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# Collection Development Policies: Ground Rules for Planning University Libraries

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## Introduction

Collection development includes everything that goes into acquiring materials, including selection, ordering, and payment. It is a chain of events that includes planning, administration, and control. Collection development serves as a foundation upon which other library services are built.

A collection development policy establishes ground rules for planning, budgeting, selecting, and acquiring library materials. These documents provide a framework for coordinated collection development programme throughout the university libraries. In addition, these policies help the library serve the academic community. They assist bibliographers in making not only routine selections, but also approval plan profiles and gift acceptance decisions. With common terminology and collecting standards, bibliographers can work with greater consistency towards defined goals. The standard processes to be considered include selection, scope of collecting, and replacement of missing but useful materials and worn-out materials. According to Eguavon and Ochai (2002), collection development is a planned, systematic development of a collection based on the objectives of the library.

Collection development policies also function as a guide to library resources for faculty, other users, and other libraries by describing the scope and nature of the collection. As an indication of collection strength and weakness, they can be useful in resource sharing and cooperative acquisitions.

A collection development policy is a written statement of selection principles and criteria, with guidelines on the depth of subject coverage, and details such as language, geography, and time period. For instance, in the E. Latunde Odeku Medical Library (ELOML) all

local, African, and tropical medicine titles must be acquired (Tamuno and Ojedokun 1997). In like manner, the University of Texas libraries develops collections and plans information access according to policies based on continuing analysis of the University's evolving academic programs, research, interests, and user needs. In light of these policies, the University of Texas libraries acquires or provides access to a wide variety of resources in formats ranging from manuscripts to digital images, in many languages and scripts supporting inquiry in all areas of knowledge.

## Collection Development And Planning

A collection development policy looks forward. Library administrators must be aware of potential library users and their various needs are likely to be. Knowledge of the user population also affects library organizational structure, the need for special reading materials and accommodations for particular user groups. The acquisitions librarian makes decisions concerning these questions.

Other library staff also participate in the collection development process, since no individual can cover all current publications. Expert advice is important in making decisions about the collection. This does not mean, however, that the acquisitions function should be taken away from qualified library staff, as in the case of some privately funded institutions in Nigeria.

## Budgeting and Collection Development

For a budget to be successful, it must be directive. It must be based on a plan so that there is value for the money spent. Money available for collection development is always very limited. The collection development policy considers the focus of the library, the clientele, and the organization it serves. The reverse is the case where acquisitions is at the mercy of the institutional director, or the founder, in the case of a private institution. In order for the collection development librarian to defend expenditures for library materials, there must be a guide to assist his decision making process. Human and material resources must not be wasted; hence, the collection development policy also serves as a training manual for new library staff. Determining why scarce resources should be spent on item "A" instead of "B" is not an easy task. A collection development policy can help bring order out of chaos.

## Collection Development in Relation to Selection and Acquisition

Ifidon (1996) opines that a focused, positive, and consistent collection development strategy is a necessity for any meaningful library development. Librarians engaged in selection must answer the following questions:

- Who are the library's patrons?
- Is the library to serve only those who actually come to it today or should the librarian attempt to provide for all those who may come some day?

The librarian must also ensure that no race, nationality, profession, trade, religion, school of thought, or local customer is overlooked during selection. The collection is built according to the policy, and patrons demands must also be considered.

Materials should meet high standards of quality in content, expression, and format. On the other hand, the selector should not hesitate to acquire a mediocre book that will be read in preference to a superior book that will not be read. The quality of materials must be related

to the other two basic standards of selection, which are purpose and need. The library performs a variety of roles, which in turn demands a variety of materials.

According to the American Library Association (ALA) standard as discussed by Carter (1974), three elements are very important in a collection development policy. They are general overview, which is the introduction and general collection; detailed analysis of subject collections; and a miscellaneous section. These form the basis of the discussions below.

Element one, the **general overview**, gives an introduction to the policy and also a description of the community the library serves. This section introduces the library collection development efforts and defines and explains the operations covered by the policy. Topics to be covered include purpose of the policy, its intended audience, a description of the institution and its clientele, and an overview of how the collection has developed. Also included are details on the types of programmes or patron needs are to be met by the collection. Likewise, the general limitations and priorities of the collection should be included in the policy.

