

Full Length Research Paper

Collection development in academic libraries

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This study discusses the importance of collection development in libraries. Various factors have to be taken into consideration while developing a qualitative collection for the benefit of the users. These factors include policies, principles, techniques and procedures, problems associated with collection/development and weeding out as well. It is equally important to evaluate the collections to assess its use and moreover the usefulness of collection development in electronic environment. Authors conclude that, library professionals need to take utmost care in developing a balanced collection, which enhances the quality of the library. The study is attempted on the basis of experience.

Key words: Collection development, policy, techniques, academic, libraries

INTRODUCTION

Collection development is one of the most challenging and imaginative processes of the library profession whereby, the library staff acquires a variety of materials to meet the demand of its users. The phrase 'collection development' does not seem to be new to the librarians for most of them often use it as a synonym for the terms 'selection' and 'acquisition'. It may, however, be pointed out that 'collection development', as also mentioned by Gardner and rightly so, is more encompassing a term since it involves more than just selection and/or acquisition. In recent years, the term "Collection Development" has come to encompass a board range of activities related to the policies and procedures of selection, acquisition and evaluation of library collection. Collection development is an important activity of a librarian. The users are the best judge of the collection of a library. They are in the best position to know what is available in the library and what is not. They can better tell whether the collection is really satisfying their information needs

or not. Again, of all types of library users in university, researchers and scholars are in an advantageous position to offer comments on the quality of the collection, because they are well familiar with the whole range of literature in a given subject area. They may therefore, usefully suggest as to what could be acquired in order to strengthen the holdings and also fill in the gaps in the existing collection.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Meaning and purpose of CD

Collection development is a dynamic and continuous activity. It involves the users, the library staff and 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

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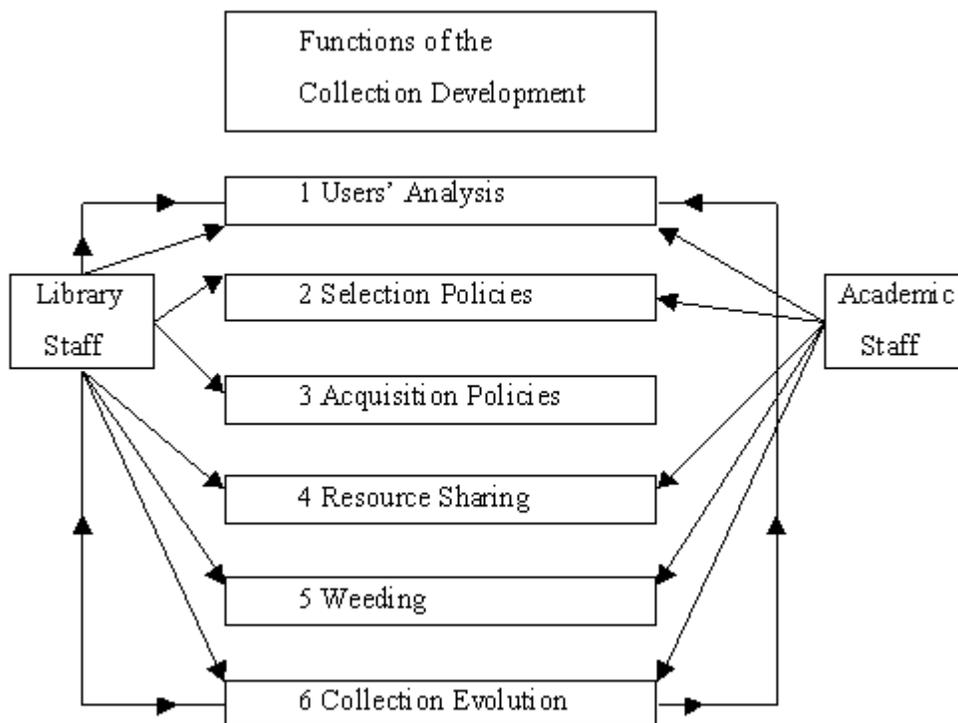


Figure 1. Collection development

information needs of the users (Gopinath and Rao, 1982). Harrod's Librarian's Glossary (6th ed. 1987) defines collection development as "The process of planning a stock acquisition programme not simply to cater for immediate needs but to build a coherent and reliable collection over a number of years, to meet the objectives of the services." Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science says "Library collection is the sum total of Library materials-books, manuscripts, serials, Government documents, pamphlets, catalogues, reports, recordings, microfilm reels, micro cards and microfiche, punched cards, computer tapes etc. – that make up the holdings of a particular library.

