

Collection Development in a Resource Sharing Environment

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Abstract

This article briefly explains the changing phase of collection development while discussing the information explosion in recent years along with an example of *Chemical Abstracts* for the same. It puts emphasis on co-operative collection development policies suited to the current philosophy of providing access to information through a sharing mechanism, stresses upon the need of improving the quality of library services through it, and also discusses its advantages.

1. INTRODUCTION

Collection Development (CD) is an operation that involves regular addition to the collection of information sources in print and in other modern forms, and weeding out on regular basis, of such materials from the collection that turn obsolete or deteriorate physically over time. This plus-minus operation involves a host of intricacies and is regarded as an operation of paramount importance in offering efficiency, responsive patrons' services in a library, information storage and retrieval system, or other bibliographic databases with similar objectives. No wonder, there has been a general belief that there is a positive correlation between the collection size of a library and its performance in terms of patrons' satisfaction.

Thus collection development is a continuous process in all types of libraries worldwide. If a library ceased adding fresh materials to its collection, it would soon relegate into a dead collection affecting adversely the performance

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of a library. Naturally, collection development, as Evans¹ puts it, 'is a universal process in the library world whereby the library staff brings together a variety of materials to meet patrons' demands'.

All types of libraries, therefore, draw a sound acquisition program with a sound acquisition policy and procedure, and most important, a selection policy. A standard selection policy is a *sine quo non* for a judicious, balanced and robust collection development. It specifies the objective of the collection, authority for selection, procedure for overseeing the proposed selection, criteria for allocation of funds and for selection of various types of materials, priorities in selection, and mechanism of, and criteria for, weeding out in order to eliminate the proverbial deed.

2. IMPEDIMENTS IN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Over the years, particularly during the current century of boon crisis, certain developments on the intellectual horizon have impeded the smooth sailing of the libraries on all fronts a great deal. The collection

development has been one of the major casualties and the panacea has been found in adopting the theory and practice of resource sharing, which implies total cooperation and sharing of resources in men, money, materials, methods, machines and all that constitute the resources of a library. The first manifestation of this need for resource sharing was the interlibrary loan which reflected a library's inability to meet the information requirements of its patrons from its individual collection. A bird's eye view of these maladies facing the library world becomes imperative to identify the factors that prompted libraries to cooperate aggressively and design programs for total resource sharing.

2.1 Information Explosion

Today, every country is eager to be on the bandwagon of research and development. A rat race is in full swing for gaining superiority in scientific and social research which has become a key factor for progress, prosperity and defence. The immediate byproduct of this unprecedented fillip to research has been too much of information. It has been estimated that one half of the present body of knowledge has been generated in the last thirty years, or that five to ten times more information is available in a given subject area than thirty years ago². Ashworth³ has tabulated the growth of information in chemistry by calculating the years it took *Chemical Abstracts* to publish successive millions of abstracts:

No. of Abstracts	No. of years
First Million	37
Second Million	18
Third Million	8
Fourth Million	4.75
Fifth Million	3.3

The author conducted a count of volumes 116 and 117 covering 52 issues for the year 1992 and found that one million entries in the

Chemical Abstracts were now covered in less than two years as shown in Table 1. Likewise information in other fields is flooding the world day in and day out.

This information explosion has consequently brought about publication explosion and the figures are indeed tantalising. Reade⁴ estimates that 'the world's output of new books is around one thousand titles per day'. Lancaster⁵ estimates that there are now about fifty thousand journals in scientific and technical areas published worldwide and this number is steadily increasing at a compound rate of 2% to 4% per year. Then there are other types of print and non-print materials including the grey literature. This mushroom growth of literature which is the intellectual patrimony of whole mankind has created several bewildering situations for libraries worldwide. Allen Kent⁶ has painted a very gloomy picture of this situation more than two decades ago:

- ✦ There have been 30 million unique titles published since Gutenberg—how many libraries have anything more than 5% of these—some have less than 1/2%.
- ✦ There are 50-100 thousand journals published currently—how many libraries subscribe to more than 10 to 15%—some subscribe to less than 1/2%.
- ✦ About 500 thousand books will be published worldwide in 1974—how many libraries will buy more than 10-15%—some will buy less than 1/2%.

In such an awful situation a library is overawed what to do. The solution has been found in co-operative collection development which ultimately paves the way for cooperative acquisition, processing, maintenance and access to information.

2.2 Inflation

Though price rise is a common phenomenon, the price hike in library materials is a unique one. Allredge and Atkinson⁷ conclude that 'the increased costs of reading materials over the past decade have far exceeded the general rate of inflation and the

Table 1. Number of abstracts covered by *Chemical Abstracts* between January and December 1992.

