

GUIDELINES FOR A COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY USING THE CONSPECTUS MODEL

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Foreword

This booklet is a brief guide on how to write a collection development policy, making use of the Conspectus methodology. It is the result of the recognition by the IFLA Acquisition and Collection Development Section that its worldwide members lacked a handy introduction to this important subject. The guide is intended to be of particular value to staff new to collection development and in areas where there is little written tradition of collection development. We hope that it will be of practical use to librarians setting out on the sometimes daunting task of writing a collection development policy.

The booklet was written by Dora Biblarz with the assistance of other members of the A&CD Standing Committee: Marie-Joelle Tarin, Jim Vickery and Trix Bakker. The text is also available, in both English and French, on the IFLA website at <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s14>.

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GUIDELINES for a COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY, using the CONSPECTUS model

WHY A WRITTEN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY?

The library's primary task is to select, maintain, and provide access to relevant and representative information resources. Due to technological developments, libraries are, in the main, moving from holdings ('just in case') to access ('just in time') strategies. This implies that collecting policies are significantly changing and that libraries need to disseminate widely information on their collecting policies. A policy statement is a kind of framework and set of parameters within which staff and users work. It serves many functions beyond being merely a tool for selection of materials. In addition to describing current collections, it forces the staff involved to (re)consider the aims and objectives of the organization, both long and short term, and the priorities to be attached to different activities. It assists with budgeting, serves as communication channel within a library and between the library and outside constituents, supports cooperative collection development, prevents censorship, and assists in overall collection management activities, including the handling of gifts, deselection of materials and serial cancellations.

The main reasons for having a written collection development policy can be put under four broad headings:

1. Selection

The primary function of a written collection development policy is to provide guidance to staff when selecting and deselecting (printed and electronic) resources for the local collection. The document serves as a guideline for each stage of materials handling. It might cover the selection, acquisition, processing, housing, weeding, retention, preservation (archiving in case of electronic resources), relegation and discard of all types of library material in the relevant subjects, with reference to specified levels of collection depth and breadth. This reduces personal bias by setting individual selection decisions in the context of the aims of collection building practice, and identifies gaps in collection development responsibilities. It ensures continuity and consistency in selection and revision. Moreover, it clarifies the purpose and scope of local collections, and allows selection decisions to be evaluated by, for example, identifying what proportion of in-scope published material has been acquired. Such a reference guide reduces the need of selectors to raise recurrent questions, and assists in the training of new staff. It also provides useful information to other library staff whose work is collection-based.

2. Planning

A policy document provides a sound foundation for future planning, thereby assisting in determining priorities, especially when financial resources are limited. This provides a basis for the fair allocation of resources, and helps to protect library funds by explaining the rationale behind acquisitions bids. Having a formal publication to refer to ensures continuity and avoids confusion. Compilation of a formal document is beneficial in itself, in that it involves acquiring knowledge of existing collection strengths, and obliges staff to reflect on the library's goals.

The stated aims help other collection-related activities such as cataloguing, preservation and storage to form a coherent strategy, and support reader services, for example by identifying areas that are ripe for deselection, or more suitable for inter-library loan, document delivery or Internet access than for acquisition.

3. Public relations

Formal policy statements can be useful in making the case for the library when dealing with both its users, administrators and funding bodies. They support the stated objectives of the organization, demonstrating accountability and commitment to agreed goals. Ideally, the compilation of the document requires the active participation of both users and administrators, thereby improving communication between the library and its clientele. The policy statement serves as a contract with the library's users; it has the function to demonstrate to individuals within an institution what they can expect of the library both in form of collections and of services. It enables individual selection decisions to be justified on a standardized basis. By referring to the official statement, library staff can deflect criticism or censorship arising from special interest groups, and politely but firmly refuse unwanted gifts, sectarian materials or potentially offensive items.

4. The wider context

As individual libraries are increasingly unable to provide all their services by themselves, they are banding together into cooperatives, alliances and consortia. For these ventures to work, there must be mutual knowledge and agreement on which library is collecting what. A written collection development policy therefore often serves as a basis for wider cooperation and resource sharing, whether in a locality, region, country, or even internationally.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY ELEMENTS

A. Introduction

The main reason to write a collection development policy is to prevent the library from being driven by events or by individual enthusiasms and from purchasing a random set of resources, which may not support the mission of the library. Besides, electronic resources are becoming increasingly important to libraries of all types and sizes, and are consuming an ever-increasing share of library budgets. Therefore, selection decisions concerning electronic information resources should also be made within an explicit collection development policy. This might be a separate policy or an integrated one.

