2004

New Frontiers In Collection Development Preparing To Meet New Standards

Gary R. Shook
Grace University

The Christian Librarian is the official publication of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL). To learn more about ACL and its products and services please visit http://www.acl.org/

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol47/iss1/3

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Christian Librarian by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact arolfe@georgefox.edu.
This article describes the general policies which may be included in a comprehensive collection development policy, attempting to follow national guidelines. It also describes one approach to analyzing how well the library collection supports the various parts of the curriculum, and presents a technique to compare a library collection with peer libraries by subject majors. Finally, the “Collection Development Plan” section provides a format for stating an action plan to develop the collection based upon all of the information gathered.

What does the AABC proposed standards and the ACRL Standards for College Libraries 2000 Edition have to say about collection development policies? The general statement from AABC states: “The institution ensures the availability of learning resources and services of appropriate form, range, depth, and currency to support the curricular offerings and meet student needs.” In the list of essential elements that characterize an accredited institution, there are two elements that relate somewhat to collection development policies. Element 2 states: “Appropriate, documented policies and practices relating to the management of learning resources.” Element 7 states: “Faculty involvement with the library staff in the analysis of resource adequacy, the selection of resource materials, and the establishment of library policy.”

Looking at the AABC standard plus these two essential elements, we can surmise that the library should have a written collection development policy prepared by library staff with faculty input which contains policies and practices relating to the selection and management of the collection. This policy should include sections on analysis of collection adequacy to meet the needs of the curriculum and student needs, and the role of faculty in selection of library materials.

The ACRL standards relating to collection development are similar to AABC standards in many respects. The “Resources” section of Standards for College Libraries contains such statements as “The library should provide varied, authoritative and up-to-date resources that support its mission and the needs of its users... Moreover, resources may be in a variety of formats, including print or hard copy, online electronic text or images, and other media.” Questions in this “Resource” section relating to collection development are: “What is the role of the classroom faculty in the selection of library resources and in the ongoing development and evaluation of the collection?” “Does the library have a continuing and effective program to evaluate its collections, resources and online databases, both quantitatively and qualitatively?” The ACRL standards contain a couple of different elements in that it recommends “judicious weeding” and comparing your
library’s collections with peer libraries.

Perhaps the best guide to preparing a collection development policy is Dr. Evans’ Developing Library and Information Center Collections, a standard book on this topic in its fourth edition. Dr. Evans suggests that a collection development policy should contain the following elements: an overview section which includes a statement of overall institutional objectives for the library, a section detailing development of the collection by subject areas and by formats, a section on who is responsible for selection and methods of selection, and a miscellaneous section including policies on gifts, deselection, collection evaluation, and procedures for handling complaints and censorship issues.

The following elements of collection development policy are mentioned in both AABC and ACRL standards and in Evans’ book on collection development: written document on policy and practices, evaluation of collections, currency/weeding, and formats. AABC and ACRL both list faculty involvement and meeting needs of students. Evans’ book which is addressed to public and school libraries as well as academic library lists responsibility for selection and library objectives. ACRL also lists library objectives, and adds comparison with peer libraries.

At Grace University, we have tried to develop a Collection Development Policy following the AABC and ACRL standards mentioned above, as well as the guidelines which appear in Dr. Evans’ classic text on collection development. The Grace University Library Collection Development Policy is organized into three major sections—general policies, course descriptions and subject headings, and collection analysis & development plans.

The section on General Policies contains the following elements: purpose statement (purpose of this collection development policy), university mission statement, library goals, responsibility for selection, intellectual freedom issues (includes procedures for handling challenged books), general policies on selection, deselection, and replacement; selection guidelines by format, gift policy, weeding/deselection, collection evaluation, and guidelines for dropping/retaining periodical subscriptions in hard copy.

The section on Course Descriptions and Subject Headings includes a course title and description for each class in our current curriculum, along with the major Library of Congress subject headings which apply to that course along with the number of times those subject headings appear in our online catalog. This provides a snapshot of both the subject coverage and its depth as it relates to our curriculum.