Vol.No.	Issue No.	Date	Entries	No. of Entries
116	01	January 06	1- 6,976	6,976
	02	January 13	6,977 -15,158	8,181
	03	January 20	15,159 - 21,470	6,311
	04	January 27	21,471 - 33,719	12,248
	05	February 03	33,720 - 42,073	8353
	06	February 10	42,074 - 50,584	8,510
	07	February 17	50,585 - 59,996	9,411
	08	February 24	59,997 - 75,448	15,451
	09	March 02	75,449 - 84,195	8,746
	10	March 09	84,196 - 98,689	14,493
	11	March 16	98690 - 1,06,827	8,137
	12	March 23	1,06,828 - 1,20,188	13,360
	13	March 30	1,20,189 - 1,29,664	9,475
	14	April 06	1,29,665 - 1,43,130	13,465
	15	April 13	1,43,131-1,52,421	9,290
	16	April 20	1,52,422 - 1,65,567	13,145
	17	April 27	1,65,568 - 1,74,783	9,215
	18	May 04	1,74,784 - 1,87,321	12,537
	19	May 11	1,87,322 - 1,94,890	7,568
	20	May 18	1,94,891 - 2,07,181	12,290
	21	May 25	2,07,182 - 2,14,925	7,743
	22	June 01	2,14,926 - 2,27,407	12,481
	23	June 08	2,27,408 - 2,36,176	8,768
	24	June 15	2,36,177 - 2,47,671	11,494
	25	June 22	2,47,672 - 2,56,065	83,932
	26	June 29	2,56,066 - 2,68,410	12,344
	Total	January-June 1992		2,68,410
117	1-26	July 06-Dec 29	1-2,64,027	2,64,027
Total abstracts covered in 1992				5,32,437

result has been a steady erosion of purchasing power of libraries.'

Prices of journals are really zooming. De Gunnaro⁸ while surveying the zooming prices of journals observes that *Inorganic Chemica Acta* was available to libraries at an annual subscription of US \$26 in 1970 but cost \$235 in 1975, a staggering increase of 804 percent. Likewise there is a price escalation of secondary journals which are an essential component of any information service today.

Moreover, there is a price discrimination in journals. Publishers employ a three-tier pricing policy in journals; higher prices for Institutional subscribers; higher prices for foreign subscribers as compared to native subscribers, and comparatively low prices for individual subscribers. Joyce and Merz⁹ demonstrate a difference of nearly two hundred percent between individual and institutional subscribers, adding that "differences vary from discipline to discipline."

Astle and Hamakar¹⁰, while studying native and foreign subscription variations, conclude that the US subscribers pay, on an average, 39% more than their British counterparts on British journals, in addition to any already existing difference for institutional subscribers.

For developing countries it is not only the price escalation that is creating the havoc; equally tentatizing is the frequent devaluation of their currencies against the mighty dollar, increasing postal charges and unorganised publishing and marketing.

As a consequence, libraries are no more in a position to buy all that their patrons want and need. Their budgetary provisions for acquisitions increase steadily and thus they spend more, but in return they acquire less.

2.3 Mounting Population of Patrons

In the present information society, the information is a much sought after commodity in all human enterprises. Universalisation of education, spread of distance and continuing education, and tremendous fillip to research in all walks of life, have resulted in greater reliance

on libraries. The industry too exploits information in a big way.

As more and more people use information, the patrons population in all type of libraries increases steadily. As a library's patrons population grows, needs increase and diversify. Libraries began to expand the radius of their services but the information explosion and price escalation created hurdles on all fronts.

2.4 Quality of Library Service

Today's environment of education and research, increasing disciplinary interdependence and greater and varied use of information have revolutionised the concept of library service. The exponential growth of information has created many a problems for the patrons as well. They are not able to assimilate all that they should to keep up and catch up.

Patrons now expect and demand from their libraries more responsive and comprehensive services and filtered quality information tailored to their exact requirements. The concept of documentation, information storage and retrieval, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information etc. reflect the new trends in library service worldwide. The information technology has offered new avenues for the growth and sophistication of these services.

Self-sufficiency in such an intellectual, economic and social environment is a myth—a will-of-the-wasp—the nearer we feel we have reached, the farther we find we are. Thus emerged the concept of resources sharing which calls for adopting the philosophy of access as against the past philosophy of possession.

Collection development in such an environment became a major casualty. Individually no library, however resourceful it might be, could afford to build comprehensive, live collection to satisfy the actual and potential information requirements of its clientele. A cooperative collection development program, on the other hand, will allow the users to have access to a wide variety and amount of

information sources. It will also lead to developing a mechanism of avoiding overlapping rampant among libraries everywhere. Thus a cooperative collection development program will be in the interest of both the patrons as well as the librarians.

