

CONNECTING WITH TECHNICAL SERVICES: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO EVALUATING THE REFERENCE COLLECTION

ELAINE SULLO, COORDINATOR OF INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES,
HIMMELFARB HEALTH SCIENCES LIBRARY, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC

JOINING FORCES

The goal of this project was to harness the expertise of reference librarians and technical services librarians in creating and implementing a plan to assess the reference collection for currency, completeness, coverage, quality, appropriateness, and function.

CIRCUMSTANCES

Prior to this project, the Print Collections Librarian was primarily responsible for the maintenance of the reference collection – including standing orders, replacing old versions of texts, and weeding. The collection as a whole needed to be evaluated with a variety of perspectives included.



PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: STEP BY STEP

- A Reference Collection Committee (RCC) was appointed by Library Administration.
- RCC provided written recommendations for the reference collection, including suggested wording for a “Reference Collection Development Policy,” which was added to the Library’s Collection Development Policy.
- Reference librarians, as well as the Associate Director for Education, Information and Technology Services, each reviewed the entire reference collection. The collection was divided up into sections, and each section was viewed by each librarian. Librarians were instructed to create a list of items to be weeded and items to be added to the collection.
- Librarians used the Himmelfarb Wiki to keep track of items to be added and weeded for sections of the reference collection.
- The reference team, the Associate Director, the Electronic Resources Librarian (who works half-time in reference), and the Print Collections Librarian met on multiple occasions to review weeding suggestions and purchase recommendation lists.
- Once a consensus was reached, items were weeded from the reference collection and purchases were made.
- Subsections of the reference collection (Consumer Health, History, Professional Collection) were either entirely weeded, moved, or integrated into the regular reference collection or into the circulating collection.
- The Library’s Health and Humanities Collection, which was housed on the second floor, is now shelved where the subsections of the reference collection once were shelved.

PARTNERSHIPS PRODUCE RESULTS

A written plan (Reference Collection Development Policy) is now in place that dictates who will be involved in the maintenance of the reference collection, criteria to be considered for items to be purchased and weeded, and how often the collection will be reviewed.

The reference collection is now much leaner – out of date titles were weeded; newer titles were added; low use/outdated subsections were moved or weeded; and other parts of the collection were moved to open shelves in the reference area to provide more visibility.

COOPERATION

Librarians from both reference and technical services, with their specific areas of expertise, are strong collaborators in keeping the reference collection as relevant and current as possible. While the Print Collections Librarian will ultimately be responsible for ordering materials, the responsibility for maintenance and ongoing development of the collection will be shared among these two library departments.

