Problems of Collection Development in University Libraries

Hareshkumar N. Parmer
Research Scholar,
Singhania University, Pacheri Bari, Jhunjhunu,
Rajasthan, India.

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Abstract

Discusses factors affecting collection development, scope, definition and process of collection development, highlights importance of collection development policy manual, presents peculiar circumstances and background of document acquisition transaction in University libraries: points out many problems relating to document selection and document procurement processes. Discusses various types of vendor-controlled order plans with their merits and demerits. In conclusion other problems concerned with technical reports. Microforms, vendor-controlled order plans and journal subscription are mentioned.

Keywords: Problems of Collection Development.

Introduction:

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. Collection development is a process of building up and improving the collection in the library and it is a very important function of a library. Users need, collection development policy, selection, acquisition, management-evaluation, weeding, storage and preservation of collection are the important areas of collection development. The major problems faced by majority of libraries in collection development are Information explosion; Literature scatter; Rising price of documents; Widening gap and cost between hard bound and paperback editions; Inelastic budget; Rising cost of binding; Book selection; weeding out; Delay in release of book grants and Technological evolution. Maintaining the most useful collection of information resources is the primary objective of a library A university library files information, Often semi-publisher or unpublished and emphasizes unit of information rather than entire document. A university library may have to deal with specific, current and up to date information in a verity of forms, including un convention forms like technical reports, reprints off-prints per-prints, conference papers and proceedings, trade catalogues ,instruction manuals, equipments manuals, codes of practice, data
sheets engineering drawing newspapers market surveys, slides, cassette records, motion pictures photographs etc. It may also have a large part of internally generated information and classified information. This presentation attempts to highlight the major problems of collection development such as information sources from the point of view of a university librarian. Collection developments involve understanding the nature of requirements of users and anticipating their demands. Then follows the selection and matching of available information resources with user requirements and their anticipated as well as current demands in other words selection of items and the actual process of acquiring them constitutes itself a wide area of professional work. Collection development is not just equivalent to acquisition of documents but much more than that. Acquisition of documents consists of selection and procurement of documents. Document selection is a highly professional work. Acquisition work involves three sets of people viz., (i) Library management and users (ii) Librarian and library staff (iii) Publishers and suppliers. Hence acquisition problems can be looked from three different ways. Normally when we say acquisition of reading materials, we exclude information in other media and accessing and using information in other than purchase mode. Acquisition work calls for elaborate purchase and accounting functions in library work and involve more of paraprofessional and non-professional work than professional work.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

It should be noted that creation and development of basic collection of a new special library demand quite different strategy and even procedure due to its own peculiar problems. Normally a special library takes birth when the need is felt to assemble existing scattered materials under the control of individuals and departments. Apart from the requirements at the time of creation of a new library, 'retrospective collection development' or 'stock revision' (Mc Clung, 1985, p15-16) may become necessary to fill in gaps in the collections, to respond to curriculum changes, to spend available funds, to replace materials that have been lost, stolen or badly deteriorated. Unless the selector has discovered 'holes' in the collection through all kinds of serendipitous methods like browsing stacks, talking to users, reviewing assorted catalogs, bibliographies, inter-library loan transactions, etc., it would not be wise to resort to retrospective collection development'. One important aspect to be considered as integral part of collection development policy of a special library is policy of resource sharing with other libraries in the vicinity or region. Hence information resources can also be obtained on free loan through inter-library cooperation. For effective and efficient resource sharing not only the factors militating against the philosophy of resource sharing should be respected but one also has to overcome the psychological and physical barriers. The concepts such as 'library without walls', library as a window of access than a 'fortress', need to provide access to information than ownership, learning to pay for service or use of information, collective ownership, buying information in new ways like digitalized form or fax or telefacsimile are yet to be operationalised in his country. Lastly, rental or hire purchase is another mode of getting information resource, but it is not yet popular in Indian libraries.
COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY MANUAL

• Purpose of the Collection Development Policy

The main purpose of the Collection Development Policy is to establish operating guidelines for the planned development of a quality collection of materials to meet the educational needs of students and faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point as guided by the missions of the University System, the University, and the University Library. From the mission statement of the University Library: The mission of the University Library is to provide users with information and access to information in support of scholarly activity and research, student learning, teaching excellence, and curricular development.