3. COOPERATIVE COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Cooperative Collection Development (CCD) marks a total shift in the traditional library philosophy—from the philosophy of possession that libraries worldwide have adhered to for a long past to the current philosophy of providing access to the information through a sharing mechanism, be it manual or mechanical. It calls for shared acquisitions shared use, and is a major factor for successful implementation of any resources sharing program.

A CCD program has several benefits—both for those who seek information and those who are obliged to provide it. To the user such a mechanism will offer an opportunity to have access to the information sources of a host of libraries participating in the CCD program. The librarians will be freed of the frustration that they experience in the wake of the impediments discussed earlier. As such a program would put an end to overlapping, rampant among libraries, the financial pressure on libraries will show a decline.

3.1 CCD Plan

A CCD programme requires a workable plan which involves a number of aspects of joint activity regarding selection, evaluation, acquisition, processing and utilisation of pooled funds. The first step in the creation of such a program is the decision making. The libraries intending to forge a CCD fraternity should take a decision to this effect. Because libraries are non-corporate institutions, such a decision should require an approval of the parent institutions and organisations of the libraries intending to co-operate. Once this fundamental step is accomplished the cooperating libraries would do well to establish a Cooperative Collection Development Committee (CCDC).

3.2 Cooperative Collection Development Committee

The first step towards any cooperative program which involves shared interests and activities is the establishment of a committee to determine the common goals and common course of action to achieve the predetermined common goals.

The CCDC shall act as a coordinating agency and the nucleus of the acquisition program of the cooperating libraries. As the task before the committee is gigantic, its composition shall include representatives of all the cooperating libraries and their parent institutions, subject experts and patrons representatives.

3.2.1 Functions of the CCDC

The CCDC shall lay down a broad policy on the objectives to be accomplished and will incorporate various decisions to have a set of procedures to achieve the target objectives. It will constitute subcommittees to deal with different aspects of the collection development. Its functions can be grouped into the following categories as shown in Figure 1.

1. General policy
2. Guidelines
3. Subject specialisation
4. Selection policy
5. Selection evaluation
6. Acquisition
7. Centralised processing, and
8. Distribution

The CCDC shall determine the collection development policy (1). The collection development policy for the co-operative libraries is then specified as guidelines (2) which embody the regulations agreed upon for co-operative collection development. These guidelines shall be based upon the conclusions of the deliberations of the subcommittee on subject specialisation (3) composed of subject experts and subject specialist librarians and based on the strengths of the collections in

