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Targeting Collection Assessment Data to the Intended Audience

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Title: Targeting Collection Assessment Data to the Intended Audience

Abstract: At Jacksonville State University, additions of new degree programs have added greater importance to collection assessments as a guide for future budget planning and the accreditation process. Collection assessments give librarians and administrators an overview of the library's collections, justification for expenditures, and disclosure of areas in need of strengthening. Assessments highlight resources and their access points, while justifying the resources' presence to faculty stakeholders. An approachable assessment can be a valuable tool to introduce or reacquaint faculty with the collection development process and with classroom and research resources.

Keywords: collections, assessment, academic libraries, academic programs, budget planning

Project focus: collections; assessment concepts and/or management

Results made or will make case for: more funding, improvements in services, improvements in spaces, improvements in collections, proof of library impact and value, a strategic plan or process, how money or resources may be directed

Data needed: library holdings, peer institutions' holdings, appropriate bibliographies, book award lists, and library expenditures

Methodology: qualitative, quantitative

Project duration: between 6 months and a year

Tool(s) utilized: librarians and student workers

Cost estimate: < $100

Type of institution: university—public

Institution enrollment: 5,000–15,000

Highest level of education: master's/professional degree

Section 3

Chapter 35

Targeting Collection Assessment Data to the Intended Audience

Kimberly Westbrooks and Paula Barnett-Ellis

Context

Collection assessment ranks high among the responsibilities of subject specialist librarians at Jacksonville State University (JSU), a medium-sized regional university with 7,561 undergraduate students, 913 graduate students, and 40 doctoral students enrolled in the fall of 2016.[1] Librarians conduct collection assessments approximately every five years, or more often if necessary, for reasons that include documentation for re-accreditation of specific programs or building collections for new programs. Collection assessments provide an overview of the library's collections, help justify expenditures, and enhance academic curricula.

The collection assessment represents the library collection as it stands at a single point in time. The library collection itself is a dynamic entity that is constantly changing due to activities including acquisitions and weeding, in both book and journal numbers. Multiple collection assessments compared to one another, making allowances for the time between them, indicate patterns of depletion and growth. Narrative portions of the Houston Cole Library (HCL) collection assessments account for these acquisitions increases, which extend from campus changes, including additions of degree programs.

Collection assessments usually take an academic year and are intended to ensure that current programs are supported adequately and that the library has the materials needed for newly added programs. The addition of JSU's first doctoral degree program in fall 2011, the doctor of science in emergency management, followed closely in fall 2017 by the introduction of the doctor of nursing practice degree and the master of social work degree, has added greater weight to assessments. Collection assessment data for new degree proposals is used for future budget planning and the accreditation process. The level of specificity within the assessment and the number of resources used to assess resource quality relates directly to the level of degree offered at the university and the accreditation tied to it; therefore, close communication ties must remain in effect throughout the accreditation process between the librarian and the faculty.

Communicating Results and Impact

Scope, impact, and purpose of collection assessment are upheld easily through mission statements found in the university. The university's mission, the stakeholder's departmental mission, the library's mission, and the Collection Management and Development Group mission all fit neatly together to form a framework under which policy functions. The HCL's mission is to "provide information services and bibliographic resources to support the scholarly and informational needs of the University Community."[2]

Well-established library policy aids in facilitating communication between librarians and faculty. The *Houston Cole Library Collection Management and Development Policy* guides subject specialist librarians in collection and evaluation.[3] The policy undergoes frequent revision to reflect changes in JSU's curriculum. This comprehensive document details resources and assessment tools in a wide range of subject areas. It also outlines the scope of collections within specific subject areas and provides guidance for future collection development decisions. Making these policies freely available on the internet fosters transparency to stakeholders.

