

Strategies for Collection Development in Academic Libraries

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***Abstract** -Selection policies and practices play fundamental role in developing a strong collection. Collection development involves a number of activities by which a library acquires materials of all types by implementing the selection policy and the plans for document acquisition. Collection development is a dynamic and continuous activity. It involves the users, the library staff, and the subject experts on selection team. It is not an end in itself, but a means to develop a need-based, up-to-date, and balanced collection fit to meet the document and information needs of the users.*

Key Words:Academic Libraries, Collection DevelopmentPolicy (CDP)

Introduction:

Any academic library that aims to satisfy the information needs of academics and researchers must take great care with the development and management of its collection. It is generally agreed that both the quantity and the quality of a library's collection depend almost entirely upon the library's acquisition program, including its acquisition policy, its acquisition procedures, and, of most importance, its selection methods. This process cannot be approached in a haphazard manner, but must be carefully planned and constantly evaluated and monitored. This is central to the library fulfilling its mission and objectives, and as such is extremely important. It is also important to develop a collection of a high standard because it has been found that if an institution wishes to attract prestigious academics and researchers, individuals must be assured that they will have support for their research ventures. Much of this support is found in the institution's library.

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Collection Development:

Collection development, as defined here, is the systematic intellectual exercise of defining what library materials will be acquired by a library with reference to a well-defined mission

or strategic programs. Collection development generally manifests itself in policies and written guidelines that direct the actual selection and acquisition of materials. Consequently, selection and acquisitions are treated here as procedural parts of the total collection building process. Collection development in library is largely a special application of general collection development principles and procedures. An important first step is to identify the mission or strategic thrusts of the institution or library. Preparation of collection development policies and evaluation of collections should follow. Cooperative agreements relating to collection development and preservation are ancillary issues.

Emphasis on components of collection development varies depending on the type of library. For example, precise selection and deselection are probably more important in the highly-specialized, small library while, in general, collection development policies and systematic collection evaluations are emphasized in the university setting. Cooperative agreements may be useful in libraries ranging from the small specialized library that cannot collect comprehensively to the largest national libraries where duplication with other national libraries is undesirable.

Collection Development Policies, Standards and Guidelines:

Collection development policies, standards and guidelines do not emanate from a vacuum. Several factors have a bearing on the way in which collections develop and are managed. The selector of library information resources must take many things into account, including institutional objectives and plans, user needs, patterns of use, the scope, strength and weakness of various subject fields in the collection, human and fiscal resources at the library's disposal and cooperative arrangements for sharing of resources.

Figure (1) reflects the environment in which collection development and management guidelines, standards and policies are developed. The arrows in the model indicate whether the factors have only a one-way influence or whether the influence works both ways (for example, goals and objectives), which are connected by double arrows to the core of the model. International standards for collection development, user needs and the resource sharing infrastructure all influence the collection development and management policies, guidelines and standards adopted in an academic library. Other factors including the collection development policy of each library, the library's goals and objectives and collection evaluation are influenced by the collection development guidelines and standards whilst at the same time having an influence on such policies, guidelines and standards. There are also several pivotal decisions to be made which both influence and are influenced by the collection development policies, standards and guidelines adopted by each institution. Decisions made in these areas (indicated in the rectangular boxes in the model) determine largely the way in which the collection is developed. Decisions must be made about who is responsible for developing the collection, whether a just-in-time or a just-in-case model will be followed, which formats will be included, whether the collection will be format- or content-based and to what extent ownership of items will be necessary.

Collection Development Policies:

Collection development policies (also known as collection development policy statements) have proven valuable tools for many collection development and management librarians in academic libraries.

Fourie defines a collection development policy (CDP) as “the written statement that provides planning and implementation guidelines for most collection building tasks.”

According to Fourie, a CDP contains three kinds of statements:

- Objectives which has a direct bearing on the institution’s mission and philosophy.
- Principles which must be flexible enough to cover different situations that might arise.
- Implementation including staff procedures to ensure stability in decision making.

