Evaluation of Collection in Academic Libraries : Need of Today

Dr.P.V.Konnur*
Smt A.N.Joshi *

ABSTRACT:

The paper deals with the need of guidelines and benefits of evaluation collection in Academic Libraries

Introduction:

Over the years, the academic institutions have nurtured the appetite of the students and teachers for information through an institution called *'The Library*.' The library has been catering to the needs of academic community all these years. But with passing time the rapid strides in information generation has resulted in information explosion. Correspondingly the library collection has also grown but accordingly the space to keep them has not increased in the library especially the academic libraries. Hence, to meet the changing needs of its clientele, these libraries have to procure the Space to the varied documents to keep in pace with fast developments of various academic fields.

Collection Evaluation:

Collection Evaluation can be defined as, the evaluation of the existing collection and withdrawal of unused items making the collection a working collection which will satisfy most of the demands of the users.

Need for collection evaluation:

The library collection has become a combination of various documents some in non-print and others in print form. The collection is not only varied in subject content and form but also in physical condition. Some are brand new, some heavy used, some less used while some others are ragged, smudged, obsolete and unused books. Coupled with this the steady increase in the collection has made it difficult for the librarians to maintain their collection. Many a times even good books go unnoticed in racks of such books. The only way to keep the required, current and most sought after information easily available to the users is by periodically evaluating the collection of the library.

Collection Evaluation Policy:

Collection Evaluation can be said to be the most effective tool to make the collection easier to maintain for the librarians and helpful to the users to search the information. It should be an integral part of library activities to make the collection a working collection. During the process of collection evaluation librarian will come across different kinds of books which have to be dealt differently. The librarians need a collection evaluation policy to substantiate their views regarding the destination of various weeded out materials.

In an academic setup for drafting such a policy, awareness of the needs of the user community makes easier to decide what should or should not remain in the collection. The policy should ensure the institutions vision, mission, role and polices. It should be on a positive note

*** University Librarian, Bangalore University, Jnana Bharathi, Bangalore-6.**
****Assistant Librarian. Prof.S.S.Basavanal Library, Karnatak University, Dharwad.**

emphasizing the merits of evaluation and also what is to be done of the weeded material.

The purpose of the policy should be to guide the libraries professional staff and to inform the users about the principles on which evaluation of the materials is made. The policy should be passed in the Library Advisory board or any other similar body, which formulates the rules and regulations of the library.

What to weed:

Once the librarian has decided to make his collection slimmer by evaluating the existing collection, he has to decide upon what to weed. Guidelines regarding this given by The CREW method of evaluation developed by Joseph P. Segal, would be beneficial to the librarian to under take the task smoothly. The CREW method is supposed to be the best method for balancing the collection.

CREW stands for

C-Continues

R-Review

E-Evaluation

W-Weed

AS the acronym suggests, the evaluation of the collection should be a continuous process and after evaluation what is found to be not useful must be weeded out. It proposed MUSTIE an acronym, which indicates the item to be deselected from the collection. The acronym stands for:

M-Misleading

U-Ugly

S-Superceded by new edition

T-Trival

I-Irrelevant

E-Elsewhere

M-Misleading, when the information in the book is misleading or factually inaccurate. Dated reference sources like dictionaries and encyclopedias will not be including new words or the same words might be having different meaning in older version, but as our language is constantly changing older sources will not be of much help. Incorrect information is often worse than no information.

U-Ugly-Those books, which are torn beyond repair, the pages turned yellow with age, with brittle paper and with broken bindings. The presence of such books makes the user reluctant to browse.

Destination of the weeded out material:

Streamlining of the collection is important. But more important is proper destination of the weeded out collection. If this is not done, the purpose of collection evaluation is not served. Hence, before physically weeding out the books, the labels are to be put on the books indicating where the books should go like binding, discarding, recycling etc should suitably be fixed on the concerned books.

Once the physical removal of the items is over, they have to be separated as per the labels affixed on them as binding, replacement, reconsideration etc. The destination of the said document should be highlighted in the card catalogue. The possible destinations could be

1) *Offsite shelving:* The less used but useful books can be shelved offsite, which saves the space of the library and the books will also be available as and when required.

2) *Rebinding:* The cost of rebinding is to be compared with the purchase of a new book, if the new edition is inexpensive and more appealing, rebinding may be dropped.

3) *Replacement:* If it is felt that the book would be better used if the classification number is changed. In this era of interdisciplinary studies, the book may be better used if placed along with books of other subject. Suitable changes in the call number and catalog must be made and the book must be reshuffled.

4) **Sell:** an exhibition of the weeded out books can be arranged for sale and interested students and teachers can buy these books.

5) **Exchange:** Some of the weeded out books may not be useful in the university libraries but may be useful in public libraries. Such books can be exchanged for more useful books.

6) **Donations:** Books in good condition, if suitable, can be donated to homes for the aged or nursing homes.