The initiation of communications with stakeholders regarding new degree programs varies as much as the stakeholders themselves. As in reference interviews with students, individuals who are implementing a new degree program often do not directly ask for the information they need. The process does not usually begin with a librarian being informed directly of the possibility of a new degree program. In one such instance at the Houston Cole Library, the first indication that a doctor of nursing practice degree program was proposed came from the Dean of Library Services in a weekly staff meeting. In another example, a conversation that began with a question to a librarian regarding how many journals were available at HCL on the subject of cybersecurity translated into useful data for the computer science and information systems programs' re-accreditation process. The process for assessing the collection to see if the library had sufficient resources to support a new master of social work degree began when the Dean of Social Sciences asked the librarian what she knew regarding the initiation of a new degree program. The savvy librarian must be mindful of such questions and

know that these questions may be indicators of a possible need for information for a future degree program. Follow-up questions may be required, and an open line of communication is imperative.

Stakeholders, typically deans or department heads, need library data to submit proposal or pre-proposal forms for new academic programs. Within these forms, library data must prove that there are enough quality resources to support the proposed program of study in order to move forward with the process. Librarians can also seize the opportunity to point out and market relevant resources of which faculty may not be fully aware. The language and data outlined in the collection assessment speaks directly to the information needed for accreditation, re-accreditation, or interdepartmental evaluation.

In the case of JSU's new program accreditation, a "Notification of Intent to Submit a Proposal" (NISP) through the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) is required,[4] followed by a "Proposal for a New Degree Program" (see figure 35.1).[5] Bear in mind that requirements for your institution and state will vary.

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4. Library. Are there sufficient library resources to support the program?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please provide a brief description of the current status of the library collections supporting the proposed program.

If "No", please briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied; include the cost in the table following (Section K).

Figure 35.1
ACHE Proposal for a New Degree Program excerpt concerning library collections.

The answer to the question posed in figure 35.1 can be given briefly with information regarding available resources, services, and staffing with applicable tables throughout; in other words, a brief collection assessment (see figure 35.2). Some context can be helpful in establishing why the library resources are or are not sufficient. Peer institutions, similar in size and with the proposed program accreditation, can be compared with regard to resources available.

Although a full collection assessment is not necessary to answer the question in figure 35.1, it is helpful to begin the process as soon as it is known that a new degree program is being proposed. Although the process of completing a thorough collection assessment can take months while managing routine duties, it can provide many answers necessary throughout the process of proposing and initiating new degree programs. A completed collection assessment also makes the librarian involved a ready source, providing the information needed in a timely, thorough manner to administrative stakeholders.

The recommended collection level for a graduate level program is a 3cP, Advanced Study and Instructional Support Level. Although the present collection minimally supports the proposed Master of Social Work curriculum, additional database purchases and sustained monograph funding accounting for inflation are necessary to provide robust graduate level research support. Purchases are recommended in the area of underserved communities, particularly in the subject heading classifications of Aged, Children, Disabled, Homeless, Single Parents, and Youth. Additionally, social work supportive reference sources are limited, as are journals focusing on international social work.

Figure 35.2
Answer to question posed in figure 35.1 for the master of social work degree proposal. (Source: Kimberly Westbrooks, "Master of Social Work Library and Learning Resources," Microsoft Word document report sent to the social work department head, Jacksonville State University, April 2016.)

Collection Assessment: Overview

In this section, the parts of the collection assessment process are detailed. Please keep in mind that collection assessments are as unique as the collections they are assessing and may have fewer or more parts than those discussed here.

Parts of the collection assessment include

- introduction
- holdings
- access to electronic resources
- supplemental support
- titles added comparison
- expenditures
- summary
- checked bibliographies

Another reason for conducting collection assessments is to market additional materials and resources and their access points to relevant faculty. Collection assessments give librarians and administrators an overview of the library's collections, help to justify expenditures, and reveal which parts of collections need strengthening. Additionally, assessments highlight resources and their access points and justify their addition to the collection to faculty stakeholders. The transparency of the assessment can introduce to or reacquaint faculty with the process of collection development and resources that could be put to use in their classes and their academic research.