The American Library Association (ALA) defines CDPs as “documents which define the scope of a library’s existing collections, plan for the continuing development of resources, identify collection strengths, and outline the relationship between selection philosophy and the institution’s goals, general selection criteria, and intellectual freedom.” Vogel sees them as sets of “directions for the orderly selection, acquisition, and management of the materials [librarians] make available to their patrons.” CDPs are also defined as “guidelines for decisions on the selection and retention of materials in specific subjects, to specific levels of collection depth and breadth.”

It can therefore be said that a CDP is a document drawn up by a specific library to provide guidelines whereby the collection is developed and managed to meet the needs of that particular user group. This policy should explain the past, present and future acquisition and collection management practices of the library for the edification of bibliographers, other library staff, users, sponsors, and anyone else who has an interest in the library in question.

There are several advantages to having a CDP in an academic library. Firstly, a CDP prevents a library from being driven by events and individual enthusiasms and from buying a random, poorly planned set of resources. It can also help to introduce change into a library without too much resistance as guidelines are clearly set out in such a policy. CDPs are good communication tools both internally and externally. Internally they can be used to indicate to the parent organization that certain types of material in specific subject fields are being bought as a matter of policy. A CDP is a valuable means to showing faculty and students why the library contains certain materials and not others as part of a rational consistent, publicly announced plan. Externally they can be used as policy documents to communicate with a network or a consortium advocates using a CDP as a means of protection. Such a document protects the library and bibliographers by providing them with a firm framework in which to make decisions. Should anyone question decisions, inquirers can be referred to the document to show why decisions were made.

A collection development policy is very valuable as a planning tool for collection development. A policy which gives clear but simple guidelines in the selection of material would clearly be of benefit to bibliographers and would lead to them making more consistent and informed decisions.