The meaning of the term "collection development" has undergone considerable change with the progress in the field of librarianship. "Collection Development Policy", "Selection Policy" and "Acquisition Policy" are the terms used interchangeably by the librarians but they are, by no means, synonymous. They represent a hierarchy in which collection development being a planning function is placed at the highest level. Selection is the second level of decision making and acquisition the third level. It is process by which library acquires various materials implementing selection decisions and collection development plans. Hence, selection and acquisition policies, though independently different from the content of the collection development plans. Collection development is a cluster of functions which together shape the holdings of a library (Indian Library Association, 1985) (Figure 1).

Various steps involved in collection development are:

1. Analysis of information need of the users.
2. Formulation and implementation of selection policy to suit the objectives of the library.
3. Acquisition programmes to build-up a balanced collection.
4. Resource sharing and its impact on collection development.
5. Weeding out programmes to ensure effectiveness of collection.

Collection development implies selection, acquisition and evaluation of the library collection in order to see that both print and non print materials that are available in a library are really useful to the clientele. Its purpose is to find out the users information needs to; find out the users information needs, select and acquire documents, that are really useful to the clientele, periodically review the collection for weeding out unwanted and outdated documents from it (Dhimal and Sinha, 2002).

Collection development policy

Collection development policy is the course of action adopted for developing the collection or stock in a library. A policy can be unwritten convention or a written

