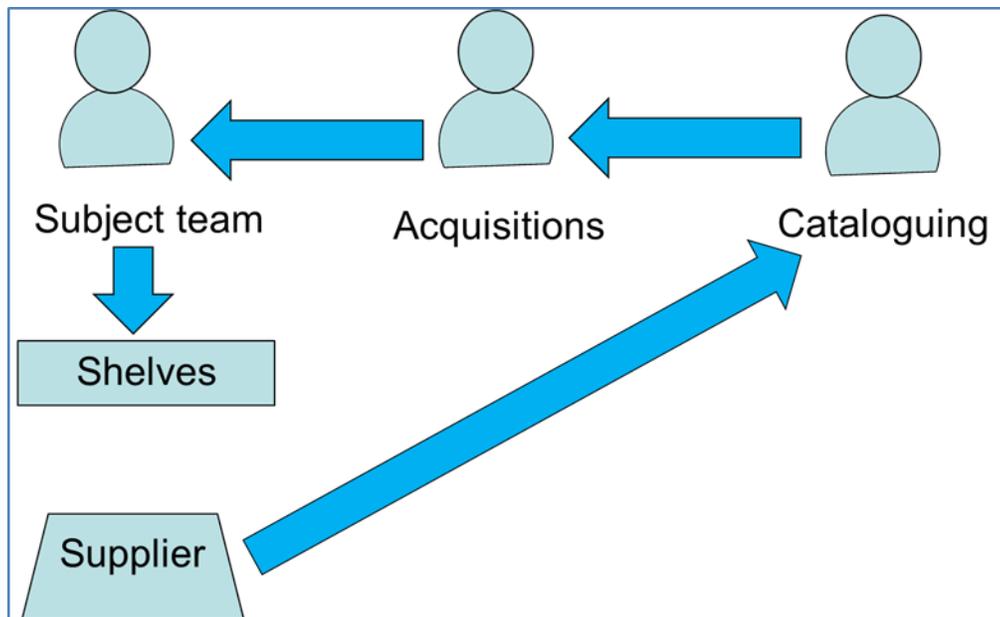


Items arriving from suppliers were passed to the subject team to download records and add orders. The items were then passed to Acquisitions for receipting and to us for cataloguing/classification. They were then passed back to Acquisitions for labelling and to the subject team for information.

This involved a lot of double handling and as items often are in sets, it's much easier to catalogue an individual item and duplicate the record than to edit multiple records. In March 2016, a revised workflow was put in place.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This workflow only applies to purchases requiring orders on arrival. Everything else still goes to Acquisitions on arrival.



Items go straight to Cataloguing and staff download/create catalogue records and apply classmarks. The item is passed to Acquisitions who create the order and receipt it, prep the item and pass it to the Subject team and then the item is shelved. Overall, it's been a positive improvement.

### Staff training

A simple document showing acceptable/not acceptable AACR2 and RDA records was produced and individuals were approached if acceptable records were being marked as 'Pass to Cataloguing'. I've been keen to stress I'm not constantly checking who does what, just following up where there are knowledge gaps to be filled.

For example, a reason for passing items to us is the presence of a 263 field (indicating pre-publication records). Speaking to a colleague who had passed a lot of items to us incorrectly, it transpired they thought this applied to items that had *any* field beginning 26-, so all the RDA records with 264 (publication information) they thought were 'unacceptable'. I can see where they were coming from, but it had never occurred to me that this would be a cause of confusion.

I'm trying to foster a culture where it's ok to ask questions as it's much easier (and cheaper!) to answer a quick question in advance than to unpick something when it's discovered, maybe months later.

### Where are we now?

So, has all the work paid off? In terms of items only requiring Dewey numbers, it certainly has (Figure 7, next page).