7) **Recycle:** The library must contact the agencies that take up recycling of paper and send the weeded out books to them to avoid wastage of paper.

8) **Destroy:** Though this may be considered as the last alternative, but those books which cannot be disposed by any method have to be essentially destroyed according to the method mentioned in the collection evaluation policy.

The process of collection evaluation does not end here. Only when the weeded out titles are suitably changed in the library holding database and the union - catalog, the process is said to be completed.

Benefits of collection Evaluation:

The Regular collection evaluation helps :

1) **For easy maintenance:** A slimmer collection is always easy to maintain as it facilitates cleaning, fast shelf reading and quick merging for library staff and enables the user for clear browsing.

2) **To Save space:** Most of the university libraries face space constraints and often old and unused books, which must have been be procured during the establishment of the setup are still on the shelves in many academic libraries. Thereby the users have to hunt for the required information in a clutter of ragged and dated books. It is important to keep the best things in the library for; *no*

library is large enough to keep everything. Withdrawal of dead, useless and unnecessary materials will make room for more circulated and sought after books.

3) **To improve the quality of the collection:** In an academic set up it is necessary that the collection is up-to-date, keeping in view of the rapidly changing information in the world of scientific and technical literature, the reliable and up-to-date resources not only enhance the quality of the collection but also elevates the reputation of the library.

4) **To separate the core collection:** It is a fact that some of the books are frequently referred while some are not. These frequently sought books meet most of the users needs. These materials constitute the core collection of the library. By weeding, the core collection will automatically be separated. This enables the user for quick finding information by saving his time avoiding going through rows of obsolete, inaccurate and dated materials.

5) **Feed back for selection:** The evaluation of the collection throws light on the strengths and weakness of the collection. This will help in further building of the collection. Those subjects which have to be strengthened can be allocated with a larger share of the budget. The teachers can be informed and the gaps in the collection can be filled by their recommendation for purchase of books.

6) **To increase the budget:** The results of evaluation give justification for investment in particular document. The collection looks lean after weeding, it will present a better case for budget increase as the empty spaces on the shelves is the visual evidence for the provider of the funds. Statistics can be shown for procurement of most highly used books.

7) **For repair and replacement:** The periodic weeding out will separate those materials that are in need of repair. Those, which are in demand, can be repaired and replaced on the shelves, there by increasing the life of the books.

Conclusion:

Obsolescence, damages, space limitations, normal wear and tear make the discarding of materials a continuing process. In fact evaluation should begin at the acquisition level, the librarian should be selective while procuring books and accepting the gifts. If the gifted item does not meet the selection criteria, it should not be accepted as it would be merely occupying space on the shelves. The academic institutions are built with some specific goals the library collection should depict them.

It is the librarian who should take initiative for the process of evaluation, as it is he and his staff who have to make room for the new inclusions of the library. Hardly few academic libraries evaluate their collection periodically. The reason for which may be, the librarians have their own limitations like shortage of staff, consumption of a lot of time which will affect their routine services, a feeling that during weeding some valuable information may be thrown out which may be needed by the users after some time. But it is time the librarians overcame these limitations as the weeded out collection if found useful can be stored at an offsite facility, where the less used collection can be stored compactly and make available to the users as and when necessary. The collection will also be better maintained under controlled environmental factors at the offsite facility.

With the advent of e-journals, open sources and the availability of information in CDs the space constraint in the libraries is reduced to some extent. Evaluating the collection allows the libraries to know whether future collection development can be filled most effectively with print or electronic resources.

The whole process of collection evaluation will be fruitful only when undertaken periodically, just as a garden which is pruned regularly is a pleasure to one's eyes so also a periodically evaluated library collection is a delight to its users.

References:

1. Berry J.N. Making space for read weeds. Libr J. 1997, May 15,122(9), 6

2. Stuart R.D. Weeding of library materials politics and policies Collection Management 1985:7(2),47-58.

3. Roy L. Does Weeding increase circulation? Collection Management 1988,10(1-2),141-156.

4. Weeding the library Media center collections. Available online at http://www.iema-ia.org/IEMA209.html

5. Emanuel M. Collection evaluation in 180 hours Collection Management 2002 27(3/4) pp.79-93.

6. smith E Assessing Collection usefulness on investigation of library ownership of resources graduate students use College & Research Libraries 2003, 64(5), pp.344-55.

7. Agee J and Antrim P Stone buildings, cyberspae and the library user New Library World 2003 104(1194/1195) pp.474-80

8. Rowley G & Black W.K Consequences of change: the evaluation of collection development Collection Building 1996, 15(2) pp.22-30.

Useful Websites

E-News
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/enews/index.html
E-Images
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/eimages/index.html
E-Music
http://wwwapp.cc.columbia.edu/ldpd/app/rti/results?
hl=1&ps=1&sb= 1&ss=1&qt= 6&q=&hpp= 100000&hk= -1&rt=sr
Data/GIS
http://www.columbia.edu/acis/eds/