The first elements of a collection development policy will be a mission statement of the library, the purpose of this policy and the audience to whom it is addressed. It should also include brief statements about the community or user group(s); description of the types of programs the library collection serves; the size (including number of periodicals, monographic volumes, electronic resources, languages represented) of the collection; a detailed budgetary overview of the money the library will spend on the different types of information resources; and any formal or informal cooperative agreements that affect the collection policy or practices.

B. General Statements

Here will be listed characteristics that determine the direction of the development of the collection such as: current focus only or also retrospective acquisitions; the resource types (monographs, periodicals, theses, gray literature, maps, etc.); languages; formats (printed, non-print or electronic); special sources of funding (a grant or gift from a donor); the policy regarding gifts and any special policies regarding maintenance (weeding, discarding, preservation) of the collection; and size of the collections. Other statements can be about how complaints are handled; if there is an equivalent to the "Library Bill of Rights"; about other relevant policies; what limitations exist - what subjects or areas are intentionally not collected etc.

C. Narrative Statements

Each institution, including its community and other constituents, is unique. Therefore, its policy statements will be unique. The policy statements should reflect this particular library and the community it serves.

- Statements should be made of special subject or format collections that represent unique materials and for which special guidelines apply, and which formats are excluded.
- The scope of coverage should be described (languages collected or excluded; geographical areas covered and/or specific areas excluded; chronological periods covered by the collection in terms of intellectual content and in terms of publication dates and specific periods excluded).
- Subjects should be described in terms of the library's classification scheme and subject descriptors.
- Library unit or selector responsible for the collection(s).
- Other categories of useful local information, such as interdisciplinary relationships; consortial relationships; policies for acquiring access to information.
- Other factors of local importance.

D. Subject Profiles

This section of the policy is based upon collection assessment (also referred to as collection evaluation) and needs periodic updating to reflect progress towards goals or goal revision due to changing circumstances. The preferred presentation is a set of conspectus reports, which include all appropriate collection information. Conspectus means an overview or summary of collection strength and collecting intensities – arranged by subject, classification scheme, or combination of either, and containing standardized codes for collection or collecting levels and languages of materials collected. Such a conspectus is a synopsis of a library's collection or of a consortium's or network's coordinated collection development overview or policy. The first conspectus was developed by the Research Libraries Group (RLG) and was subsequently adapted by other groups such as the WLN (Western Library Network). The information should be provided for each conspectus division (24), category (500) and subject (4000) evaluated by the library. See the Appendix for the list of the 24 Conspectus Divisions.

The assessment is achieved by a number of steps which include planning, gathering data, assigning collection depth indicators (or levels) and language codes. This information is used to manage the library's resources and to make other decisions relevant to the general operations.

E. Collection evaluation methods

The techniques and processes used to gather data for collection assessment are briefly described below. The data ideally describe in a succinct fashion the strength and depth of

existing collections and provide a basis on which to assign collection levels.

Some techniques are essential and should be used consistently, while others are valuable under certain circumstances and not always necessary. It is up to the individual conducting the evaluation to select the methods, which will be used for each segment of the collection. This decision is based upon the availability of data, the amount of staff and other support available, and the goal for the final outcome (how it will be used in the library/institution). The techniques available for evaluating collections may be divided into two groups: those that are primarily collection-centered and those that are client-centered. Collection-centered techniques examine the content and characteristics of the information resources in order to determine the size, age, scope and depth of the collection in comparison to an external standard. Client-centered techniques describe how the collection is used and indicate the effectiveness of the collection relative to use. Collection assessment is likely to be most accurate and produce the most useful results when combinations of client-centered and collection-centered techniques, including both quantitative and qualitative results are employed in the data gathering and description process.

- Quantitative Measures

Quantitative measures reveal size, age, use, costs and other numeric data. Examples of quantitative measures include inventory, or shelf list measures to determine actual title or volume counts, by segment or subject area. Median age or similar measures indicate the currency of the materials. Amount expended for acquisitions in a segment or subject area per year illustrates the ongoing commitment to develop that area. Percentage of titles owned by a library when compared to a standard list shows the breadth and depth of the collection. Use statistics (including internal library use and ILL) are both collection and client-centered.

- Qualitative Measures

Qualitative measures are obtained through subjective evaluation and involve the professional judgment of librarians, appraisal from subject experts, or the opinion of customers. These techniques include impressions of the condition, character and appropriateness of a section of the collection. Another qualitative technique is the judgment made by comparison of one subject in the collection to a similar subject in another library, or to a subject bibliography.

F. Collection depth indicators

The collection depth indicators, or levels, are numerical values used to describe a library's collecting activity and goals. Three aspects of collection management are considered: current collection level, acquisition commitment, and collection goal.