The third section of Grace’s policy, Collection Analysis & Development Plans consists of three parts: comparison to peer institutions, collection analysis, and collection development plans. The Comparison to Peer Libraries has a page for each broad major such as Bible, Psychology, or Teacher education. For this comparison, choose a number of representative subject headings and subject keywords from the Course description and Subject heading section for each major. Then select two to four “peer” institutions to compare your collection in this subject major based on this sampling of subject headings and subject keywords searched in FirstSearch’s WorldCat. Libraries may use their own criteria to select peer institutions. Grace used institutions from our “competitive set”, which is a list of colleges that our students seriously considered attending before enrolling at Grace University. Check to make sure that each peer library offers the major being compared. It is possible to narrow a WorldCat search to one library’s collection by limiting the search to a particular library’s three letter OCLC code. A search of each subject heading is done for each library without any limits and then limited to the past 10 years. In general, search single words in the subject (keyword) field and subject phrases in the subject phrase field in WorldCat. Then both the total number of items in this sampling and the number of items with copyright dates in the last 10 years can be translated into the number of volumes/student faculty FTE to control for different sized institutions. Also calculate what percent of this sample collection has a copyright date within the past 10 years. This procedure gives a picture of the currency of the various collections and a rough idea of acquisition rates. (See Appendix A for an example of a comparison of collections for a teacher education major.)

Collection analysis is the second part of the Collection Analysis & Development Plans section. This analysis is done to obtain the actual number (versus a sampling) of items in a collection in a particular major. For each major, create a list of related classification numbers (Dewey or Library of Congress) divided into books, periodicals, and audio-visual materials. Divide each area into subdivisions of classification and format. Then use your automated library system software to produce current statistics on the number of items in each subdivision. Totals from these numbers give you a base figure for the current size of collections supporting a major.

The third part, Collection Development Plans utilizes the information gathered in the previous sections to develop an action plan. Each one of these plans includes the following sections: Name of the major, description & scope of collection, influencing factors, selection plan, retention & weeding, and the development plan. The Description & Scope of Collection mostly consists of a list of the main classification numbers for the subjects in the major. Influencing factors notes such things as the number of students in the major, curriculum changes in the major, and unusual circumstances or factors of a program including off-site or co-op classes. The Selection Plan section lists any bibliographies being
is a narrative discussion of what specific subjects need to be developed to support this major. In part, this is determined by looking at the number of hits received for various subjects in the Course Descriptions and Subject Heading section.

The Collection analysis and the Collection Development Plan sections are working documents which need to be updated regularly, and are to be used with department heads and professors as the librarian meets with them on the development of those portions of the collection which support their classes.

REFERENCES


“WRITTEN FOR OUR INSTRUCTION”

PROFESSIONAL ANCESTORS WHO INTEGRATED FAITH AND PRACTICE

We have never before attempted a study of librarians who integrated their Christian beliefs into the teaching and practice of library and information services. We have, however, discussed this topic in conceptual terms in our essay, “The Master We Serve,” published in 1993 and since reprinted on three occasions, most recently by Gregory A. Smith in Christian Librarianship: Our goal this time is much different from our goal in the earlier essay. This time we are looking back into the lives of individual librarians to recover their unique stories; we want to recall and, in some instances, re-interpret their life experiences in order to identify those who walked by faith. But we are trying to go a step further, seeking not just to know about librarians who remained faithful to their calling as followers of Jesus but also to learn something of their struggle, something of their particular dilemma, something that brought their faith directly into contact with their work as practitioners and professors.

We chose our topic because we want to live in hope, and we want to share that hope with our colleagues. Much about modern life is troubling and difficult. Job reminds us that human beings are “born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward.” We know that the culture at large, though occasionally giving favorable lip service to Christianity, tends to marginalize it. The library professional literature acknowledges only rarely the contributions of the Christian religion to the core values of our profession.

In a fallen and divisive world, the apostle Paul had offered wise counsel. “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope.” Paul urges us to an ethos of mutual support by referring us to the lives of people who followed God prior to his era. In much the same way, the writer of Hebrews has identified a number of individuals who, in spite of their failures, responded to the call of God and deserve our emulation and appreciation. Biblical examples of faith abound, constituting the most important sources of learning and encouragement for those who follow Jesus. Smith’s collection addresses contemporary struggles, and we seek to complement his collection by considering librarians of prominence who also served Jesus faithfully and who, at times, responded to professional obstacles and difficulties with faith-based perspectives.

THE METHODS OF COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHY

In order to gather, analyze, and present biographical information, we have chosen the method of collective biography, also known as prosopography. Conceptions of prosopographical research have evolved over the centuries and, indeed, the definition we adopt is not the purest, according to a number of contemporary scholars. Collected

Donald G. Davis, Jr.  
Professor of Library History, School of Information & Department of History, University of Texas at Austin

John Mark Tucker  
Dean of Library & Information Resources, Margaret & Herman Brown Library, Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas