THEY DON'T TEACH PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN GRAD SCHOOL

How archives can combine ethical practices with modern Agile project management methods

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OUTLINE

• Access to Collections (A2C) Project
• World’s shortest overview of Scrum
• Lessons learned
  • Project structure and team dynamics
  • Relations between project and permanent staff
  • Change and the nature of term positions
  • Prioritization and automation
ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS (A2C) PROJECT

• Mid-2018 to mid-2021
• Six to seven project staff
• Overarching goals
  • Maximize access to the holdings of Smith College Special Collections
  • Modernize systems and processes
  • Treat our collections, our donors, and ourselves ethically
WORLD’S SHORTEST OVERVIEW OF SCRUM

• Small, close-knit team that fully participates in planning
• Work is conducted in short “sprints” (two weeks in our case)
• Each sprint includes an internal retrospective and a broader meeting to review work with stakeholders
• Daily 15 minute standups (or scrums)
• For an excellent primer, see *Scrum: A Breathtakingly Brief and Agile Introduction* by Chris Sims and Hillary Louise Johnson (Dymaxicon, 2012)
• Regular retrospectives are valuable, even if you aren’t using scrum

• The sanctity of the sprint cycle in scrum is one of its most important aspects

• Scrum is an excellent tool, but if parts of it aren’t working, stop using them
RELATIONS BETWEEN PROJECT AND PERMANENT STAFF

• Avoid making things worse, even temporarily, until trust is established
• Always over communicate
CHANGE AND THE NATURE OF TERM POSITIONS

• Always have ideas for additional projects or expansions for existing projects on hand
• If your processes never change, you’re doing something wrong
• Know when to cut your losses
PRIORITIZATION AND AUTOMATION

• Focus on systemic problems first
• Limit the amount of effort spent on improving temporary systems
• The true value of automation is as a force multiplier and positive feedback loop
• Sometimes brute force is the way to go
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QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND COMPLAINTS

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