When assessing collection data necessary to support the accreditation of a new degree program, the process is much the same as with existing programs but has much greater detail and some notable additions. Collection assessments within new degree program proposals include comparisons with peer institutions that hold accreditation for the new degree programs sought and suggestions for bolstering collections to better

Section 3

serve the proposed degree programs. Also, an important part of an assessment report is the expenditure increases often required to support and sustain proposed degree offerings, including inflation estimates, for the next five years.[6]

Collection Assessment: Introduction

Rank is listed among the first data points in the collection assessment to speak to the ability of the collection depth of a subject available for research within the library's collections. Guidelines set forth by the Online Computer Library Center/Western Library Network (OCLC/WLN) rank collection depth.[7] Although the WLN conspectus is no longer in use, its legacy continues as the basis on which library collections are analyzed. Divisions and categories are used to assess holdings for analysis as well as compare them to other standardized lists (see figure 35.3).[8] HCL subject specialists use conspectus sheets based on the WLN method that are tailored to library collections. The following rating system is used.

- 0—OUT OF SCOPE
- 1—MINIMAL INFORMATION LEVEL
- 2—BASIC INFORMATION LEVEL
- 3—STUDY OR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT LEVEL
- 4—RESEARCH LEVEL
- 5—COMPREHENSIVE LEVEL[9]

Although the rating system is somewhat subjective, it is one way in which librarians can summarize both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the collection for stakeholders.

Introduction

Based on guidelines provided by the OCLC/WLN Collection Assessment Service, which provides a framework within which to evaluate a library's current holdings and the level of activity at which the collection is being developed, the Nursing and Health Sciences Collection is rated an overall 3cP, Advanced Study or Instructional Support Level, predominately English. In addition, the Nursing and Health Sciences Collection meets criteria set forth by *Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Degree Nursing Programs* from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education. The standards state that, "Academic support services are sufficient to ensure quality and are evaluated on a regular basis to meet program and student needs." Refer to the Nursing and Medicine conspectus sheets and checklist analyses for a more detailed examination of the Library's holdings.

Figure 35.3
HCL Nursing and Health Sciences Collection Assessment introduction. (Source: Paula J. Barnett-Ellis, "Nursing and Health Sciences Houston Cole Library Collection Assessment," Jacksonville State University, September 29, 2014 http://www.jsu.edu/library/docs/assessments/NursingHS2014.docx.)

Collection Assessment: Holdings

Holdings counts are a snapshot of a collection's strengths and weaknesses (see figure 35.4). A holdings report will most likely change from one month to the next, depending on weeding and acquisitions. When a new program is proposed or implemented, the corresponding increase in the subject area can reflect the library's response to the need.

It is important to document the amount spent in a subject area and growth from one year to the next to maintain transparency between the library and stakeholders. Should budgets increase, this is an excellent way to show specifically which collections benefited from the funding boost. If JSU holds an accreditation and a degree in a subject area, holdings reports categories reflect curriculum subject areas and faculty research areas.

As of December 2016, the Sociology collection contains 33,526 titles in the Library of Congress classification schemes H–H99, HM–HV5840, including 1,597 titles from the e-books collection. Further, patrons have unmediated access to millions of volumes through universal borrowing agreements with other libraries. Monographs in the areas of Sociology and Social Work from fiscal years 2011–2012 to 2015–2016 increased by 2,223 new titles. These additions comprise 6.6% of the current Sociology collection.

Library Holdings

Classification	Category	Library Holdings
H-H61	Social Science	4,026
HM	Sociology	4,307
HN	Social History and Conditions	3,355
HQ	Family. Marriage. Women	9,780
HS	Societies	217
HT	Communities. Classes. Races	3,421
HV	Social Pathology. Social and Public Welfare	6,763
TOTAL		**31,869**

Figure 35.4
Holdings portion of the HCL Sociology Collection Assessment. (Source: Kimberly Westbrooks, "Sociology Collection Assessment," Microsoft Word document awaiting approval of the Collection Management and Development Group of Houston Cole Library, Jacksonville State University, January 2017.)

Section 3

Collection Assessment: Access to Electronic Resources

Electronic resources show a library's ability to keep current and meet the needs of students in online courses. The entry point for many electronic resources looks similar, and the singular entry point to a database can be mistaken as a singular source. Enumerating and describing databases that support a degree program can work toward informing stakeholders, marketing digital resources, and giving substance to the intangible (see figure 35.5). Hard-to-remember links can be made into shorter, more attractive links through free websites, services such as Bitly, Goo.gl, or TinyURL.com.