The University Library is a vital instruction and information resource for the University. Primary users are the undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. Its collection should serve instructional, curricular and research needs of all its primary users, including those with disabilities. At the same time, the exploding production of books, periodicals, audiovisual media and electronic resources, rising costs and a limited budget demand a prudent selection policy which acknowledges the need to rely on cooperative resource sharing. The policy provides general guidelines for allocating funds fairly and formulating objective selection criteria. The goals are to ensure consistency among those who have responsibility for developing the collection and to provide a tool for evaluating and improving collections for all relevant subject disciplines. The library collection includes all formats, i.e., books, periodicals, microforms, audio-visual materials, electronic resources, etc. The University Library upholds and promotes the following statements from the American Library Association:

The Collections Policy Statements govern the Library's collections development and acquisitions efforts. They provide the policy framework to support the Library's responsibilities to serve the Congress as well as the United States Government as a whole, the scholarly community, and the general public. The policies provide a plan for developing the collections and maintaining their existing strengths. They set forth the scope, level of collecting intensity and goals sought by the Library to fulfill its service mission.

The Library's collection building activities are extremely broad, covering virtually every discipline and field of study, including the entire range of different forms of publication and media for recording and storing knowledge, with the exception of technical agriculture and clinical medicine (where it yields to the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine, respectively). The Library's goal is to formulate statements which are sufficiently inclusive to ensure this broad coverage, yet specific enough to serve the particular needs of the Library's varied clienteles.

The Library has been developing its body of Collections Policy Statements since the mid-20th century and has based their formulation on three fundamental principles, or "canons of selection" which succinctly summarize its collections development programs.

Collection Development Methods
Collection development methods relate to the procedures of selection and acquisition of materials for an expanding collection and decisions on the material to be included in the collection. While selection and acquisition methods to be adopted for traditional/conventional printed materials is well known, what one is not familiar is the uses of electronic facilities (including networks) for collection development activities. "Knowledge is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges toward an ideal view; it is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps even incommensurable) alternatives, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness." - Paul Feyerabend

**Document Acquisition Problems**

1. **Document Selection Problems**

   The theoretical book selection principles like providing the right book to the right reader at the right time (Drary), die best reading for the largest number at the least cost' (McIlviv Dewey), book selection determined by demand to maximize service (L R Mc Colvin), etc., may at the best serve as optimistic or idealistic objectives for collection development. To achieve these objectives is not an easy task. There are many practical problems in document selection work of a special library. Document selection for a special library is done by library staff, library committee and users. Library committee and users are very much constrained by the inputs provided by library about existence of new materials. Often, users may tell whether a book is good or not whether or not it is needed. The multifaceted problem of document selection starts with problems of ascertaining user requirements, lack of clearly defined boundaries of core and peripheral areas of interest, lack of clear policy of collection development, lack of priorities in collection development, heterogeneous nature of user-requirement and literature scatter, if any and multimedia nature of University Libraries and the resultant problem of enlisting large number of sources of reading materials for regular scanning. In a practical situation, assessing a book against standard criteria like book production standards, date of publication, publisher, author, etc. is given less importance than relevance of book to the needs of users.

