

Collection Development in University Libraries: Policy and Procedures

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Abstract

This article defines Collection Development in university libraries and discusses centralised and decentralised patterns. It also suggests a policy for collection development and concludes that involvement of all the staff members of the library is essential to develop a balanced collection.

1. INTRODUCTION

Collection Development includes planning for the systematic and rational building of a collection. The term includes all such activities as assessing the user needs, evaluating the present collection, determining selection policy, coordinating selection of items, re-evaluating and storing parts of the collection, and planning for resource sharing. Thus collection development is not a single activity but a group of activities. Acquisition is usually distinguished from collection development. Acquisition refers to the process of verifying ordering and making the payment for the required materials.

2. CENTRALISED VERSUS DECENTRALISED PATTERN

Organisationally university libraries have two structural patterns, viz., centralised vs decentralised system. In a centralised system, collection development of a balanced collection is full responsibility of the central library. In a

decentralised pattern, development of a subject collection is the responsibility of the academic department concerned.

3. EVOLVING A POLICY FOR COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Collection development in university libraries should be based on proper planning. Library should have a policy in this regard. The disciplines in which courses are conducted can be easily identified. Total fund available should be apportioned among various departments of study and research or among various disciplines in which courses are conducted. This must be done on the basis of need and it should be done judiciously. Similar decision should be taken relating to the peripheral subjects.

- When new disciplines evolve, special funds should be made available for developing a basic collection in that discipline.
- Books relating to the academic disciplines should be based on the recommendation of subject committees or departmental councils constituting the teachers of the respective academic departments.

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- Separate funds should be apportioned for books of general nature. Books which may be of interest to the teachers in general may be purchased from this fund.
- Selection of books of this nature should be done by the university librarian or a senior most in library staff who has good academic background and general knowledge.
- It should be ascertained that books ordered have a certain academic standard.

Magrill and Gorbin propose a new allocation plan for university libraries. According to this 25 per cent of the material budget be set aside for general reference materials, special collections and other purchases, that can not be directly related to specific academic programs. Another 25 per cent would be allocated directly to individual academic departments for purchase of materials that would likely be needed only for instruction and research in a single department. The remaining 50 per cent of the budget would be allocated to eight disciplinary clusters made up of academic units sharing research interests and likely to have similar needs for library materials. The amount of the allocation given to each disciplinary cluster and to each individual department would be based on factors commonly used in budget allocation formulas, such as:

- ⊕ Number of student credit hours generated;
- ⊕ Number of student credit hours by academic level;
- ⊕ Number of full time faculty by department;
- ⊕ Average cost per book by department, and;
- ⊕ Average cost per periodical by department.

3.1 Book Acquisition as a Continuous Program

Books acquisition should be done as a continuous program. When the budget allocation has been made in the beginning of the year, a meeting of the Heads of Departments or their representatives be arranged where an agreed policy be arrived at and guidelines chalked out relating to the

procurement of books. This will help in minimising the complaints and to streamlining the procedure.

3.2 Collection Development for Leisure Reading in Campus Libraries

Most of the university campuses are away from cities. These may be situated in remote villages where there is no public library. Hence there may be demand for books for general reading. Whether campus libraries should acquire books for leisure reading is a debatable question. Most of the campus libraries do acquire such materials. However, it is not very much desirable. Procuring popular fiction, etc., will bring forth many other problems such as need for frequent rebinding, inviting non-serious readers, difficulty to maintain standard, and possibility of selecting cheap fiction, etc.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL COLLECTION

Usually when a new course is started or research project on a new topic is started, there will be some special grant from University Grants Commission or the State or Central Government for purchasing essential books relating to the topic and to develop the basic collection.

However, local environment may compel collection development on special topics such as area studies. In such cases initially the books scattered in different places on shelves in the library can be brought together and shelved as a special collection. Further, it should be assured that every year, some fund is set apart for the development of this collection according to the need. The Kerala studies collection has been developed in Kerala University Library in this way.

5. EVALUATING THE COLLECTION

The schools of library science can take up user surveys for evaluating the library collection. The library should try to implement the findings

of such surveys to the possible extent. Libraries also should have some inbuilt mechanism for assessing user requirements and evaluating the collections. Cooperation of faculty members and newly enrolled members should be sought in this regard. Staff members providing readers service, can note down their findings relating to the lacuna in the collection and forward the same to the acquisition section.

6. CONCLUSION

Collection development in a university library is not an easy job. This should be done

carefully and should be based on policies and programs chalked out with the help of a committee or in a meeting consisting of representatives of faculty members from various faculties. The involvement of all staff members of the library is also essential for developing a balanced collection.

REFERENCES

1. Magrill and Gorbin. Acquisitions management and collection development in libraries. Ed. 2. ALA. 1989. p58.