BOOK REVIEW

Library Collection Development Policies: Academic, Public, and Special Libraries, by Frank W. Hoffman and Richard J. Wood. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2005. 329 p. $65.00. ISBN: 0-8108-5180-6.

Collection development librarians need an updated guide on library resource management, especially a quality monograph on collection development policy writing in particular. Unfortunately, *Library Collection Development Policies: Academic, Public, and Special Libraries*, by Frank W. Hoffman and Richard J. Wood, does not fulfill that need. A revision of their earlier work, *Library Collection Development Policies: A Reference and Writers' Handbook*, published 1996 by Scarecrow Press, this 2005 book purports "to assist both library school students and professionals in the field in the compilation, revision, and implementation of policies (p. xiv)." Sadly, both audiences will find Hoffman and Wood's rewrite to be flawed by unsupported judgments, factual errors, and outdated information. The text is fundamentally out of touch with current professional practice.

Many elements of the text are disappointing. The authors never address the process of creating a collection development policy. The book has two parts: the first half, meant to describe the components of a collection development policy, and, the second, focused on issues around electronic resources. No clear explanation is given for why electronic resources—now a major component of most library collections—are treated in such a disjointed, secondary way. Each of the twenty-six chapters in the first half of the book dedicates only a brief page or two to describing a particular section of a collection policy accompanied by samples of that collection policy section from several libraries. These short chapters present little discussion. This, more importantly, often results in unsubstantiated and out-of-date treatment of current library collection management practices. For example, in Chapter 9, the authors quote extensively from a section of Evans's book, *Developing Library and Information Center Collections* apparently unconcerned by G. Edward Evans's now dated forecast: "Many publishers expect to use, and are using, CD-ROM packages to distribute reference material (p. 53)." In Chapter 11 on "treatment of specific resources identified in policies," the authors describe the future library policy areas likely to be expanded including "laser optical software, computer software, floppy disks, and Internet websites—in future policy revisions (p. 84)." Such

outdated advice left this reviewer wondering how much actual rewriting was done for this edition.

With so little of each chapter devoted to the actual text, the reader is left to direct attention on the policy examples themselves. But the authors give no explanation for why or how the sample policies were chosen. Some examples appear to have been chosen because they were the only example that could be found to illustrate the topic, such as the choice of the National Library of Wales for Chapter 11, the section on selection of specific resources (pp. 87–88).

Citations for the policy samples in each chapter are not consistent. Though most have URL citations, not all do and some date from the mid-to-late nineties. At least one sample, at the end of Chapter 13 on resource sharing, was dated 1988 (p. 129). Though many examples are cited as revised in the early 2000s, the content of many examples suggests that the Web site rather than the policy itself underwent changes. For example, a policy in Chapter 3 on background statements describes the county in which the library resides having "experienced an 18 percent growth rate form 1990 to 1996 (p. 11)." In Chapter 18, sample policies caution about the pre-Internet problem of locating out-of-print books with one stating "The Library generally does not attempt to purchase material through the out-of-print marketplace (p. 166)." The policy is cited as modified in 1999 but that section of the policy may originate much earlier, before the advent of easy online out-of-print acquisition.

In addition to the above shortcomings, the authors often make unsubstantiated proclamations, questionable enough to require citations to support them. For example, in the chapter on special collection statements, the authors declare: "Like state universities, public libraries are careful to avoid using taxpayer funding for special collections (p. 94)." This has not been my experience with state universities. In the chapter on selection aids, the arrangement of the list of suggested selection tools, as well as the only example policy given in the chapter, may lead a reader to infer that the use of bibliographies is more primary than the use of reviews in making selections of current material (pp. 136–8). Again, current practice in many libraries differs. In Chapter 29 when discussing the embargo by aggregator databases of recent journal issues, the authors appear to confuse aggregator vendors with electronic publishers as they chastise publishers for the action of vendors (p. 233).

This reviewer hoped the second half of the book, dedicated to "virtual collection development," would somehow redeem the first. This did not occur. After a short introduction by the main authors, a guest writer falls right into line with the prior anachronisms: "…today's collection *might* include Internet resources, online or networked databases, and electronic journals," she announces in her second sentence, as though these resources may not yet have entered our collections [emphasis added] (p. 218). In the second section of her chapter, she argues that collection policies should include costs of electronic resources, a difficult and arguably unnecessary addition, as well as "cost differences between formats, compatibility of the resource with existing hardware and predictability of future costs (p. 219)." Such considerations are out-of-date.

Hoffman and Wood resume authorship of the last three chapters. These are marred by inconsistent treatment and length of the sections. These chapters on recent policy issues also have a tendency to drift from the topic of collection policies. The section on the "Big Deal" is too short. Open access, one of the biggest issues in academic libraries in recent years, is essentially ignored. On the other hand, electronic security and filtering are given several pages. A following chapter entitled "Sample Policies" sets three sample policies within their own chapter rather than including them within as previous chapters had done. These three samples are uncited and undated-appearing like ghosts of libraries past: "External data sources available via Telnet, Gopher, and Mosaic are selected based upon expected utility and ease of use (p. 248)"; "Access tools: FTP, Mosaic, Gopher, WAIS, WWW, Veronica, etc. (p. 252)"; "Library Systems should provide the support necessary to mount stand-alone datafiles and CD-ROM databases (p. 253)." Clearly, these are out-of-date.

The final chapter on resource sharing is also confusing. A block quote goes uncited (p. 258). Another section on the "Big Deal" surprisingly reappears as though someone forgot it was already in an earlier chapter (pp. 232, 271). And, a confusing and rambling section on the Conspectus is included (pp. 263–70). There are many other specific problems in this as well as other chapters of the book too numerous to catalog thoroughly in a review.

This reviewer takes no pleasure in documenting these flaws. But readers should be warned when the peer-review process has failed; resulting in a publication that potentially may waste time or, worse, mislead novices in their quest for professional guidance. Library students and practicing librarians who seek to understand collection development policy should look elsewhere. Not recommended