2. **Background or Document Acquisition Transaction**

   Libraries regularly buy information products and services apart from equipment, consumables, furniture, etc. Products include books, reports, standards, journals, etc. and services include translation, reprographic or *photocopy, current awareness, literature search, etc. These purchase activities call for a basic knowledge of the relevant laws of the land, purchase procedures, norms and financial audit (which are not taught in formal education for librarianship) on the part of acquisitions librarian. There are some peculiar circumstances under which purchase of information products and services are normally made in libraries. Firstly, neither the seller nor the buyer is fully aware of the value of the product being transacted. Further, the buyer is not the consumer of the product. Secondly, the product specification is...
inadequate on most of the occasions and often misleading too. Occasional wrong announcements of new books lead to acquisition of duplicate copies. In other words libraries buy a product based on a title or a short abstract or at the most based on a review. In case of journals, libraries pay for products even before they come into existence. Thirdly, almost all the products are proprietary in nature and publishers dictate price and terms. At the same time they are available through multiple layouts under differentiated pricing. Fourthly, for obvious reasons neither a system of calling for competitive quotations (i.e. bids) nor extensive contracting is workable. In the situation, each library has to evolve its own procedure keeping the broad guidelines of GOC (Good Offices Committee) and terms of book trade in view. However, in practical situations such procedures cannot be strictly enforced for lack of a workable mutually agreed contract.

3. Need of Subject Background

The University Library whereby young students with a variety of subject backgrounds would be recruited and trained to act as an effective link between library resources and the faculty. Discusses the beneficial effect this unique plan has had in all aspects of library services, and the impact it has made on the library users by having librarians with specialist backgrounds able to offer many and varied subject data knowledge when required by university library users.

Mathew Ikechukwu Oliobi, (1994) "Tapping the Subject Background of Librarians: The University of Port Harcourt Library Experience", Library Review, Vol. 43 Iss: 3, pp.32 – 40

Developing relevant collection in anticipation of demand depends heavily on active participation of users in terms of timely, adequate and useful suggestions for documents. But direct and overt participation of users in collection development is often limited to few handful users of a special library. Lack of user (or subject experts) participation in selection of documents becomes a serious problem where librarian and library staff lack sufficient subject knowledge. Some suggestions to improve user participation in collection development are (i) Intensifying current awakes services and disseminating information about new titles/documents to a large cross section of users. (ii) Systematizing literature searching, reference services and other information functions and services to get regular feedback to acquisition system for procuring useful items. (iii) Speeding up procurement of suggested documents to create a drive of achievement motivation in users (iv) Involving actively the project teams and the information personnel in identifying precise requirements of information and documentary resources of new and ongoing projects/programmers.

4. Multiplicity of Vendors

There is a havoc of multiplicity of vendors (today's salesman of a firm is tomorrow's independent vendor) and a consequent flood of books on approval of popular publishers which are easily available but normally above average cost. This problem in major cities is going to such an extent that an encyclopedic book is sent on approval to a library by not less than six vendors in their fervent efforts and hence they aim at creating an arterial need among users for books readily available with them by sending them on approval basis. As such the relative assessment of these books against books to be bought on confirmed orders will not be made. In the process,
the document selection may become highly flexible to suit the requirement to the readily available documents and by mathematical induction serve the hidden and derived objectives and needs of users than real objectives and needs. This is often called the tension between what users say as they need and what librarian and his colleagues think as their users need. Contrary to above situation, if a library is not located in one of the major cities or capital of the state, it lacks quick and easy access to the stock of the vendors to make best choice of off-the-shelf documents.

5. Document Procurement Problems

Having seen some of the problems faced at the time of selection of documents, the problems related to the document procurement transaction are discussed below. The foremost task and problem in procurement activity of a special library is to determine the vendors of all types of materials, their terms, credibility, efficiency and service. One had to be aware of bogus companies and individuals in the trade and continuously evaluate vendors based on sample orders and other criteria. A special library has to sequence its orders in such a way that a steady stream of documents arrive at regular intervals in the library.