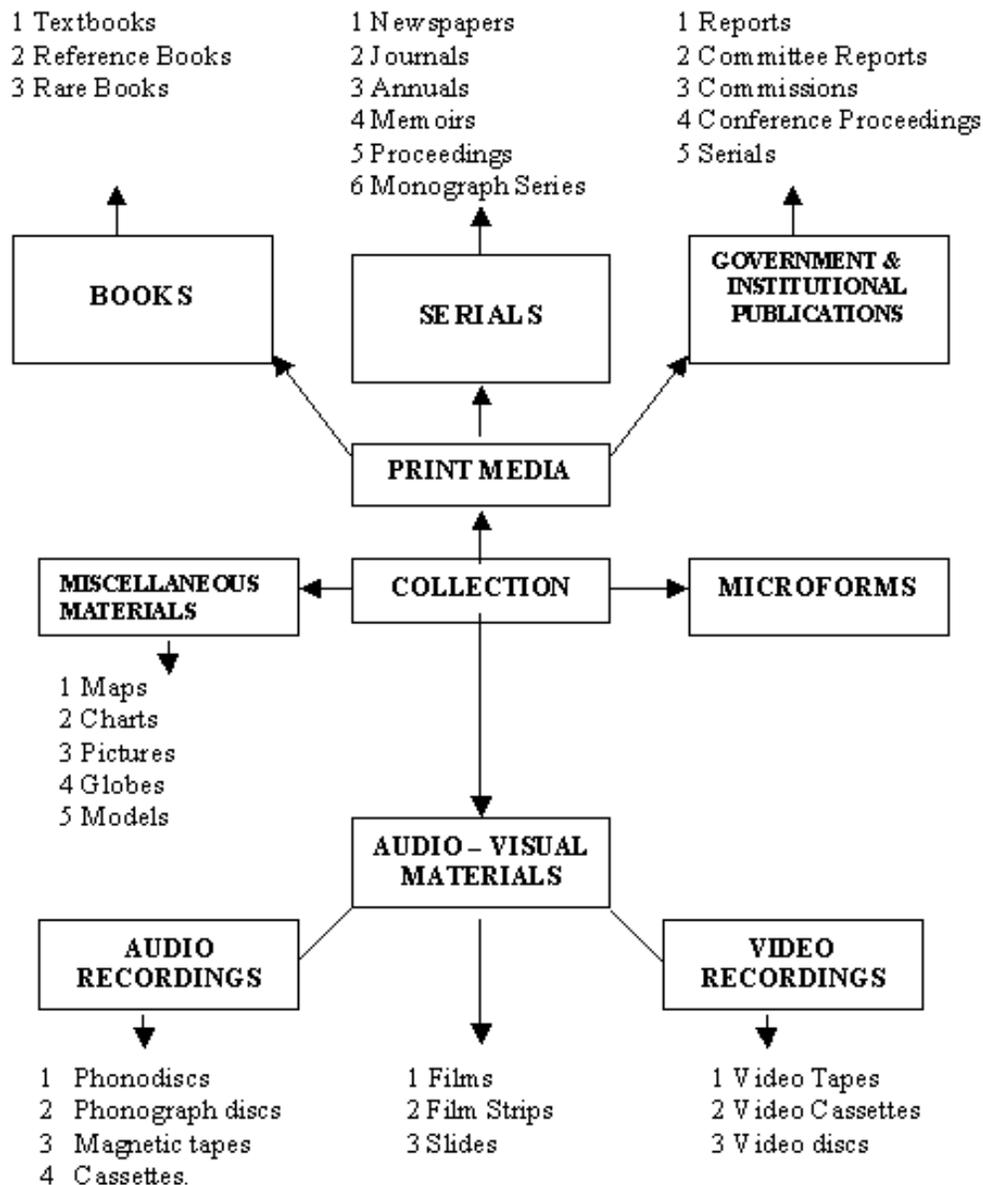


Figure 2. Course materials for various media.

document. Preparation and review of a written policy should also encourage the library and institution to define or refine their goals and help the library collection to conform to the aims and objectives of the institution and of the library, by translating those aims and objective into clear and specific guideline, for each stage of materials handling – Selection, acquisition, processing, housing, weeding and discard. These guidelines should cover all subject fields and all types of library material. The library has to acquire materials in various formats to assist the academic staff in preparing course materials for various media and students to earn through them (Chopra, 1994). (Figure 2). Several author like Katz, MA grill and Hickey” mentioned the advantages of a written collection development policy. Their view can be summarized as

follows:

A collection development policy

1. Expresses openly its relationship with the objectives of the parent organization / library.
2. Forms the basis for planning collection development.
3. Provides practical guidance in day to day selection of reading material free from personal bias.
4. Helps in determining the best method of acquisition.
5. Support and assists in justifying the selection a collection.
6. Acts as a rational guide for budget allocation and also helps in long range budget planning by stating priorities and outlining growth and development goals.

7. Helps in making best use of resources.
8. Facilitates cooperative programmers like interlibrary loans, resource sharing and networks.
9. Assists in establishing methods of reviewing materials before purchase.
10. Offer suggestions on types of materials to be stored, weeded and discarded.

Collection development policy of an academic library should be guided by the aims and objectives of the organization/institution, the needs of the users community, and the availability of financial and other resources (Krishna, 1986).

Weeding policy

Weeding policy is an important component of CD policy. Weeding documents means removing documents which are found not useful or not serviceable from a library. Document removed from the library may be completely discarded where they are not serviceable; and they are donated to some other library where they may be useful; or kept in a reserve place called a dormitory library. Weeding policy means a policy statement on:

- a. What materials are to be weeded?
- b. When to weed?
- c. Should weed?
- d. How to weed?
- e. What to do with weeded materials.

With the explosion of knowledge, documents are now being published in millions. New areas of knowledge are coming up and some of the earlier ideas and thoughts are becoming outdated. For a modern library it is a question of money and space to get all new documents which are relevant and useful. Particularly space from keeping the documents has become a major problem for University Libraries. Saving space is not the only reason for thinking about weeding of documents. Some of the documents may get worn out because of continuous usage. But most important of all is that some documents may become useless since the thought content therein has been modified in a subsequent edition; or because the information in the document has become absolute. In modern times, documents may be weeded out after transferring the information contained in them on to microforms and computer tapes and disks.

