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### Focus Groups as a Method to Build Library Services and Partnerships Across the Institution

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## Background

Children's Mercy is an independent, non-profit, 367-bed pediatric health system with multiple clinic locations and a strong focus on research. It offers a pediatric residency program and over 37 subspecialty fellowship programs.

New initiatives go through many steps from conception to implementation. The focus of this case study is to describe how gathering feedback from stakeholders during proposal development provided valuable insight, secured stakeholder collateral to support requests for administrative approval and funding, and marked the beginning of new productive institution-wide partnerships.

## Project Stages



### Identify Needs

Children's Mercy Library Services has long recognized the need for an increased focus on digital asset management. As the institution began to place a greater emphasis on research, library staff began noticing a significant increase in duplicative literature search requests, which indicated a lack of awareness regarding past and current research initiatives throughout the institution. This prompted an investigation into solutions for a digital research repository.



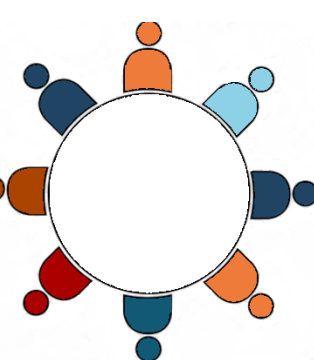
### Identify Stakeholders

A broad range of stakeholders were identified, including frontline researchers, backend technical support, and high-level administration. The goal was to ensure that representatives from all major touch points in research and associated administrative and technological processes were included.



### Evaluate Software

After performing a literature review, three software options were evaluated: ContentDM, bepress Digital Commons, and Dspace. Evaluations considered price, technical support, organizational and discovery features, storage space, and other relevant factors. Digital Commons was ultimately selected.



### Conduct Focus Groups

To ensure that the library staff's identification of needs was accurate and that the selected software would be sufficient, stakeholders were contacted directly for feedback on the project proposal and Digital Commons software.



### Develop Fair Market Analysis/Executive Summary

A fair market analysis and executive summary were developed based on the software evaluation and information collected during the focus groups. This information was presented to the Executive Medical Director / Executive Vice President and the Vice President / Chief Information and Digital Officer. Both parties approved the initiative, and information on stakeholder support addressed several specific concerns.



### Convene Task Forces for Implementation

Once the purchase was completed, stakeholders from the focus groups served as a vital resource for participation on two implementation task forces: Governance and Usability. Additional task force members were added through recommendations from focus group members and through a second round of relevant stakeholder identification conducted by the project team.

## Gathering Feedback

Gathering feedback is an important part of project development. Surveys can be a convenient and effective option, but they risk low response rates with stilted, fill-in-the-blank answers. Candid feedback was imperative for this initiative to ensure that all critical factors were being considered.

### Outreach

- Invitations were distributed via email and included:
  - Project summary
  - Time commitment expectations
  - Encouragement to recommend or invite additional colleagues

### Attendees

- Approx. 40 participants from 20+ departments
- Split into 5 function-based cohorts
  - Education, Graduate Medical Education, Allied Health, Research / QI, and Technology

### Sessions

- Conducted over 6 weeks
- Average of 5-10 attendees per session
- Individual appointments for those with scheduling conflicts
- 10 – 15 minute project overview followed by 30 – 45 minutes of guided discussion and Q&A

### Feedback

- Very positive
- Prompted more robust investigation into software features and capabilities
- Provided a broader understanding of administrative and end user environment
- Identified additional use cases

## Conclusions

Using focus groups proved effectual in improving the project design. Feedback provided the opportunity to refine the proposal and highlighted issues that had not been sufficiently investigated, such as interoperability with existing systems. It also revealed interest in additional use cases, such as the ability to host educational materials. Furthermore, the interactions resulted in stakeholders willing to advocate for the project and to participate in its development and implementation and better prepared Library Services to address administrative concerns. These newly built partnerships will allow future projects and service improvements to build off this project's success.