Collection depth indicator definitions (see Appendix 2):

- 0 = out of scope
- 1 = minimal information level
- 2 = basic information level
- 3 = study or instructional support level
- 4 = research level
- 5 = comprehensive level

G. Language codes (RLG)

E: English language material predominates; little or no foreign language material is in the collection.

F: Selected foreign language material included in addition to the English material.

W: Wide selection of material in all applicable languages. No programmatic decision is made to restrict materials according to language.

Y: Material is primarily in one foreign language. The overall focus is on collecting material in the vernacular of the area.

H. Language codes (WLN)

P: Primary language of the country predominates --- little or no other language material

S: Selected other language material included in addition to the primary language

W: Wide selection of languages represented

X: Material is mainly in one language other than the primary language of the library and country

I. Policy implementation and revision timetables

This describes the process for implementation, timetable for revision and other official adoption issues and introduces the notion of control.

Control

- Check the regular and pertinent application of the collection development policy on future acquisitions
- Call into question standing orders and subscriptions; thus apply retrospectively current policy standards on existing collections and relegate documents not fulfilling updated objectives.

Revision

- Re-examine the policy text at a frequency to be determined in order to detect insufficiencies and integrate new needs or recent modifications such as budget cuts, new curricula, etc.

APPENDIX 1 WLN/OCLC CONSPECTUS DIVISIONS

Division	Prefix LC	Prefix Dewey
AGRICULTURE	AGR'	AGD
ANTHROPOLOGY	ANT	AND
ART & ARCHITECTURE	ART	ARD
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES	BIO	BID
BUSINESS & ECONOMICS	ECO	BUD
CHEMISTRY	CHE	CHD
COMPUTER SCIENCE	COM	CSD
EDUCATION	EDU	EDD
ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY	TEC	END
GEOGRAPHY & EARTH SCIENCE	GEO	GED
HISTORY & AUXILIARY SCIENCES	HIS	HID
LANGUAGE, LINGUISTICS & LITERATURE	LLL	LAD
LAW	LAW	DLA
LIBRARY SCIENCE	LIS	DLS
MATHEMATICS	MAT	MAD
MEDICINE	MED	DME
MUSIC	MUS	MUD
PERFORMING ARTS	PER	PED
PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION	PAR	PHD
PHYSICAL EDUCATION & RECREATION	PHR	DPH
PHYSICAL SCIENCES	PHY	PUD
POLITICAL SCIENCE	POL	POD
PSYCHOLOGY	PSY	PSD
SOCIOLOGY	SOC	SOD

APPENDIX 2

CONSPECTUS COLLECTION DEPTH INDICATOR DEFINITIONS

The following revised Conspectus collection depth indicator definitions were developed in 1996 and early 1997 under the auspices of the Association of Research Libraries with the help of WLN (Western Library Network). More than 30 active Conspectus users from the United States and abroad worked together to update the original language in a way that would improve the use of the definitions without diminishing the value of assessments that had employed the original definitions.

The revised definitions are the result of a conscious attempt to make them uniformly applicable to all subjects. Consequently, the definitions are generic. Supplemental guidelines have been and should continue to be developed to communicate common sets of understanding about the definitions within the context of a particular subject or area, e.g., fiction, children's literature, architecture, etc.

The revised definitions also reflect the need to deal more adequately with non-print and electronic forms of information and access/ownership issues in collection development.

For topics requiring information in non-print formats at the Basic Information level and beyond, it is assumed that appropriate visual, aural and other materials will also be collected, e.g., dance, music, etc. To determine the appropriate collecting levels for topics in which non-print resources are essential, add the phrase "appropriate non-print media" to the line detailing the collecting of monographs and reference works. For example, Basic Information Level for a music collection would include "a limited collection of monographs, reference works and appropriate non-print media materials."

Relevant electronic resources are equivalent to print materials at any level as long as the policies and procedures for their use permit at least an equivalent information-gathering experience. Electronic journals, whether remotely or locally stored, are equivalent to print journals if

1. access to the electronic resources is at least equal to the print product;
2. there is access to a sufficient number of terminals; and
3. the information comes at no additional cost to the patron.

Similarly, a full text electronic archive of monographs, periodicals, images, etc., whether loaded locally or accessed over the Internet, is also equal to the original format if patron access and cost are equal or superior.

Document delivery services that are not instantaneous are not the same as those providing immediate availability on-site or electronically. The Conspectus measures resources owned by a library and its branches, if any, or those resources that are immediately accessible. The Conspectus does not measure what is obtained on a delayed basis from another library system or vendor, whether the delay is 10 hours or 10 days. Nonetheless, Conspectus users should feel free to provide details in the Notes Field about library user services which supplement but do not replace the library's owned resources.