> Defined access points users to resources through menu options on the Library's homepage by linking the user to quality, highly relevant, electronic resources. Because the Library provides access to electronic journals, documents, e-books, and video databases along with integrated quality websites that encompass the area of Business and Economics, the Library's electronic collection in this subject is rated a 3c (Advanced Study or Instructional Support level).
>
> A complete list of all of the Library's databases can be found at http://libguides.jsu.edu/az.php.
>
> **JSU** | HOUSTON COLE LIBRARY
> JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY
>
> Houston Cole Library / LibGuides / A-Z Databases
>
> ## A-Z Databases
> Find the best library databases for your research.
>
> | All Subjects ▾ | All Database Types ▾ | All Vendors / Providers ▾ |
>
> All A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #
>
> **431 Databases found**
>
> **A**
>
> **ABI/INFORM Complete**
> Journals, dissertations, working papers, key newspapers in business, including economics, finance, accounting, management, marketing, and transportation.
> more...
> Librarian Review
>
> **Academic OneFile**
> Extensive coverage of the physical sciences, technology, medicine, social sciences, the arts, theology, literature and other subjects
> more...
>
> **Academic Search Premier**
> Academic Search Premier is a giant database that covers more than 8,000 journals, 85% of which are peer-reviewed and over 55% are full text, and full text for nearly 3,900 peer-reviewed titles. It covers a wide variety of disciplines.
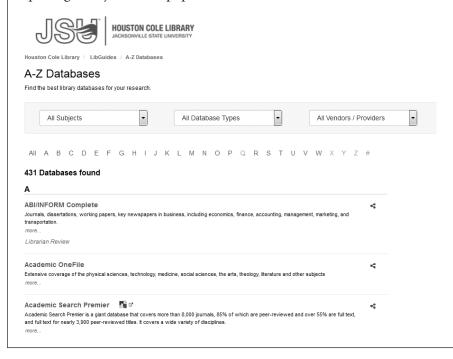> more...

Figure 35.5
Electronic resources excerpt from the HCL Business and Economics Collection Assessment. (Source: Kimberly Westbrooks, "Business and Economics Collection Assessment," Microsoft Word document awaiting approval of the Collection Management and Development Group of Houston Cole Library, Jacksonville State University, April 2017.)

Collection Assessment: Supplemental Support

No collection is an island. Figure 35.6 is an example from the HCL Emergency Management Collection Assessment.[10] Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the subject area and the depth of information necessary for the doctoral program, the supplemental support list is quite long.

The Emergency Management subject areas also extend beyond the boundaries of the discipline. A wide range of subject areas such as: Law; Sociology and Social Work; Biology; Medicine; Technology, Ethics, Forensic Sciences; Psychology; Political Science and Public Administration; Geography; Military Science; Business; and Criminal Justice are also important areas of research.

Number of Titles held for various subjects

Classification	Subject	Previous Years	2014	Growth Increase	Percentage
BF1-BF990	Psychology	8,357	8,728	371	4.4%
BJ1-BJ2195	Ethics	1,277	1,318	41	3.2%
G1-GF900	Geography	6,453	6,600	147	2.8%
HM1-HM1281	Sociology	4,238	4,478	240	5.7%
HV1-HV5840	Social Work	6,578	6,953	375	5.7%
HV6000-HV9960	Criminal Justice	14,479	15,096	617	4.3%
J1-JZ9999	Political Science and Public Administration	21,436	22,339	903	4.1%
K1-KZ9999	Law	13,067	13,525	458	3.5%
QH301-QR502	Biology	18,421	19,031	610	3.3%
R1-RZ9999	Medicine	23,392	23,473	81	0.3%
T1-TP9999	Technology	15,702	16,235	533	3.4%
U1-VM9999	Military Science	6,804	7,200	396	5.8%
Total		**140,204**	**144,976**	**4,772**	**3.4%**

Figure 35.6
Supplemental support list within the HCL Emergency Management Collection Assessment. (Source: Doug Taylor, "Emergency Management Collection Assessment," Jacksonville State University, April 22, 2015, http://www.jsu.edu/library/docs/assessments/criminal_justice_assessment_2011.doc.)

