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# Using the Conspectus Methodology in Algeria: Case Study of the University Library of Bejaia

by **Dr. Madjid Dahmane** and **Zahir Yahiaoui** (Information Science Research Division, Scientific and Technical Information Research Centre, University Library of Bejaia, Algiers) <mdahmane@wissal.dz> <yy\_zahir@yahoo.fr>

## History of the University Library of Bejaia

The **University Centre** is created in 1983 with all the common services, among them the **University Library**. At that time, it owned a little collection constituted of gifts. Afterwards, it purchased books in the fields of fundamental sciences because they were exclusive domains taught at the centre. With the spread of specialties and the extent to social sciences, the **Centre** is transformed to **University**.

## Conspectus Project

The idea to perform this method came from **Dr. Madjid Dahmane**, Director of the Information Science Research Division at the **Scientific and Technical Information Research Centre** in Algiers. The method is obviously robust requiring readings about the techniques available to collections and users. Its application through the American context and English environment has been fulfilled with success [Streby, 2005]; some critics and suggestions were made considering the Conspectus as available for print collections and should be updated to take into account the digital world [Clayton, 2002].

Is it the case for Algeria? Is it possible to apply it to the electronic resources?

In Algeria the project is launched during the year 2004-2005 at the **University Library** of Bejaia, in view to apply it to the whole university libraries around the country. It focuses on these suitable and adapted indicators:

### 1 – Age of Collection and Language Coverage:

We applied the median age and language indicators to some divisions of the collection. The findings from the analysis are indicated below.

For biology, chemistry, law, computer science, mathematics, physics, and electronics, the appropriate goal levels are 3c or 4. The median age for books in biology is 21 years old; for chemistry, 19 years old; for computer science, 10 years; mathematics and physics, 20 years; and electronics, 12 years. For these disciplines English language coverage is between 17% and 29%. We concluded that for these disciplines the age of the materials indicates that the library should update its collection, purchasing more recent materials and more books in foreign languages. For law, however, the corresponding level is 3c and the median age is seven years old and only five years old for Arabic documents, both of which are acceptably recent.

### 2 – Collection Depth:

Because of its time consuming nature, we analyzed the division of math only. We chose it because our library's collection is well developed, and math is taught in several fields at our university. Furthermore, we have Internet access to catalogues of specialized libraries and French universities such as the university libraries of Bordeaux and Grenoble, which have strong collections in the field of mathematics — e.g., the catalogue of books of all French libraries in this field. [Catalogue Fusionne Des Ouvrages De Bibliothèques Françaises]. We analyzed the division of mathematics by exploring the academic levels of titles using the French bibliographic database "Electre" for French books and the English database "Dawson" for English ones. We also examined the preface and table of contents of books not in the database and conducted interviews with professors and doctoral candidates in math.

Across the entire mathematics division, 41% of the collection's monographs were deemed appropriate to the bachelor's level, 46% to the master's level, and only 13% to the doctoral level. We concluded that the collection focuses on the undergraduate and master's levels, and that holdings appropriate for advanced research should be enriched. The useful results of the Conspectus methodology cited above push for an ongoing project. The field of computer science is taught in many specialties and is a narrow field relative to math. The results showed that 22.71% of the collection is appropriate to bachelor' level, 48.41% to master and only 6.86% to doctorate. We conclude that the collection focuses mainly on the master's level. It is under expectation to match the undergraduate level. The purchase of handbooks is required to satisfy the needs of students. The doctoral level is

also not sufficient and should be enriched. Nevertheless, there are substitutes like print and electronic journals to improve the research level.

### 3 – Use of Checklist:

The evaluation of collections is still an ongoing project in America. A list of rowing books is checked to the **Harvard** and **Yale** libraries. The check consists of identifying the exact edition as "match book," a different edition as "near match" and if there is no edition found, that is designated as "no match." The parameter of circulation is added in order to cross the indicator of the collection within the circulation availability. The study checked the list against the collection of **Harvard**, which allows a comparison between categories and, beyond that, the evaluation of the overall availability. It is calculated by the formula:

$$\text{Overall availability} = \text{Percentage available at acquisitions barrier} \times \text{percentage at circulation barrier [Nisonger, 2007].}$$

In the purpose of evaluating our library, we chose the comparison to the university libraries of Bordeaux and Grenoble (France), which serve as benchmarks. [Catalogue Fusionne...]. We chose these libraries for comparison with ours because they have strong collections in math. The study showed that, compared to the libraries of Bordeaux and Grenoble, the university library of Bejaia had many titles in algebra, analysis, numerical analysis, and probabilities and statistics, but fewer in the fields of mathematical logic, arithmetic and number theory, geometry, and trigonometry.