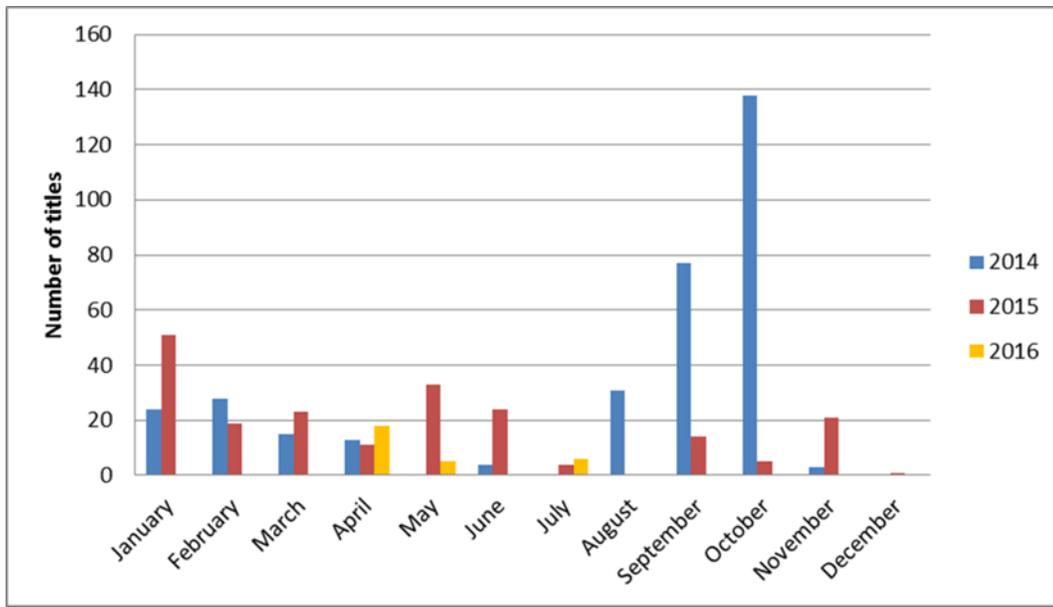


Fig 7: Items requiring classmarks only (2014-2016\*)  
 (\* 2016 figures only recorded April – July).

The number of books requiring only a classmark has dropped to almost none, but as new procedures were only implemented in April, it's likely there are still some older items on order. There will also always be one or two items where the item has to be viewed to decide where best to put it.

The graph I was most looking forward to seeing was the one for 'Items that didn't need to come to us'. I was hoping that it would be on a similar level to Figure 7. However, my heart sank when I saw the numbers *increasing!* What was going on?

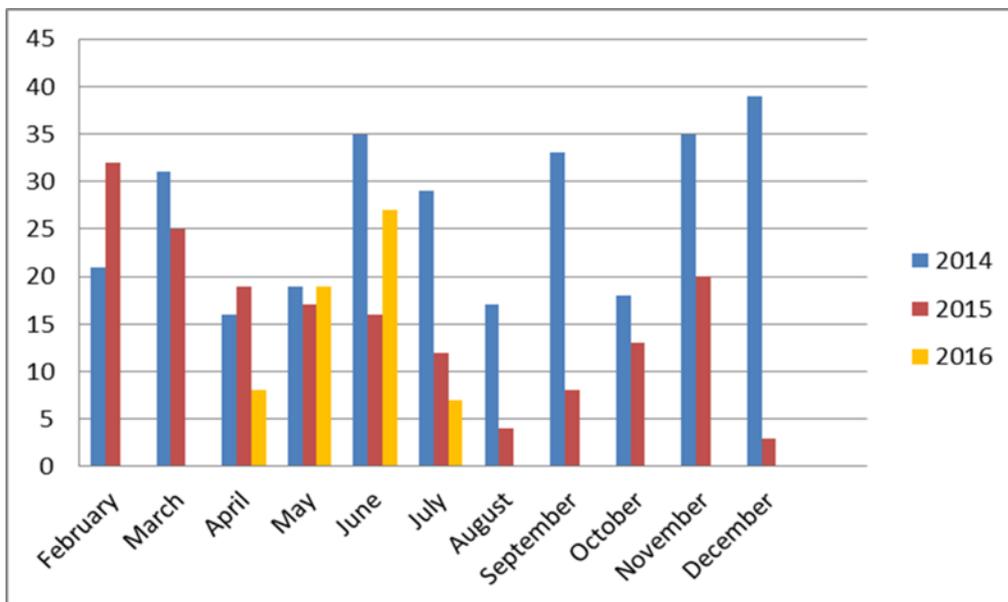


Fig 8: Items that didn't need to come to us (2014-2016)

Because we had been recording the reasons for these items coming to us, it was possible to look into it in a little more depth (Figure 9 below).