Collection Assessment: Titles Added Comparison

The HCL uses the list of titles published by GOBI Library Solutions from EBSCO versus the number purchased in a subject as a marker (see figure 35.7). This also allows stakeholders to see the overall amount published in a subject.

The Library's collecting level was measured against *Yankee Book Peddler's New Titles Report.** The average percentage of books added to the Library's collection from 2005–2010 in Biological Science is 14%. This rate is within the guidelines of the recommended collecting level to maintain a 3a level collection, which is 11–15%.

Fiscal Year	Added to Collections QH-QR	Y.B.P. Output	Percentage
2005/06	290	1,679	17%
2006/07	290	1,886	15%
2007/08	247	1,921	13%
2008/09	252	1,918	13%
2009/10	207	1,925	11%
Totals	**1,286**	**9,329**	
Average			**14%**

*Yankee Book Peddler is now GOBI Library Solutions from EBSCO.

Figure 35.7
HCL Biology Collection Assessment excerpt comparing the GOBI Library Solutions of EBSCO listing of total items published versus those added to the HCL collection. (Source: Kimberly Westbrooks and Paula J. Barnett-Ellis, "Biological Sciences Houston Cole Library Collection Assessment," Jacksonville State University, May 25, 2011, http://www.jsu.edu/library/docs/assessments/BiologyAssessment2011.doc.)

Collection Assessment: Expenditures

Book collections may contain materials that can be quite costly per item. Also, considering those reading collection assessments likely do not have personal database subscriptions for which they pay, it is important to inform stakeholders of the cost of databases, including aggregate databases that benefit multiple disciplines. A chart with the amount spent on a collection per fiscal year can be particularly helpful and possibly curb future budget cuts. Financial transparency can have many benefits in terms to building stakeholder confidence.

Collection Assessment: Summary

Honesty really is the best policy in constructing the summary, a carefully constructed review and conclusion about the library's collection (see figure 35.8). Lists of strengths can give stakeholders a better understanding and appreciation of the resources that are available for them to use in a particular degree program. Lists of weaknesses can highlight budget shortfalls, publication deficiencies in a subject area, and sharp increases in the cost of resources. These lists can also give librarians data on which to base future purchases.

If library materials are not present to support the proposed program, a detailed report of materials needed and their cost is provided. HCL's *Collection Management and Development Policy* states that acquisitions should support the curriculum first; therefore, it follows that collections are usually not typically sufficient for degree programs not yet in existence. An insufficient collection is not a negative conclusion and may be an opportunity to express an increased need for funding collection expansion in preparation for the new degree offering.

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<u>SUMMARY</u>

<u>Strengths:</u>
Total holdings, WLN conspectus evaluation, and checklist comparisons indicate the overall Criminal Justice collection is more than adequate to support the curriculum. Of particular note are the holdings in the subject areas of: Criminal Classes; Crimes & Offenses, Offenses Against Public Order; Crimes Against the Person; Crimes Against Property; Crimes Against Public Morals; and Prison, Corrections. These areas have shown a 26.9% growth rate since the last assessment. The following bibliographies also show a strong growth in our Criminal Justice collection: American Reference Book Annual, 46.3%; Yankee Book Core, 78.9%; and Resources for College Libraries 2007, 76.5%.

A review of the journal holdings reveals that the Criminal Justice collection is adequate to support the curriculum. The addition of JSTOR database, with access to many of their retrospective full text journals, has made our journal support even stronger.

<u>Weaknesses:</u>
Total holdings, WLN conspectus evaluations, and checklist comparisons indicate that the weakest areas of the Criminal Justice Collection are: Criminal Psychology; Crimes and Criminals; and Guards, Watchmen, Private Security.

<u>Recommendations:</u>
Although the monographic collection continues to be strong and the serials holdings have grown in strength sufficiently to support the Department of Criminal Justice program at the Intermediate Study level, but additional monographs in the area of Criminal Psychology; Crimes and Criminals; and Guards, Watchmen, Private Security need to be collected.

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Figure 35.8
Summary portion of the HCL Criminal Justice Collection Assessment. (Source: Doug Taylor, "Criminal Justice Collection Assessment," Jacksonville State University, February 9, 2011, http://www.jsu.edu/library/docs/assessments/criminal_justice_assessment_2011.doc.)

Section 3

Collection Assessment: Checked Bibliographies

The collection assessment method compares holdings against an authoritative list for the purposes of determining collection strength and quality (see figure 35.9). Comparisons between HCL holdings and professional or subject bibliographic listings gives qualitative substance to resources available. These checklists include bibliographies such as *Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles*, GOBI Spotlight Lists, and resource recommendations by professional organizations. Checking these lists yields a list of items to consider for acquisition and demonstrates the quality of items currently held. The HCL subject specialist librarians have noted a decrease in the number of authoritative bibliographies available in recent years.

The following bibliographies were checked against the Library's holdings, revealing the following percentages. See the attached checklists for more detailed data about the Library's holdings in specific subject areas within Computer Science and Mathematics.

Title	Held	Listed	Percent Held
American Reference Books Annual 2005–2009	31	58	53%
Choice Outstanding Academic Titles 2005–2009	62	73	85%
Resources for College Libraries 2007: Computing	115	248	46%
Resources for College Libraries 2007: Mathematics	328	834	39%
Guide to Information Sources in Mathematics and Statistics	110	442	25%
Computer Science and Computing: A Guide to the Literature	94	263	36%

Figure 35.9
Bibliography checklist portion of the HCL Mathematical, Computing, and Information Sciences' Collection Assessment. (Source: Paula J. Barnett-Ellis, "Mathematical, Computing, and Information Sciences Collection Assessment Houston Cole Library," Jacksonville State University, February 5, 2010, http://www.jsu.edu/library/docs/assessments/MCIS2010.doc.)

Conspectus

A qualitative tool employed in collection assessment, the conspectus worksheet, was created from guidelines provided by the OCLC/WLN Collection Assessment Service,[11] which provides a framework to evaluate a library's current holdings and the level of activity at which the collection is being developed. Library of Congress subject headings listed are tailored to those relating to proposed curriculum. Note the differences in conspectus sheets in figures 35.10 and 35.11.

Figure 35.10 shows a portion of the conspectus sheet for chemistry,[12] which supports an American Chemical Society–certified undergraduate program of study.[13]

Version - 09/2011 — CONSPECTUS DATABASE WORKSHEET - LC — Page: 1
Library: Houston Cole Library
Division: CHEMISTRY — Date: 4-15-2013 — By: Paula Barnett-Ellis

LC CLASS	LINE NUMBER	DIVISIONS, CATEGORIES and SUBJECTS	CL	AC	GL	PC	COMMENTS
	CHE0	CHEMISTRY					
QD1-65	CHE1	Chemistry (General) 654	3	3	3	2	
QD11-22	CHE2	History, Biography 73	2b	2b	2b	2	
QD23.3-26.5	CHE3	Alchemy 10	2	2	2	2	
QD40-49	CHE4	Study & Teaching 85	3	2b	3	2	
QD71-142	CHE5	Analytical Chemistry 285	3a	3	3a	2	
QD81	CHE6	Qualitative Analysis (Organic & Inorganic) - General 7	2	2	2	2	

Figure 35.10
HCL Chemistry conspectus sheet excerpt. (Source: Paula Barnett-Ellis"Chemistry Conspectus Database Worksheet," Jacksonville State University, September 2011, http://www.jsu.edu/library/docs/assessments/Chemistry conspectus2013.pdf.)