Report of library committee of the University Grants Commission speaking on the need for weeding out says; "Many works lose their value within one generation, say in twenty-five years. By that time, their thought-content of same may even turn out to be wrong. In a service library no useful purpose is served by retaining such pedestrian books and providing self space for them after they have become obsolete. The proper course is to weed out

periodically. They should give place to current variations of them (Indira Gandhi National open university 1998)."

Problems in collection organization

Organization means systematically arranging in a planned way things or activities to achieve some functional goals. In a library, the document collection should be organized in order to achieve effective use of the collection. Once a library acquires information records under its collection development policy they should be put to real use. That can be achieved only by organizing the collections. Documents procured will have to be systematically arranged in the library. Then only they can be searched with ease and comfort. We may think that arrangement of things or documents is very simple. But we face several problems as we begin arranging information records in a library. The documents so procured should be made accessible to the users because satisfying users' needs is a major concern of a collection development policy. Shelf arrangement, classification and cataloguing techniques followed should help in this regard.

Several problems crop up in collection organization in deciding the way the documents should be grouped, and how they are to be classified and catalogued. Circulation service, reference service, interlibrary loan and other co-operative activities and the like will help the users in getting the information they need and will result in maximum use of the library collection. Care and preservation of the library materials is also significant for collection organization for it is not at all contrary to the optimum use of the documents. Privilege does not mean abuse of the facilities. Library materials should be protected from misuse, mutilation and theft. They should also be protected from insects and environmental dangers. Collection development can fulfill its objectives by periodic evaluation of the collection. Shelf rectification and stock verification will help the evaluation process.

In order to ascertain whether the collection is really useful in quality and scope surveys can be conducted and services of the subject experts can be taken. For collection evaluation, Webster's seventh New collegiate Dictionary says that evaluation means an attempt to determine either the relative or intrinsic worth of something in terms other than monetary. Evaluation is an integral part of library management and administration. Evaluation of the document collection is an essential and inevitable component of the collection development policy. Through evaluation only library can improve its quality of service (Lax and Rattan, 1993).

Collection development and acquisition programme

You have studied the concept of collection development, its meaning, purpose and prerequisites. You have also

noted that collection development implies selection and acquisition of useful materials, periodic evaluation of stock and weeding worn-out, outdated, and unserviceable documents. It was noted that collection development policy should preferably be in written form. Therefore, when we speak of collection development it implies programmes relating to selection, acquisitions, stock evaluation and weeding.

Separate policies are to be evolved for each one of these components. Then you will be aware of the policies and the programmes relating to collection development. Before collection development is planned it is necessary first of all to identify the types of documents that are to be kept in an academic library. We have seen that in modern times, information may be available not only in the form of conventional documents like books and periodicals but in other forms also. Particularly in the case of a university library, information available in non-conventional documents may also be required for teaching and research.

You know the books and other documents are acquired by purchase, Gifts, Exchange and Legal or statutory obligation. Whatever be the method of acquisition it is necessary that the material acquired should be appropriate to the objectives of the library. In case of gifts and exchanges the library should keep in mind its requirements and accept the materials on that basis only. Inappropriate materials, even if free, are ultimately expensive. Like purchases they require clerical work in the order department, cataloguing and processing and shelf space (Mittal, 1993).'

Budgeting and fund allocation

In the case of a library, the parent body will apportion the funds for the library. The library in its turn will allocate the funds for the different items of expenditure. There may be some other sources of income to the library like sale of news papers, collection of overdue charges, etc. The library may have to pay back those collections to the parent body as income from the library. Major sources for library fund are the recurring and non-recurring grants received from the parent body, state and/or central government and their agencies. You have seen that the UGC is playing a vital role in promoting academic libraries. Trehan says that "The book fund allotment should be apportioned and allocated as under.