6. Need for Avoiding Duplication

A very crucial problem of document acquisition is avoiding duplication in the collection. This assumes additional significance in University Libraries where collection has to he compact. The duplication may appear in the form of duplicate copies of documents, different editions (with or without revision) of the same document and it may be substantial content duplication among different documents. As far as duplicate copies are concerned one can have a thorough checking with existing stock, on order files and just received but not processed; files. The duplication arising out of contents has to be checked only with the help of subject experts and users. However, the duplication due to reappearance in different forms like special issue of a journal or a book, journal article, conference paper, thesis, and a report at times is difficult to check.

7. Choice of Vendors and Problem of Local Vs Foreign Suppliers

When selection of vendors is made discretionary, it may be necessary to have some criteria to assess credibility and efficiency of vendors. Some of the 'credibility' criteria that can serve as elimination criteria are: (i) Involvement of a vendor in any scandal or cheating or any similar affairs elsewhere, (ii) Credibility and credit worthiness of vendor with publishers and wholesalers, (iii) Past experience of a library with a vendor, (iv) Estimation of risk of advance payments, if any, (v) Practices of marking up prices and avoiding or refusing to provide price proofs, (vi) Improper billing, (vii) Bad practices noticed or heard, if any. Some of the 'efficiency' criteria for selection of vendors include: (i) Getting quickly what are needed by a library rather than just trying to supply what are available with a vendor, (ii) Specialization of vendor, if any, (iii) Providing bibliographic details, information about availability of books, etc., as a free service, (iv) Accepting stray requests to search one or two items and rush them to the library, (v) Occasionally accommodating return of duplicates received against confirmed order, (vi) Allowing flexible (30-45 days) credit system without penalty.
or interest. Many times local vendors try to propagate that direct import of documents from publishers or foreign agents is quite costly as one loses the normal library discount (10%) and at times one may have to pay additional postage and handling charges. But it is not always true. Except for books of exclusive agencies, chapter Indian editions and off-the-shelf-books of popular publishers, the supply of all other documents will be more efficient from publishers and foreign vendors. In fact, it is not desirable to approach local agents for short discount tides (what are called society publications) wherein library has to pay additional handling charges. However, prolonged correspondence, levy of arbitrary handling charges and risk of advance payments go against direct import from publishers and foreign agents. Further, at times, it is economical to import directly and save on cover version rate, discount, differential pricing, membership prices, paperback editions, etc. yet it may not be worth importing a book of popular publisher which is locally available. Vendors can certainly provide added value service to libraries. They can save time and money for libraries by reducing cost of paper work involved in cancellations and reporting, by providing accurate and regular status reports about supplies, by reducing the encumbered funds of libraries, by providing continuation cataloguing/processing refined approval plan and other services.

8. Problems Relating to Terms of Payment

The procurement procedure should have taken cognizance of terms of payments. Though an element of risk is involved in advance payment, it is necessary to make advance payments to many publishers and foreign vendors if the volume of purchases is less than the minimum prescribed. Some conservative suppliers/agencies have deposit account schemes and prepaid coupon systems in place of advance payment with a favorable edge to the seller. For others including local suppliers a 30-45 days credit terms should do. If credit terms are not agreeable it is better even to agree for payment against delivery in case of publishers and foreign agents. It is here that the acquisitions librarian has a moral responsibility to arrange timely payment for suppliers. Just as delayed supply is a serious problem to libraries, the delayed payment is a serious problem to suppliers. In fact mutually agreeable genuine penalty clause for both sides is a good step in the right direction. An extreme type of case one often hears is that the advance payments made towards journal subscriptions are not immediately transmitted to publishers by agents leading to delayed or non-supply of initial issues of the year. Further rare cases are those where libraries have been cheated by local vendors/agents after taking advance payments for journal subscription.

