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FROM COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT TO COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

Just as Peter Bembo's definition of beauty in the *Book of the Courtier* as a circle, "the goodness whereof is the center," collection development and management currently imply less a formal activity in libraries, and more the approach and attitudes that are developing in "traditional" library functions. It is the implicit form of collection development and management that has some importance in the library world rather than any formal structure such activities may take.

Collection development has always been present in libraries in the form of selection and acquisition. As a structured activity, it is somewhat more recent, a child of the growth period of the late fifties and sixties when funds for libraries were at a peak. Collections not only increased in size, they also became more diverse. School systems used funds for non-print materials, and academic libraries, in cooperation with new programs in their parent institutions, began to develop special subject collections. Today many library selection policies reflect both the growth spawned over a decade ago and the subject interests growing out of that era.

Collection development in academic libraries began as a formal activity in the larger university libraries, and came at a time when the trend for primary responsibility in selection moved from faculty to library staff, particularly to subject bibliographers either as members of a collection development unit or as adjuncts of various service areas.¹ The general emphasis in collection development is growth rather than an attendant concern for the way in which material is used. Elaine Sloan points out in her study of collection development activities that "few respondents make use of policy statements or

have attempted to evaluate their collections or selections by techniques other than traditional use of standard lists."² One might also note in the 1976 "Guidelines for the Formulation of Collection Development Policies (ALA)"³ that there is no mention of "de-selection"--stock control or weeding.

Collection management, unlike collection development, is rarely used in the discussion of formal library organizational structure. It is, however, treated in a journal devoted to de-acquisition (weeding), as well as collection and services evaluation--all activities which are being applied more and more to library collections. There are several conditions which have given rise to the attitudes and activities implied by collection management. The first is the current state of the economy, political attitudes concerning the spending of public monies, and the subsequent limitations these conditions place on the growth of collections. Such conditions are well known and have existed for almost ten years.

Equally well known is the rapid growth of information in a myriad of forms, the acceptance by librarians of the impossibility of serving all needs with one collection, and the attempt to subdue the proliferation of information with new technologies. What rapid growth has created more than the limitation of buying power is an overflow and redundancy in materials that glut the current body of information. Jerold has proposed a parallel between this problem and the states of organisms in the biological world. He writes that an overdose of positive feedback is ultimately detrimental to the organism; and at best, inhibits its evolution; and that the effects of applying technological solutions to information overload

may result in masking the problem of coping with burgeoning information supplies.⁴ It is against this background that collection management has evolved.

Collection management implies a tendency to view collections in the manner of a business inventory. Although collections do not exist for profit, one must be acutely aware of costs and attempt to build the stock or inventory in such a way that will allow maximum use. Collection management has as its cornerstone the notion of limited growth and is laterally tied to current clientele needs, and the evolution and dissipation of subject area needs. Whereas the idea behind collection development concerns itself with acquisition per se, collection management implies concern for weeding, collection evaluation, accessibility and bibliographic organization, and treats these activities on an equal level with the acquisition of material. The force that has put this attitude in motion may have been economic, but what is carrying it through is a desire for collections to be useful and usable.

If the growth of collections is coming under scrutiny insofar as making those collections more useful, there may also be a shift in the importance of specific library activities that will be crucial in the management of collections, particularly the role of technical services. Selection, one of the principal activities of collection development, has been primarily the function of public service areas. An increased emphasis on evaluation and accessibility of collections makes bibliographic control and organization essential in order to provide the flexibility to meet changing and growing subject areas, and to provide bibliographic systems which will be adaptable to the application of technological processes to these systems.

James Baughman, for example, has suggested a "structured approach" to collection development in light of the restrictive trends in acquisitions. Such a technique would involve the study of in-

terrelationships between traditional subject areas or branches of knowledge, and set up priorities according to the manner in which subject areas evolve and intertwine in response to information needs.⁵

Quantitative techniques applied to analysis of collections; users, use patterns, and bibliographic systems are growing, but it will be some time before they are codified to establish broad principles that can be blended into library activities in a regular fashion. In other words, it may be some time before the fruits of the quantitative methods can be built into library education, although the techniques have been, and need to continue to be, integrated into professional training.

Collection and collection management imply greater differences than they may have in actual practice. But it is precisely the implications, the ways of looking at and addressing ourselves to the problem that libraries face that will determine actual practice.

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