1. Fixed charges which recur annually and cover renewal of journal subscriptions.
2. General fund for purchase of reference books, books of wide general interest and creative reading.
3. Departmental fund which is allotted to department generally on the basis of actual expenditure of the previous year and recommendations of the library.
4. Special fund for purchase of text books for poor student.

Library budget provides for recurring and non-recurring expenditure. The routine funds required procuring books and other reading materials and for staff salaries, maintenance, and miscellaneous expenditure usually constitutes the recurring grant. But sometimes, the library may have to spend as a one-time expenditure on some equipment, or furniture or extension of the library and the like. Such expenditure will not repeat year after year. So it is known as non-recurring expenditure. Whenever a new course is offered or a new department is started the library collection on that course or on the courses offered by the new department should be developed by providing funds in addition to the routine funds at par with the other Department (Shipman, 1971).

So many libraries have general funds. These funds are also known as " Unallocated Funds " Gelfand suggests " that 30 to 45% of the library fund should be set apart for this, with this fund, the librarian can fill the gaps in the library collection, buy multiple copies when needed; and purchase special collection or private collections of retired scholars and scientists to enrich the library collection. The fund will be useful for subject development in the collection. In short unallocated funds help in collection development by the librarian. The ways in which academic library book funds are allocated very widely some are divided into an amount of money for each academic department's library needs, with or without a significant amount being retained by the library; others are divided notionally between subjects or subject groups, with total control resting with the library. Where funds are allocated to departments a variety of formulae has been evolved in an attempt to find an equitable method of distributing insufficient funds (Prasher, 1993).

Role of library committee in CD

A librarian alone cannot bear the heavy burden of policy making and managing a library. Though his colleagues assist him in the routine of the library, the administrative and policy issues are to be shared by some more persons. Harrods defined a library committee as "the committee responsible for the provision of a library service". Library committee is a body of organization consisting of persons who are assigned the job of governance of a library. Such a committee may be appointed by a library authority. The word authority implies that the authority is having power to do something. Library authority will be person or a group like a Board of Management, Board of Trustees etc. (Srivastava, 1994) Wilson and Tauber, observed that the library committee of a university should be a representative of the university; its members should be chosen for their interest in the development of the resources and services of the library; and its functions should be informative and advisory rather than administrative and executive. They further observe that normally, it has few powers, as it is intended to serve in an advisory rather than in

administrative capacitors.

In our country, universities and colleges usually have library committee. They are concerned with library policy and do not interfere in library administration. Such a library committee serves in an advisory capacity and in cooperation with the librarian formulates policies for the development of higher learning and research. It allocates funds for the library needs of different departments. In most of the universities, the vice-chancellor will be the chairman and deans of schools or heads of departments and some senior faculty members will constitute the Library Committee. Similarly in the colleges, the President/Chairman of the college committee or Principal of the college may be the chairman and Heads of Departments and one or two senior teachers nominated or elected will be the members. A library committee can lay down the broad policies on acquisition, organization, evaluation and weeding. Within the framework of these policies the library has to see their implementation. The librarian takes decisions and manages to seek the cooperation of the committee and the assistance of his staff to effectively execute the decisions.

Conclusions

The concept of CD, or materials acquisition, has been evolving recently to that of collection control or collection management. This concept encompasses the design of a process for selecting bibliographic materials to meet the needs, goal, objectives and priorities of a library.

The major function of collection development plan is to identify procedures for acquiring new materials. The plan should also help in allocating the budget to meet various needs, and establish policies for reviewing and modifying the plan to meet the changing needs. Storage, weeding, and preservation policies also need to be established as part of collection management. Collection development implies building up collection with quality material through proper acquisition and weeding policies. Objectives of the parent body and the needs of the users are very important in collection development. In order to see that useful and relevant documents are not lost in large numbers of mutilated, worn-out and obsolete document such documents are to be weeded out periodically. Weeding policy should be rational and based on periodical evaluation of the collection. Library committee and its sub-committee can play a crucial role in collection development by framing policies and formulating programmes to implement them.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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