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## Collection Development in a Small Library

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# Collection Development in a Small Library

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"Libraries need to become fundamentally different institutions than they were twenty years ago." So says Mark Sandler in his article, "Collection Development in the Day of Google" in the October, 2006 issue of *Library Resources & Technical Services*.<sup>1</sup> Is your collection development policy up to date? Does it reflect user's expectations? Does it provide for an expanded range of formats? Does it address funding issues?

As the small college library develops a collection that supports the curriculum of the college, the policy that governs that responsibility must be reflective of the community it serves. Overarching issues like information literacy and the rapidly changing information environment must also be considered.

Here is a checklist for further consideration:

- Has an active library committee helped in developing your collection development policy?
- Has the entire faculty approved the collection development policy?
- Does your policy address the unique needs of your community of users? What are the demographics of your student population? What kind of assignments are your faculty members making? Are there additional groups who use your library?
- Does the policy address your decisions on the following formats?
  - E-books
  - E-journals
  - Microfiche
  - Vinyl recordings (LP albums)
  - VCRs, DVDs, CD-roms
  - Audiocassettes
  - Recorded books
  - Web pages
- Does your policy address collaboration with other libraries through inter-library loan and consortia collections? Quoting Mark Sandler again, "The best library in the country will be the library that can satisfy user needs by calling upon the resources of the rest."<sup>2</sup>

- Are costs appropriately budgeted for library purchases? Eric Ormsby calls this an "era of unprecedented budgetary crisis for libraries ... [with] staggering increases in prices for both books and periodicals."<sup>3</sup> How do costs play a role in your collection parameters? If you allocate funds for different departments, is there a standard formula in place?
- If Lauren Mandel is correct that "weeding is essential to collection development"<sup>4</sup> (and we all agree that she is), what does your policy say about weeding? Does it consider space, usage, condition, and age of the collection? Is there an established process for weeding?
- What are the criteria for popular materials? Is there a difference between religious popular reading and secular popular reading? Do you collect fiction? Christian fiction?
- What will you do with gift books? Does your policy clearly state that you have authority to appropriately dispose of those you do not add to the collection? Does your policy prohibit "strings attached"?
- Do you house a special collection? What are its parameters?
- Are there appropriate statements about preservation?

You and I will probably never work in a library with an unrestricted budget. We will always be called upon to make selection decisions, to "choose between." We should be making such decisions in order to, as Ross Atkinson describes it, "privilege particular objects as being more useful or reliable than others."<sup>5</sup> This can seem to be a huge task – a monumental responsibility, an overwhelming and multi-faceted mission.

Collection development will always require intentionality. It will always demand wisdom.

*But if any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He is generous and enjoys giving to all people, so he will give you wisdom."*

James 1:5 (NCV) †

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sandler, Mark. "Collection development in the age day of Google." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 50.4 (October 2006): 239(5). *InfoTrac OneFile*. Thomson Gale. Free Will Baptist Bible College. 16 May. 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ormsby, Eric. "The battle of the book: the research library today." *New Criterion* 20.2 (October 2001): 4. *InfoTrac OneFile*. Thomson Gale. Free Will Baptist Bible College. 16 May. 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Mandel, Lauren. "An essential practice. (weeding in libraries)." *Library Journal* 132.6 (April 1, 2007): 59(1). *InfoTrac OneFile*. Thomson Gale. Free Will Baptist Bible College. 16 May. 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Atkinson, Ross. "Six key challenges for the future of collection development: introduction for the Janus breakout sessions." *Library Resources & Technical Services* 50.4 (October 2006): 244(8). *InfoTrac OneFile*. Thomson Gale. Free Will Baptist Bible College. 16 May. 2007.