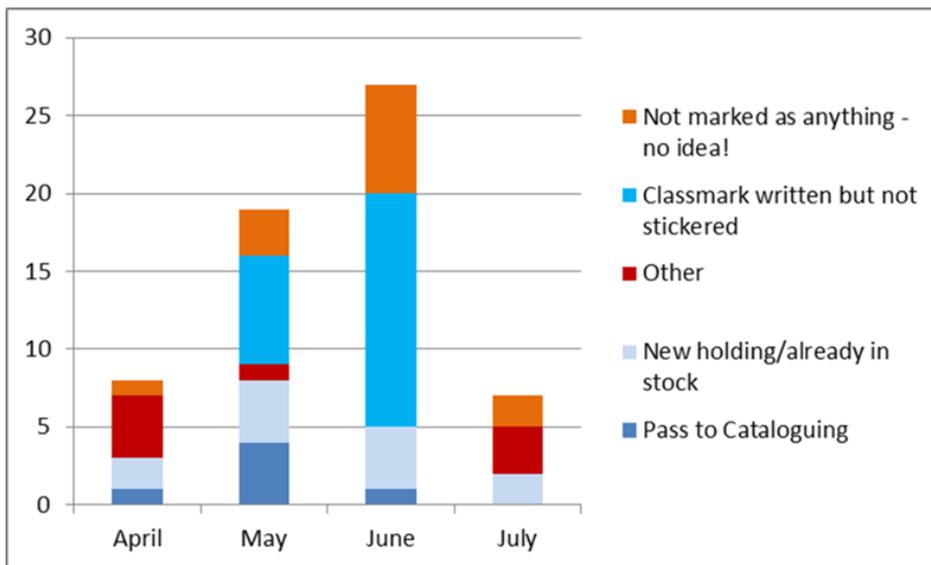


Fig 9: Items that didn't need to come to us – reasons Apr-Jul 2016

Whilst a few were still being incorrectly marked as 'Pass to cataloguing', there were other things going on. Items 'Not marked as anything' has always been an issue. Unfortunately, as good as cataloguers are, we can't see inside a person's head to know what they were thinking when they passed the book to us. These few may have simply been human error. The largest area though were books that had been classified but had no label on them. These were items with thin spines, where we normally label them side-on. The supplier can't do that so had simply thrown the label away. We've now briefed Acquisitions staff on how to handle them and find the classmark.

I also compared April – July 2016 with the same period in 2015 (Figure 10, below). This showed the balance was moving towards problems with the supplier and away from items being marked incorrectly. Furthermore, the number of items with 'other' issues had dropped, suggesting people are more aware of how to handle queries on items.

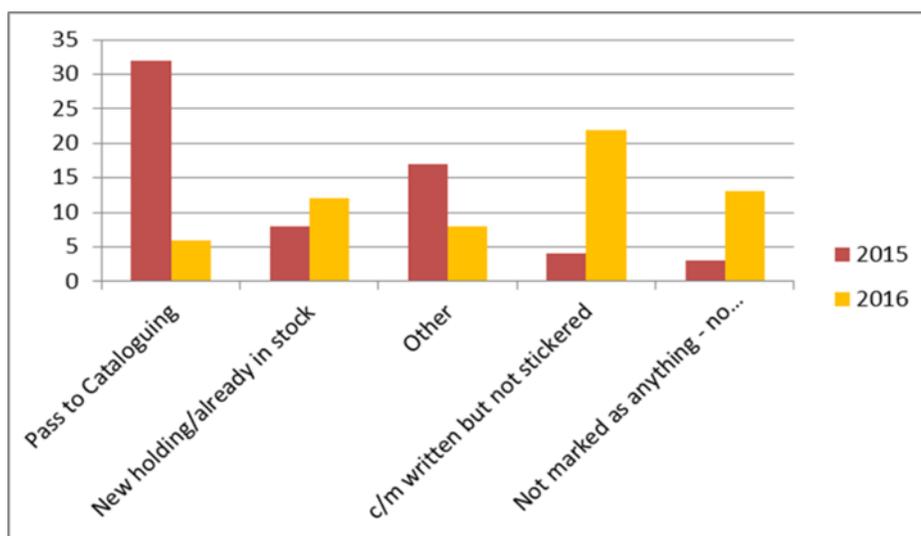


Fig 10: Items that didn't need to come to us – reasons Apr-Jul 2015 v 2016

To have a slightly better looking graph I redid Figure 8 to remove the items with the 'sticker' issue (as that will hopefully not reoccur) (Figure 11, below). It does look a little better!