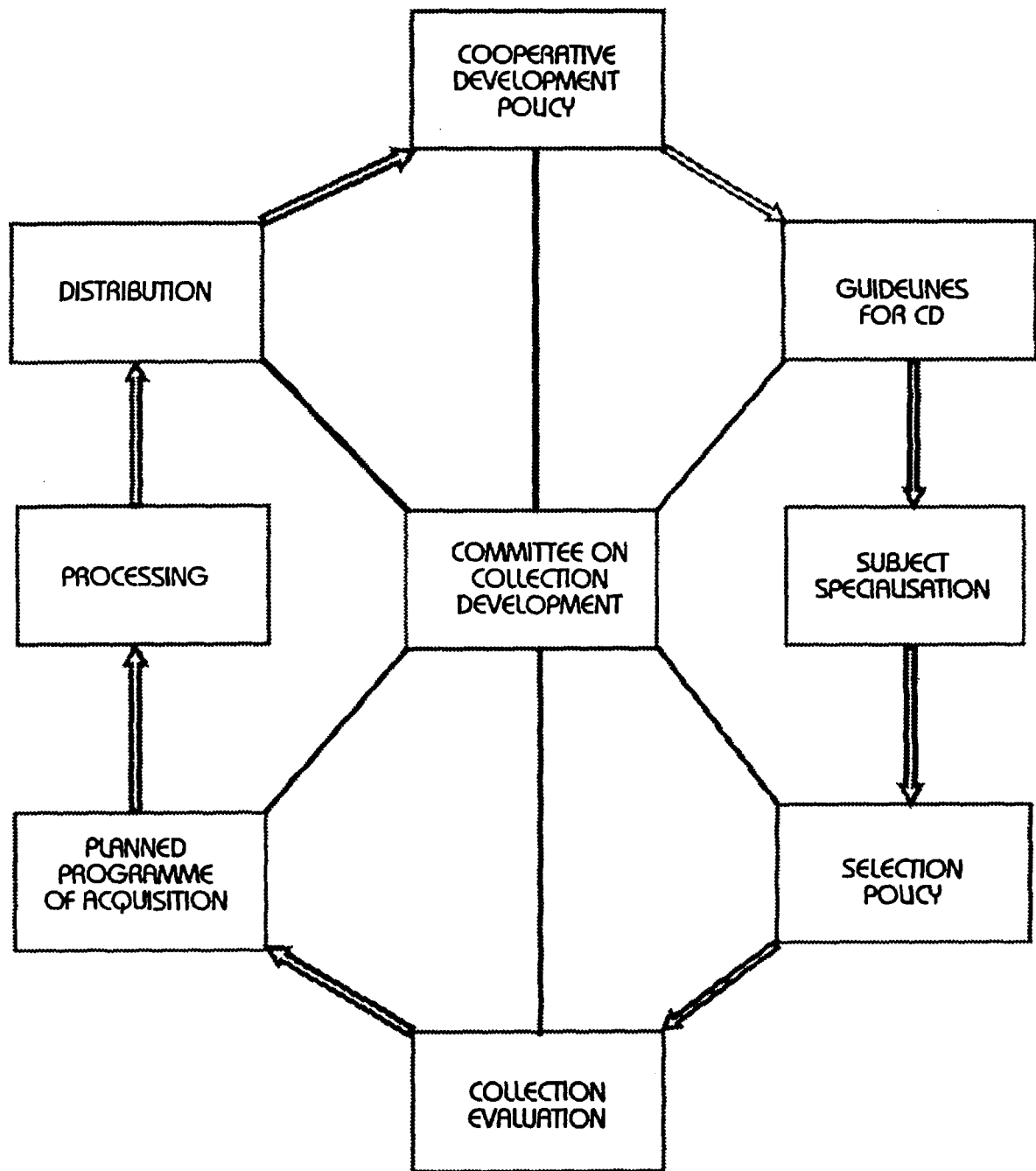


Figure 1. Functions of the Cooperative Collection Development Centre.

participating libraries. They shall also determine the selection policy (4). All participating libraries shall select items in keeping with this policy. As a centralised acquisition program is envisaged in the model, the selections by the individual libraries shall be subjected to evaluation by the subcommittee on selection evaluation (5) in a

systematic, coordinated manner. The evaluation, in addition to other criteria, shall take into account the strengths of the existing collections and the actual and potential needs of the selecting libraries. The conclusions drawn at this stage in conformity with the guidelines (2) and evaluation policies (4) will be utilised to

produce the planned program for acquisition (6) which shall serve as an overall plan for co-operative acquisition for the co-operating libraries. The final ordering will be based on the final selection reflecting current needs as expressed in the selection policy (4), the selection evaluation (5) and the planned program for acquisition (6). However, provision for flexibility in policies, guidelines, evaluations and plans would be essential for modifications in the wake of changing situations, expanding emphases in participating institutions and mounting and diversifying patrons requirements; all these developments will make certain revisions mandatory.

Once the materials have been received, verified, physically inspected and formalities for payment completed, they will be transferred to the centralised processing component for processing in accordance with a well-framed plan (7). Finally, the processed materials will be distributed among the libraries for which they are selected (8).

3.3 Advantages

It is evident that co-operative collection development will offer solutions to the problems faced by the libraries in the wake of the exponential growth of knowledge, skyrocketing of prices and diversified patrons information needs.

Besides such a plan will ensure improvement and expansion of services in the present day ailing libraries. For, efficient and responsive services are possible only when librarians and patrons have access to increased resources. The concept of resources sharing has been forwarded to increase the accessibility to extensive collections for both the parties. Thus the exclusive aim of the co-operative activity is to increase and expand services to the patrons.

As the co-operating libraries will develop the mechanism of avoiding overlapping in acquisitions, they will be able to acquire more needed materials and improve upon their services. The common acquisition and joint evaluation program will fetch to the libraries high quality materials fully responsive to patrons legitimate requirements and will bring to halt

present spending on materials having less relevance to the patrons information needs.

The proposed common access to the resources of the sharing libraries shall entitle the patrons to exploit the pooled resources thereby leading to the expansion of services to the clientele. The union bibliographic database shall expose the patrons to a vast variety of resources irrespective of their institutional affiliations. As cooperative operation shall pave the way for a common bibliographic centre, a mechanism could be developed for the provision of referral and switching services, or to a choice between the two.

The plan would in due course be able to develop ways and means of introducing modern sophisticated current awareness services which have become the hall mark of any standard library service today. These services have become all the more important today when the comprehensive secondary services inform the patrons of the new information scattered in a huge number of journals and other formats into which new information is packaged now-a-days. In order to promote the assimilation of the relevant information, the sharing libraries would be able to introduce current awareness service and its sophisticated version of selective dissemination of information.

In short, cooperative collection development and the ultimate multi-purpose resources sharing plans are the only solution to the ailing library environments of the present. Rather there is urgent need for it. Such plans and programs have worked wonders throughout the world and are, therefore, pleaded vehemently at all levels. Incentives are available. Information technology offers a facilitating mechanism. What is needed now is to proceed in this direction with a strong will supported by professional commitment.

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