Version - 10/2014 — CONSPECTUS DATABASE WORKSHEET - LC — Page: 1
Library: Houston Cole Library
Division: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT — Date: 25 October 2014 — By: Doug Taylor

LC CLASS	LINE NUMBER	DIVISIONS, CATEGORIES and SUBJECTS	CL	AC	GL	PC	COMMENTS
	EM0	EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT					
GB5000 - 5030	EM1	Natural Disasters 60 (28)	4S	4S	4S	2	32 new titles added. More than doubles our holdings in this call number range.
HC79.D45	EM2	Disasters, Economic Impact of 64 (15)	4S	4S	4S	2	49 new titles added. A more then triple increase of our collection in this call number range.
HD49	EM3	Crisis Management, Emergency Management 34 (26)	4S	4S	4S	2	8 new titles added. A 30.7% increase in holdings.
HD61	EM4	Risk Management 32 (24)	4S	4S	4S	2	8 new titles added. A 33.3% increase in holdings.
HV551.2 - 639	EM5	Emergency Management 503 (378)	4S	4S	4S	2	125 new titles added. A 33.1% increase in holdings.
HV6429 - 6433	EM6	Terrorism 743 (569)	4S	4S	4S	2	174 new titles added. A 30.6% increase in holdings.

Figure 35.11
HCL Emergency Management conspectus sheet excerpt. (Source: Doug Taylor, "Emergency Management Conspectus Worksheet," Jacksonville State University, October 2014, http://www.jsu.edu/library/docs/assessments/EmergencyManagement2015Conspectus.pdf.)

Section 3

Figure 35.11 shows a portion of the conspectus sheet for emergency management,[14] which supports a bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and educational specialist's degrees accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.[15]

Librarians assist in the accreditation approval process of many new degree programs. As degree offerings expand, subject librarians increase communication with stakeholders, involve stakeholders in collection development, and produce timely assessment information when scheduled or requested. Assessment has been and will continue to be an integral part of librarianship at HCL.

Leveraging the Findings

The resulting data from the collection assessment reveals areas of strength and weakness in the collection. A look at development in collection areas supporting new curriculum is necessary also. A plan for correcting weaknesses and disparities in the collection is developed. The plan includes the projected cost over the next five years with 10 percent cost inflation each year.

Information represented in figure 35.12 is the format used to summarize findings for needs in the master of social work program.[16] To keep proprietary budget information private, example financial amounts are fabricated.

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Purchases are recommended in the area of underserved communities, particularly in the subject heading classifications of Aged, Children, Disabled, Homeless, Single Parents, and Youth. Additionally, social work supportive reference sources are limited, as are journals focusing on international social work.

The Houston Cole Library is planning to add the following databases in support of the MSW program of study:

Recommended Database Subscriptions

Title	Yearly Subscription Cost
AgeLine	$3,000*
Social Work Reference Center	$2,200*
Family & Society Studies Worldwide	$2,500*
Total	**$7,700***

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Figure 35.12 (continued on next page)
HCL master of social work proposal with suggested subscription additions. (Source: Kimberly Westbrooks, "Master of Social Work Library and Learning Resources," Microsoft Word document report sent to the social work department head, Jacksonville State University, April 2016.) Fiscal information fabricated to protect proprietary budget information.

5 Year Estimated Cost for *AgeLine, Social Work Reference Center*, and *Family & Society Studies Worldwide*

Year	Cost
2016	$7,300*
2017	$8,030*
2018	$8,833*
2019	$9,716*
2020	$10,688*
Total	**$44,567***

Costs include an increase of 10% each year to cover subscription cost increases.

*Amounts fabricated due to proprietary budget information.

Figure 35.12 (continued)

Assessment Completion

Upon completion of the collection assessment, the HCL Collection Management and Development Group (CMDG) reviews, offers revisions, and gives approval of collection assessments.[17] This extra step ensures the accuracy and quality of the assessment before communicating results to the department head or dean seeking the information.

Communication of results usually starts with an email, paired with an appointment to ensure that all information is in place for the implementation of the new program. This exchange can allow for serendipitous communication of hopes and aspirations for the new degree program. In addition, a conversation can convey feelings of doubt or inadequacy regarding the collection, which a faculty member may be less inclined to express via more formal, permanent forms of communication, such as email. In addition, a phone call or visit may allow for an expression of tone, such as satisfaction or gratitude. This also further affirms that the librarians involved care about the outcome of the accreditation process.

