

April 1998

What Library Directors Want Collection Development Librarians to Know

Maureen Pastine
Temple University Library

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pastine, Maureen (1998) "What Library Directors Want Collection Development Librarians to Know," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 10: Iss. 2, Article 7.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.2826>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

What Library Directors Want Collection Development Librarians to Know

by **Maureen Pastine** (University Librarian, Temple University, Paley Library (017-00), 1210 W. Berks Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122-6088)
phone: (215) 204-3259; fax: (215) 204-5201
mpastine@nimbus.temple.edu>



In the past few years, I have been asked the following questions by various university administrators or members of Boards of Trustees. They were serious — and we must take these questions seriously in responding to them.

1. How soon can we expect you to turn your physical space back to us for other campus uses now that we are moving into a “paperless society.”

2. Why do you need space for remote storage when over 90% of those resources receive little, if any, use?

3. Since 65-70% of our students purchase their own personal computers, why do we need to take up library space with microcomputer labs, electronic resource centers, and public access workstations?

4. Why can't you just get faculty to donate their back issues of science journals and cancel those subscriptions with spiraling inflation?

5. Since you now have access to all those journals in fulltext format, why not just cancel the print subscriptions, get rid of bound journals which take up all that space, and help the university reallocate that space for faculty offices and other on and off campus needs?

6. What library personnel positions can you give up now that the computer center handles information technology?

7. Many libraries are reporting a decrease in circulation and less in-house traffic because of the newer remote access capabilities, so why can't you reduce operations costs and return funds to the university?

8. Since it is so much easier to get to information electronically with no help from a librarian, why not reduce the number of positions?

9. I just read **Brian Hawkins'** latest article on the “obsolescence of academic libraries,” so why don't you just extend library hours and reduce staff and materials costs now that you can get everything electronically and librarian mediators aren't needed?

10. Why are you using library acquisitions funds to purchase electronic information when faculty do not want to read it electronically?

11. Faculty are reporting that the libraries are buying fewer paper books and journals in order to purchase equipment that is not really necessary. How true is this?

12. Why renovate or ask for new construction when we will not need libraries in a few years?

Libraries have been leaders in organizing knowledge, locating, identifying, retrieving, and teaching users to evaluate and use information for a long time, and we have been leaders in using technology to improve, enhance, and enrich knowledge management. Yet, we are not often visible enough to convince others that we are and will continue to be important in this arena. Today, there is growing competition in knowledge management. Much of this we have encouraged and helped to develop — approval plans, electronic indexing and abstracting, and provision of fulltext databases from commercial vendors. Our users have a growing wealth and breadth of knowledge available to them, beyond local holdings, and via multiple access points not available even a few short years ago. Maybe we have too often talked only among ourselves, rather than through liaisons with other professional associations. Maybe we have too often focused on “free” vs. “fee.” Maybe we have led others to devalue our services, our physical facilities, and

our personnel by focusing on free libraries, leading to misinformation and misconceptions on the part of our users. Many people do not understand that libraries are expensive to operate and that resources and services are no less costly. Often they also feel that anyone can act as a librarian. And today many people believe that libraries are really becoming just warehouses for outdated print materials. We need to stress that there is a great need for quality of information and quality in provision of that information. Or maybe it is true that what information users can get on their own, rapidly, via the Internet, is “good enough,” and we don't need to be concerned about authoritativeness, respectability, or the reputation of information available. Maybe we shouldn't care about purchasing an item “just-in-case” and rely solely on “on-demand.” Maybe what a customer wants is more important than what we think he or she needs, or might need down the road. Maybe we aren't responding to change as quickly as we should be. Maybe we're too concerned about standards and ease of access, simplicity, and balance, when what our users want is totally different than what we feel is needed.

Librarians, library physical facilities, and resources (in many formats) are still necessary. We have more to offer than many might understand or acknowledge. But I am concerned about our visibility, our public image, the continuing proliferation of print and our growing inability to purchase, house, organize, and make it available, along with access to the new digital information. And I am concerned about the real lack of bibliographical control in a growing electronic information marketplace. We still must work on addressing deficiencies in standards for ease of access and to ensure that years from now, access to today's electronic information resources can occur through emulation of a variety of hardware and software platforms and applications.

This leads right into what I, as a university librarian, want collection development librarians to know.

1. I want them to know that they are still crucial to the selection, preservation, and use of our cultural heritage, in both print and digital formats.

2. I also want them to understand that their very existence and expertise is being challenged by a largely misguided but “in-power” administrator who often sees the library as a “black hole” consuming large amounts of the university's financial resources without adequate return on the dollars allocated.

3. I want them to know that they need to take a more visible role in justifying why print as well as electronic resources are still needed.

4. I want them to know how scholarly inquiry is changing and what impact that will have on resources, access, use, value, and allocation of funds.

5. And, I want them to know how to respond positively and constructively to a growing inattentiveness to library needs because of other competing campus needs.

Academic costs are skyrocketing and resources are being stretched beyond the limit. The library is evolving; it is in the process of a major transformation, at the same time that its role and expanding needs are under intense scrutiny. Most of our institutions are carefully analyzing methods by which resources, services, personnel, space, and facilities

continued on page 22

What Library Directors Want from page 20

can be contracted out. Many of our academic libraries have already begun to eliminate or outsource traditional reference services, interlibrary loan, circulation/reserve, and cataloging operations. There is a growing perception that access is more important than ownership and that intermediation and assistance services can be displaced with self-service and electronic on-demand distribution services. Our institutions are expecting us to take a greater role in cooperation, resource-sharing and other partnerships, and fundraising to resolve long-standing problems and to help them reallocate limited dollars at the same time that we, and they, are facing new demands and expectations, including greater competition with new and changing players.