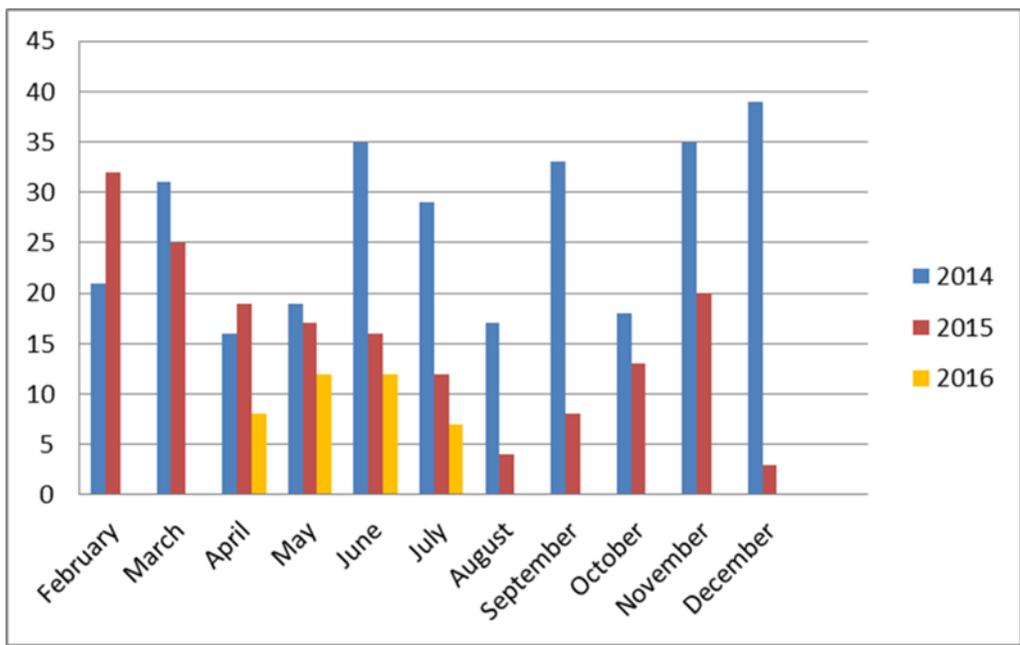
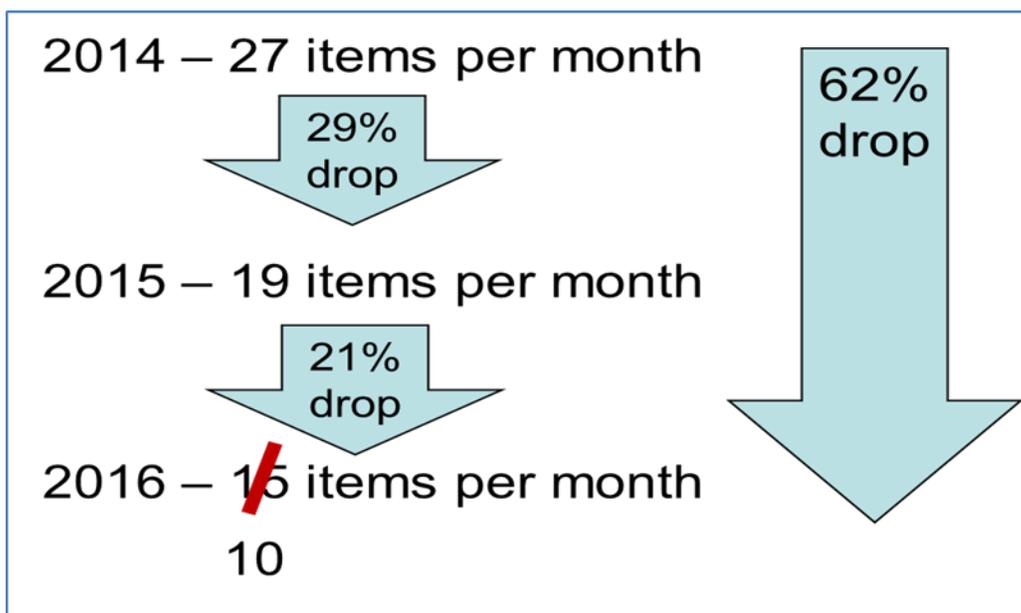


Fig 11: Items that didn't need to come to us (2014-2016) minus sticker issue

The graphs show the varying numbers of items coming in during the year and comparing month on month doesn't always give an accurate representation. Therefore, I've taken a monthly average for each year for the items that didn't need to come to us.



(The 10 items as opposed to the 15 for 2016 was removing the sticker issue).

Whilst 17 items a month might not sound a lot, on the busiest month in 2014 it took around 2 days to deal with all these unnecessary items. As we have multiple sites, items can sit for a few days before they are looked at. Our roles are, as with many people, always changing. I now spend a great deal of my week supporting the Research Repository librarian with Open Access, so time is more precious. Additionally, in the new Town House (new LRC), the Collections staff won't be permanently based there (other than the Archivist). Reducing time spent there unnecessarily will therefore be important.

### **What I've learnt**

Most importantly, I think this project has given us in Cataloguing a chance to have a dialogue with the subject teams and for both sides to understand better what they do. We've been able to explain *why* the throughput rate is important to *them* – i.e.: effect on usage of stock or satisfaction of students.

It's important to take the time to question practices and to investigate the reasons behind any trends you observe. Get others involved remembering to couch issues in terms of what's in it for them but be aware of what they actually know, not what you think they do! Above all, don't be afraid to change/stop things if they're not working and be persistent - change can take time and several attempts before you get what you want done.

I'm more than happy to answer any queries on any aspects of what we did – my email is [k.clifford@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:k.clifford@kingston.ac.uk)