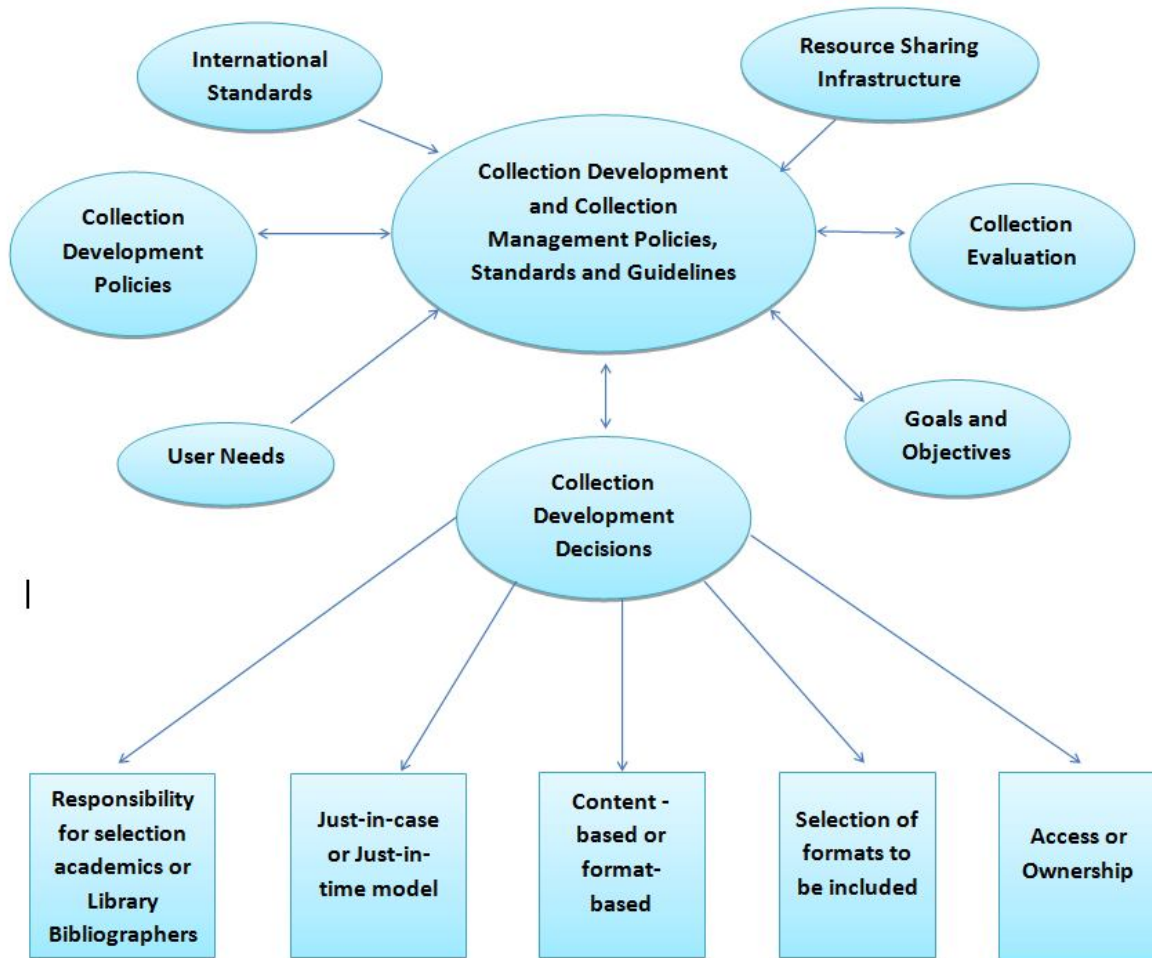


Figure (1): A model for collection development and management in academic libraries

Collection Development Strategy:

Collection development is considered as one of the primary tasks for any library and information center. It is a dynamic and continuous activity. In order to develop a balanced, user-oriented and active collection, a well-planned and thought out system has to be evolved by the library and information managers in close association with the representatives of various user constituencies. Such a system will not only help develop need based collection but also save money, time and space that would, otherwise, be wasted on developing irrelevant, outdated, and passive collections.

Goals of Collection Development and Management:

Collection development and management, as two important programmes of any academic library, must be driven by goals and objectives. The aim of collection development is to carry out a library's mission to create a repository or gateway to information for scholars today and to capture the intellectual heritage of the prevailing culture in order to benefit future learners and thinkers. These concepts of creating a repository and a gateway to information are indeed important to the process of collection development and management.

When it comes to collection management in particular, one could say that the goal is to add value to specific information sources so that they can be used more effectively to meet user needs. In this regard, collection management differs significantly from collection development. In the case of the former, the motive is to make the collected information sources more useful and accessible to users.

It is also important that collection development be related to the needs of the parent institution. Bibliographers must thus find out about any important developments and changes in each discipline and programme and adjust its collection development priorities accordingly. A library should continuously review its assumptions about each programme offered at the institution. No university will continuously offer exactly the same courses and programmes because the universe of knowledge is in a constant state of flux. A relevant collection must even anticipate future changes as the body of knowledge in disciplines alters.

Responsibility for Selection Criteria in Academic Libraries:

Collection development is usually the joint responsibility of the library staff and academics in an academic institution. Responsibility should be clearly spelt out in policy statements. Because it could be library managers, subject librarians or people specifically appointed to develop and manage collections, the term “bibliographer” will be used as a generic term for the person entrusted with the task of developing and managing collections in an academic library.

Conclusion:

Collection development and management in academic libraries is a complex and important part of providing an infrastructure in which academics and researchers can acquire the information they need. This requires the formulation of clear goals and policies which must be in keeping with the goals and mission of the library and institution as a whole. The ultimate responsibility for collection development rests with library bibliographers who are assisted in their decision making by academics. As collection development is a continuous and never-ending activity, a well thought out long-term policy is needed to accomplish the task of collection development systematically.

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