9. Problems of Fiscal Management

A budget is a guide or directive for fiscal management. Libraries need funds for services, and these services must be budgeted for. Fletcher (1990) gives two definitions of a budget, calling it "the overall picture of allocations (for expenditure) and income,” as well as "the financial allocation for specific purpose or purposes during a given period." Although libraries are service-oriented and have little or no revenue-generating motives or objectives, they still obviously require a budget. Technical services is not a significant source of income in
the library system. Very small amounts of income are made from reprography and binding, but
the amount is infinitesimal compared to the funds expended on technical services.

The need for budgets in libraries is increasingly important. In public institutions,
government funding continues to dwindle. The literature (books and journals) that must be
managed continues to grow. There is an increasing demand for online resources and services.
Libraries must effectively divide funds between staff and materials, which include acquisitions,
services, and equipment. Library fiscal management is becoming more decentralized. Current
trends give a measure of financial control to divisional, sectional, and unit librarians. It is
within this framework that budgeting for library technical services is approached.

The process of encumbering the available meager budget and moving
monies 'back and forth in a manual system can lead to errors and too broad
approximations of expenditures, commitments and available balance funds. The
process of encumbering funds is further complicated by fiscal policy of parent
organization normally bound by the artificial year called financial year.

10. Price Verification

Another sticky issue often faced in libraries is price verification of
documents supplied. As noted earlier there is a regular price hike (of documents
ordered) without notice. In case of journals additional invoices for additional
volumes will be coming throughout the year. Unless the suppliers cooperate and
produce necessary information as and when sought the acceptance of revised
prices become extremely difficult. On the other hand since upward revision of
price takes place in almost all the documents supplier after 3 months, a
vendor (more so in case of foreign vendor) is likely to get annoyed for such price
proofs. It may be desirable to make a random check of all hikes upto 25% and an
100% checks for items where price hikes are more than 25%. Some suppliers do not
maintain the consistency of applying conversion rate as on the date of billing or
supply and occasionally manipulate and adjust the date of billing to suit conversion
rates of GOC.

11. Vendor Controlled Order Plans

Irrespective of the size of a library, more desirable and possibly least
exploited methods of procurement, which can considerably enhance the utility of
limited monetary resources, are standing/blanket orders, package deals, combination
subscriptions, membership orders and other vendor con-trolled order plans. A
standing order is normally placed for a series like advances and annual reviews
while a blanket order is placed in terms of a subject field, grade level, country's
publications or publishers’ publications. Certain package-deal offers, such as
those offered by professional bodies, (e.g., IEEE and AIAA) and membership
offers (individual, student, associate, institutional, patron membership of ACM,
ISI (now BIS), BSI, etc.) provide considerable saving in price, procurement time
and office work. Combination subscriptions, such as those for SIAM journals,
also result in considerable saving. Much less known terms in Indian libraries are
*Greenaway plan*, *Till Forbidden* order and *Gathering plan*. The greenway
plan is a contract between a library and a publisher for a library to buy, at a large
discount, one copy of all or most of the publisher's trade hooks. The purpose is to
provide examination copies immediately after publication so that the library can
decide which titles should be acquired in multiple copies. If the library does not buy
multiple copies, however, publishers will cancel the agreement. Till bedridden’ is
used by a library in serials work to indicate that the publisher or supplier of a
journal should automatically renew a subscription without any further approval
from the library (Evans, 1987, p 109). 'Gathering plan' means a blanket
order arrangement with a foreign dealer, who is, in effect, given instructions to
gather and ship whatever can be obtained in specified categories. Another vendor
originated book supply plan not practiced in India is the lease or rental plan
designed to provide regularly changing collections of best sellers.