Secondly, a detailed subject analysis of the collection is essential. The types of materials and classes of users are included. Five levels of collecting are specified: **general coverage, instructional/working collection level, research level, and comprehensive level.**

The policy should specify who is responsible for selection. It could be combination of users and librarians. Methods of selection, treatment of gifts and donations, weeding and collection assessment are also included.

## Literature Review

The collection should be inclusive and contain whatever materials contribute to the library mission. The collection development policy establishes ground rules for planning and budgeting, selection and acquisition of library materials. This is in agreement with Poole as reported by Cutter (1978) that, "it is important to remember when one is trying to select the best that there are as many kinds of best as there are kinds of readers" (p. 43). Cutter (1978) once asked, "Best in what? In style? In interest? In instructiveness? In suggestiveness? In power? Best for whom? For the ignorant? For people in general? For College students? (p. 43). Since the library attempts to serve all those various categories of readers, they would be willing to accept a variety of materials, whose standards of quality might vary as the titles are seen to be useful for one group or another.

Elaturoti (1995a) sees collection development as the process of assessing the strengths and weaknesses in a collection and then creating a plan to correct the weakness and maintain the strengths.

Selection is the decision-making aspect of collection development. The decision to order means attempting to build a well-balanced collection covering most subject equally, whereas, during difficult economic times, it will only be possible to attend to a few users requests.

Acquisition is the implementation of selection decisions: ordering, receipt, and payment. These must be done according to a procedure that is guided by the collection development policy. To correctly distinguish ends from means, examine values as well as capabilities, the dimension and importance of Readers Services must be known. This is only determinable through the use of a written collection development policy statement or document. According to Buckland's (1963) argument, all library operations that primarily

facilitate the exploitation of the collections and those directly consumed by the end users of the library have their roots in the collection development policy.

Ikem (1995) opines that collection development policy is the vehicle through which the library achieves the goals of its readers' services. Proper budgeting (in line with the collection development policy) and its careful operation are vital to the success of library services activities. It should be used as a planning and monitoring instrument. Just as no group of activities can succeed without proper planning, so also the activities of meeting users needs cannot succeed without proper policies and monitoring.

He further states that "for purpose of progress and development, the performance of library activities should be evaluated over certain periods, strengths, and weaknesses in services, which can be used as basis for actions and future plans." Power (1943) observes that, "one of the most meaningful ways to judge the quality and effectiveness of a library's services is to measure how well it is meeting the needs of the users. If the users needs are mostly not met, then the library acquisition policy needs to be re-appraised and modified. The policy must at all time be scientifically managed if the library is to fulfill its mission." For any collection development policy to be acceptable it must reflect six basic elements identified by Tamuno (1995) as reported by Ikem (1995). They are philosophy, needs assessment, goals and objectives, implementation, administrative control, and evaluation.

Among other things, a policy statement can do the following:

- Help achieve a unified view of what areas of the collection should be developed
- Help develop coordination among individuals responsible for the collection
- Help achieve a consistency in the collection
- Help reduce the number of ad hoc decisions that have to be made regarding the collection; and
- Help avoid confusion in the minds of selectors and patrons as to what the collection is and is not (Elaturoti, 1995a)

## Recommendation

The following recommendations are for combating the professional challenges facing acquisitions librarians:

- librarians should insist on having a functional policy;
- material should be ordered for the library continuously, without necessarily waiting for things like accreditation reviews;
- efforts should be made by the head of the library to overcome any social, political, economic and environmental factors;
- Nigerian Library Association (NLA) should create a standard policy and ensure compliance by all academic libraries for them to enjoy increased funding.

High proficiency in acquisition processes can improve the status of an academic library.

## Conclusion

Collection development is a planned, continuous, and cost effective acquisition of quality, relevant materials to meet the needs of users and the objectives of the library. Collection development is not only growth in volumes and titles but in the quality of acquired materials in enhancing effective information delivery. It is only from this perspective that the word "development" could be meaningful in relation to collection development.

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