Reflection

Houston Cole Library Collection Assessments and corollary data used for accreditation, re-accreditation, or the introduction of a new degree are critical to the continuing growth and adaptation of the library collection to best suit its community. First, the library provides information that will either prove that resources are already in place or expose what to purchase to provide a framework for research and study in the proposed degree program. This data fosters transparency, ownership, and buy-in with library stakeholders. Stakeholders see the exact dollar amounts required to attain or retain resources pivotal to the success of degree programs, demonstrating the importance of maintaining or increasing the library's budget.

Section 3

Collection assessments can elicit strong emotional responses. For example, if all other elements are in place for a new degree program but the library resources are inadequate, this can be a point of debate. An alternative example would be if collection assessment data proves the necessity of a resource to support a degree program. This may lead to a budget increase to attain a new necessary resource. In this sort of example, HCL has experienced positive feedback regarding new collections, increased usage, and expressions of goodwill from patrons. Additionally, library administrators are appreciative of budget growth to enhance the evolving collection or become frustrated by the lack of budget increases to meet university needs.

Numerous difficulties arise in the collection assessment process. Tasks assigned to librarians continue to grow in number and complexity, making it hard to find adequate time to produce a detailed assessment. Collaboration with various library departments is necessary to assemble acquisitions, budget, and holdings information, which can absorb a sizeable portion of the collection assessment time line. At HCL, technical service departments involved in the process are acquisitions, cataloging, electronic resources, serials, and a cross-section of public services. Communication with other academic units impacted by the collection is also time-consuming. Degree proposal deadlines can lead to stress-inducing time crunches. Meeting these deadlines, however, can produce faculty library advocacy that is contagious.

The most rewarding part of collection assessment preparation is receiving expressions of appreciation from deans or department heads. Without the underpinning of library resources, accreditation would not be possible. The increase in student enrollment that often comes with new degrees would not be possible. Research and assignments would be extraordinarily limited, as would the ability to stay current, should there not be an appropriate collection to meet those needs.

In retrospect, a number of changes could further improve the scope, dissemination, and workflow of information provided for new degree program accreditation processes at JSU. The addition of usage statistics, such as circulation statistics, database usage, and door counts, could further support the request for additional acquisitions to support an expanding subject area.[18] The addition of a formal method of request for library information concerning new degree programs would be a welcome addition and possibly increase lead time before due dates. Finding ways to increase lead time for assessment data would offer library departments additional time to prepare necessary reports and statistics. This would provide subject specialists additional time for deliberation over collection assessment data and time for an action plan prior to the new degree program's institution.

Conversations with faculty reveal confusion with library jargon in current assessments. The elimination of jargon would encourage broader use and consumption of assessment data. Although assessment length has already shortened with the elimination of specific resources listing descriptions and appendices, even shorter collection assessments for degree programs lacking accreditation could increase readership. For unavoidable jargon, a brief description of terms may be helpful.

Collection assessment data is helpful to libraries of all sizes giving information for program proposals and accreditation. To save time, a smaller institution may want to create a conspectus sheet and highlight only high-quality, relevant resources in the applicable subject area. Smaller to medium-sized institutions typically have fewer resources to automate data collection, such as Web of Science, which can make data collection more time-consuming. Additionally, fewer library employees are available to share the workload of collection assessment data gathering. Larger institutions can expand the depth of quality assessment checklists through use of subscription services that offer citation analysis and core title lists that check against library holdings, such as OCLC's WorldShare Collection Evaluation.

It is easy to look at the number of any library's resources and interpret it strictly as inventory. A count of resources does not take into consideration the number of research questions answered or service to the community. With proper communications with faculty members and administration, those resource usage possibilities unfold. In this way, a collection assessment is far more than just a snapshot of resources present in a library collection at a given time; it is the hope that something great is accomplished with those resources.

Notes

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Section 3