12. Problems of subscription to journals:

Mittal discusses on problems related to the subscription of foreign journals like late
or non-receipt of journals, non replacement of missing issues by publishers, fluctuations in
subscriptions by delayed payments that affects regular supply of periodicals, fluctuating
exchange rates, lack of indexes and overlapping abstracting and indexing journals. He suggests
for prompt payments to the journal publishers by established agents for the guaranteed and
regular supply. Anand and Chopra highlight the importance of current periodicals in Indian
institutions of higher education and research. They discuss the problems of subscription to
current periodicals such as inflation, additional cost of special numbers of periodicals,
uncertainty of arrears bills, communication gap between publishers and agents, postage and
handling charges. Fluctuation in international money market, additional charges for late orders,
proliferation and fission of periodicals. They give viable suggestions to minimize the financial
problems for subscription to current periodicals. Isaac and Sathyanarayana outline the
problems connected with the acquisition of journals such as impact of knowledge explosion,
the rise in the price of reading material and fluctuation in conversion rates.

13. Other Problems of Documents Acquisition

There are many miscellaneous problems of documents acquisition in
University Libraries. A selected few deserve mention here. Often vendors do not
provide up to date and quick status report about supplies. Indian vendors do not
even agree to or indicate/intimate the automatic cancellation of pending/unsupplied
orders after expiry of stipulated time. On the other hand, careless declarations are
often mode as out of print or out of stock for a given book. Wrong supplies, supply
of defective copies, frequent errors in invoices and incorrect crediting of payments
are not usual with suppliers. Many new and small suppliers abroad do not maintain
extensive records and the same often leads to unwarranted and hasty credit
collection actions on bills or Performa invoices already paid. Airfreight/
postage, handling and other incidental expresses including telephone or telex
charges levied by foreign suppliers are too heavy and disproportional to the cost of
the material being supplied. Sometimes airfreight and expenses like foreign
postage, custom clearance charges, etc., are also arbitrarily levied by local
suppliers too. Another peculiar tactics of obscure publishers and suppliers within the
country is to send books by VPP or by freight-to-0y basis without proper
order from libraries. Just like suppliers are born overnight both within the
country and abroad, there are companies abroad who go for liquidation in short time and claims of libraries are passed on to their chartered accountants. Of course within the country it is difficult even to locate the liquidated supplier or his chartered accountant.

CONCLUSION

It is said that an elegant library is a white elephant unless it houses material building appropriate for its users (Spitler, 1980, p15). Collection development in a special library is an important preparatory work accounting for nearly two-thirds of its operational expenses and space (Buckland, 1989) and has strong effect on efficiency and effectiveness of its services. Collection development policy should take into account the degree to which material has to be borrowed from other libraries. Collection development should aim at balancing among buying, borrowing and available space. There are a number of problems in collection development: many are common and few are unique to library concerned. Judicial and scientific assessment of problems is bound to reveal options open to special libraries. Value judgment of practitioners alone is not adequate Microforms are versatile, economic and efficient information handling media without which no library of present day can hope for comprehensive collection development. An important aspect in developing micrographics in University Libraries is to consider it as a system. It is very necessary to identify relation of micrographics with other systems such as reprographics, automation, etc. The problems of journal subscription are the most complex and peculiar in any library. Choosing an agent, taking risk in huge advance payments, handling irregularity in supplies, transit losses, getting extension of subscription period or refund for non-supplies, checking prices, handling unconfirmed prices and supplementary invoices, promoting resource sharing, disposal of duplicate and stray issues of journals, etc. are some of the important problems of journal subscription. Quite a few of the problems evade solutions and some cannot be generalized to all libraries. Diverse opinions and experience have been aired by professional colleagues and experts on these issues. Collection development is largely neglected area of research in librarianship. Simple surveys and reporting of statistics of libraries are not enough. Well designed experimental research on many of these problems could provide some bases for decision making by practitioners when collection development problems are faced. For example, participation of users, staff and higher level managers in collection development continues in University Libraries in varying degrees. Incidentally, they are analogous to some demand forecasting methods. It is not clear about the relationship of use of documents and the group of people who select them. In fact a simple and small study in four institutions indicated that there was a higher percentage of use of librarian-selected material than of others (Clark, 1976, p122). Due to insufficient sample and lack of reinforcement of the finding in different environments, librarians have not been able to use this result with confidence.
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