CONSPECTUS COLLECTION DEPTH INDICATOR DEFINITIONS

0 Out of Scope.

Library does not intentionally collect materials in any format for this subject.

1 Minimal Information Level

Collections that support minimal inquiries about this subject and include:

- A very limited collection of general materials, including monographs and reference works.
- Periodicals directly dealing with this topic and in-depth electronic information resources are not collected.

The collection should be frequently and systematically reviewed for currency of information. Superseded editions and titles containing outdated information should be withdrawn. Classic or standard retrospective materials may be retained.

2 Basic Information Level

Collections that serve to introduce and define a subject, to indicate the varieties of information available elsewhere, and to support the needs of general library users through the first two years of college instruction include:

- A limited collection of monographs and reference works.
- A limited collection of representative general periodicals.
- Defined access¹ to a limited collection of owned or remotely-accessed electronic bibliographic tools, texts, data sets, journals, etc.

The collection should be frequently and systematically reviewed for currency of information. Superseded editions and titles containing outdated information should be withdrawn. Classic or standard retrospective materials may be retained.

3 Study or Instructional Support Level

Collections that provide information about a subject in a systematic way, but at a level of less than research intensity, and support the needs of general library users through college and beginning graduate instruction include:

- An extensive collection of general monographs and reference works and selected specialized monographs and reference works.
- An extensive collection of general periodicals and a representative collection of specialized periodicals.
- Limited collections of appropriate foreign language materials , e.g. foreign language learning materials for non-native speakers or foreign language materials about a topic such

¹ Defined access means more than simply providing patrons with access to the Internet and one or more Internet browsers. Defined access refers to menu options on the library or institution's home page, etc., which link the user to owned or remotely accessed electronic resources selected by the library with the needs of its patrons in mind. The level of defined access changes according to the level of the collection, e.g., from limited to extensive to very extensive access to collections of electronic information.

as German history in German.

- Extensive collections of the works of well-known authors and selections from the works of lesser-known authors.

Defined access to an extensive collection of owned or remotely-accessed electronic resources, including bibliographic tools, texts, data sets, journals, etc.

The collection should be systematically reviewed for currency of information and for assurance that essential and important information is retained, including significant numbers of classic retrospective materials.

4 Research Level

A collection that contains the major published source materials required for doctoral study and independent research includes:

- A very extensive collection of general and specialized monographs and reference works.
- A very extensive collection of general and specialized periodicals.
- Extensive collections of appropriate foreign language materials.
- Extensive collections of the works of well-known authors as well as lesser-known authors.
- Defined access to a very extensive collection of owned or remotely accessed electronic resources, including bibliographic tools, texts, data sets, journals, etc.

Older material that is retained and systematically preserved to serve the needs of historical research

5 Comprehensive Level

A collection in a specifically defined field of knowledge that strives to be exhaustive, as far as is reasonably possible (i.e., a "special collection"), in all applicable languages includes:

- Exhaustive collections of published materials.
- Very extensive manuscript collections.
- Very extensive collections in all other pertinent formats.
- A comprehensive level collection may serve as a national or international resource.

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Electronic resources

General

Acqweb's Directory of Collection Development Policies on the Web.
http://acqweb.library.vanderbilt.edu/acqweb/cd_policy.html

Collection development policies – French libraries on the Web
<http://www.enssib.fr/autres-sites/poldoc/index.html>

Collection development policies – selected

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/~tplwww/e/cdp.html>

Collection development policies – electronic
<http://www.library.yale.edu/~okerson/ecd.html>

Examples

Collection Development Policy / National Library of Australia
<http://www.nla.gov.au/policy/colldevt.html>

Collection Development Policy / Laval University
<http://www.bibl.ulaval.ca/info/polsec.html>

Information Resources Policy / University Library, University of Hertfordshire, UK.
http://www.herts.ac.uk/lis/services/inf_resources/inf_res_policy.html

Collection Development Policy for Internet Resources / University of Oregon Libraries, US,
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~chadwelf/intesele.htm>

Collection Development Policy for Offline Electronic Resources / University of Oregon Libraries, US:
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~chadwelf/offlelec.htm>

Collection Development Policy for Electronic Journals / University of Oregon Libraries, US:
<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~chadwelf/ejoupoli.htm>

Collection Development Policies - Digital Libraries / Columbia University Libraries, US,
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/about/colldev/digital-library.htm>

Collection Development Policy / Arts & Humanities Data Service
<http://ahds.ac.uk/bkgd/cppub.html>

Collection Development Policy for Electronic Material / National Library of Canada
<http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/>

Collection Development Policy for California Digital Library
<http://www.cdlib.org/collections/>

Collection Development Policy / National Art Library [UK]
<http://www.nal.vam.ac.uk/pubs/nalcdp.html>