Peter Drucker has predicted that by the year 2000 over 50% of our academic enrollment will be distance learners. There is a decreased focus on teaching and an increased focus on individual and group learning. There are businesses, industries, and others outside of academe providing degreed programs and competing with higher education's recruitment and retention efforts, often without any traditional library support at all. There is a growing student body who do not want access to any information not in electronic format at the same time that many of our older faculty are dragging their heels about having to learn an entirely new way to access information and teach.

The expertise of staff needed in a complex, technological environment is leading to stresses and pressures unheard of less than a decade ago. Our traditional hierarchical structures aren't working. Change is not only necessary, it requires a far more rapid ability to revamp and redirect how we do things.

In many ways, I believe that libraries have responded better than most other campus units. We have reorganized, reallocated, revamped, and re-engineered over a period of many, many years. We have found new ways to analyze quality and quantity of resources, services, and operations, and how to partner and build more effective liaisons with users and other stakeholders. We are involved in development of "best practices" in a more sophisticated technological environment. Yet there are still many weaknesses, inadequacies, deficiencies, problems, and issues to address.

Those issues which our collection development officers need to focus on include:

1. How to provide the best relationship and balance between ownership and access.
2. What consortial partnerships are needed locally, regionally, nationally and internationally?
3. Improved analysis of how collections are used and what information should be electronically archived and/or preserved for future generations.
4. How to assume a stronger role in ensuring that intellectual property rights and fair use guidelines are not threatened in an increasingly technological environment.
5. How can collection development officers assist in better educating faculty, administrators, and governing bodies, decision-makers and others, on and off campus, about the transformation we are experiencing, new demands and expectations, and ways in which they can help to continue a strong library for their student body, faculty, and other users?
6. How should allocation formulas be redesigned in a more consortial-oriented environment?
7. What new planning initiatives should be undertaken to focus more on evaluation, measurement of collections, use studies, and outcomes assessment?
8. What has, and will be, the loss of information in humanities and social sciences as science costs continue to drain funds once allocated to these other resources? And to general undergraduate resources?
9. What can we do to decrease threats to librarians, faculty, and others who question and conduct studies related to spiraling costs in science publishing and the decreasing number of publishers? How can we ensure that libraries are not overcharged? How can we ensure

that we select and purchase the best new resources?

10. How should we rethink space issues?
11. What value-added services need to be designed and made available — greater subject access, contents access, genre access? And can we improve Web-based access from our OPACs?
12. Should we redo departmental and formula allocations and set up new models? What should they be? Departmental allocations are a serious impediment to cooperative collection development. What might work better in an environment where we are relying more on consortial purchasing?
13. How can we better gain bibliographical control of the maze of Internet and World Wide Web resources?
14. How can we get around competitiveness in consortial agreements?
15. What dangers are there in the increasing control of large portions of publishing, communication, and information industries by a few publishing giants? Or is this a negative direction?
16. How can we provide equivalency to distance learners?
17. What is the overlap and duplication from one of our institutions to another — can and should it be prevented, and what is not being collected because of it?

In summary, the collection development officer of the future will need to be far more conversant in how scholars communicate and in emerging technologies (hardware and software), site licensing and intellectual property and copyright issues, analytical reporting, benchmarking and rethinking methods of assessment and value. The role of the collection development officer differs from one institution to another, as does the structure/organization of that office. Some are more highly centralized than others. Some rely more on bibliographers and area studies collection development librarians than others. Some give faculty a greater role in selection than others. And some do not have control of the funds allocated but allow that to be a role of the teaching departments, a real problem in today's environment. In the past we have focused largely on inputs and outputs; today there is a greater need to emphasize new organizational structures and communications, and outcomes assessment — i.e. looking at the qualitative aspects of what we are doing, more on quality of resources and services than on numbers of volumes and titles. Many university administrators today are moving towards the **Vanderbilt** method of budget planning, i.e. "each tub on its own bottom," or "responsibility-based management." Many university librarians feel that responsibility-based management is dangerous for libraries in that it forces us to negotiate with each dean of a school or department within a school for funding each year to support collections/access. It requires the libraries to justify the library as a public good and often leads to purchasing in order to fill subject discipline requests, leading to massive gaps in collection strengths and little for meeting the undergraduate needs. It makes it difficult for university libraries to retain base budgets and obtain inflationary and new dollars for acquisitions/access. Most universities have a development office, many are involved in capital campaign fundraising, and the libraries are often excluded in the planning cycles, or in trying to court potential big money donors because the schools from whom many of the donors have graduated have "first dibs" on approaches to a particular donor, foundation, or corporation. Thus, it is extremely important for the university librarian and collection development librarians to build close liaisons with the development officers assigned to each school, and to the deans and department chairs who are submitting project solicitation proposals for priorities for the schools. Collection development librarians can assist university librarians to demonstrate how collections have helped the internal and external communities and why it is necessary for libraries to retain a physical and intellectual presence within the university.

Finally, I know that you will agree with a quotation from **Ogden Nash** as you review all the many things university librarians expect of you and all the new responsibilities that you have had to take on: "Progress is wonderful but it has gone on too long."

NB: A version of this paper was delivered at the 17th Charleston Conference, November 6, 1997. — KS