### 4 – Advent of Internet:

The spread of the Internet developed ways to improve the use of eBook and e-journal databases [McKiel, 2008]. Furthermore, the library that acquires digital collections serves dispersed and networked users instead of making access only for few ones. [Ross, 2007] We should recognize that the shift to digital collections spreads worldwide in the context of globalization. The use of e-journals is an object of study in Turkey. The users of the university library of Istanbul agree that e-journals are accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Furthermore, it gives access to many journals and offers quicker availability. [Dilek-Kayaoglu, 2008] Our library made the Internet part of its life in the year 2000. However, subscribing to databases available through the Web began during the year 2005. Because of the weakness in the doctoral level, the library purchased the **ScienceDirect** database available through the Internet. The holdings of the database are sufficient for journals and different specialties and subjects. Having UNESCO dollar coupons, the library added the **SpringerLink** database. The study compared the journals owned of math and computer science in both **ScienceDirect** and **SpringerLink**. The impact factor is used as a parameter of evaluation of the pertinence of journals. The result is described below in the table:

Discipline	Database	Number of journals	Journals with impact factors	Percentage of the total number in the subject
Math	ScienceDirect	88	79	32%
	SpringerLink	157	99	40%
Total		245	178	
Computer science	ScienceDirect	120	96	46%
	SpringerLink	88	56	27%
Total		208	152	

In the field of math, the **SpringerLink** database owns 99 journals having an impact factor that represents 40% of the total number of journals in the field. The **ScienceDirect** database possesses 79 journals with impact factors that represent 32%.

In the field of computer science, **ScienceDirect** has 96 journals cited in *JCR* that represent 46% of the total number of journals in the division, whereas **SpringerLink** owns 56.

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### Use of Conspectus Outside America

This methodology of evaluation is still used outside America. The following examples concern its use in Europe in English countries as well as in France.

#### 1 – Conspectus in Scotland:

The use of Conspectus by the **Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries (SCURL)** began in 1987. The **Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED)** adapted Conspectus to electronic environment in 2000. They assign subject strength levels by self assessment. The search for terms in a category within hierarchical organization: (division, categories and subjects) can allow the user to increase his recall by using Boolean OR relationship. Up to 2005, the conspectus takes into account the new environment of I.E. that is the result of the activities of the **Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)** that support research and high education and include resources of all types [Dunsire, 2006].

#### 2 – Conspectus in France:

The **Library of Fresnes** applied Conspectus to its collections. In 2001 it evaluated the division of philosophy describing either the collections or the users. The method is used afterwards to the collection of psychology. The evaluation consists of setting objectives to the categories such as psychoanalysis, family education, child psychology, sensorial perception, and applied psychology. It divides also its users to five classes: first: 0 to 13 years old, second: 14 to 19, third: 20 to 24, fourth: 25 to 54, and fifth: up to 54. The analysis is conducted during a period of five years from 2002 until 2006. The collection has been evaluated through the parameter of circulation. As an example we choose the category of child psychology. This objective matches student needs at the bachelor's level in university. As a result, the class of 20 to 24 year olds should be more interested and then should borrow more books, whereas the evaluation showed that the class of 25 to 54 year olds is the great borrower. They conclude that the collection or the objective is not fitted to the users [Giappiconi, 2006].

#### Conclusion

The Conspectus approach helped us to identify strengths and weaknesses, improve our collection, and also make these recommendations for librarians across Algeria:

- Develop objective standards to evaluate the collection at a given university for analyzing the existing collection strength, the current collecting intensity, and teaching objectives for the various disciplines.
- Develop a Conspectus handbook specific to Algeria.
- Compile a union list of all publications at the national level in the Arab world, in France, U.S.A. and other countries that use Arabic, French, or even English.
- Push for the installation of experts at the national ministry level to develop lists available to university libraries.

The values of the Conspectus for Algeria and other countries are various. List checking is among them. In the fields of Humanities, Social

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**BORN & LIVED:** Bejaia.

**EARLY LIFE:** Bejaia.

**FAMILY:** Married, one daughter (07), one son (03).

**EDUCATION:** License (psychology) **University of Constantine**; High Diploma (library science) **University of Algiers**; Master (library science) **University of Algiers**.

**FIRST JOB:** As a teacher in high school.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** Teacher in high school 1986; Administrator 1991-2004; and librarian 2004 to present.

**IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO:** Read, write and watch T.V. with my family

**FAVOURITE BOOKS:** Algerian literature, librarian, and psychological books.

**PHILOSOPHY:** The creed on labour.

**MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** Online catalogue; specification project on acquisitions.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Write a thesis on Conspectus.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** Electronic information shall reach the world of libraries even in remote and poor countries. 🌍



Sciences, and Law, the lists should be developed specifically for the country in question. They might be extended to all Arabic cultures in the subjects of Arabic language and social sciences. It is obvious that list checking in fundamental sciences and techniques should be available to all countries all over the world, making differences between countries using French, English, German or Spanish as primary language. English can be used as foreign language in the level 3b and upper for describing the code S for all countries using languages like French, Spanish, German and other languages. For countries using English as a primary language, a foreign language appropriate to the discipline should be chosen. For example, the German language can be rich in physics, French in economics etc. When in doubt, librarians can defer to professors in the chosen disciplines.

The use of bibliographic databases such as **Electre** for French publications and **Dawson** for English publications is of great interest to indicate the depth codes of books. Using benchmarking methods between libraries inside one country or inside a network of libraries, the means of them can serve as a reference or a standard. For periodicals, we use the *Journal Citation Report* to evaluate pertinent ones. Periodicals that have an impact factor can be considered as suitable to the research level (doctorate).

Furthermore, the Conspectus has benefits for evaluating the acquisition level for electronic resources, which are very exhaustive. They include local and remote databases, as well as free and costly databases. As always, librarians should confer with professors in those disciplines.

On the other hand, when a portion of a collection is identified as a point of weakness, the results may indicate a need to improve human resources in those areas. Revealed weaknesses may underscore the need for a management review. More research on this method is required, of course, but our preliminary findings indicate a certain robustness in this method for identifying weaknesses in a collection's holdings. We recommend its use in other libraries and look forward to the reporting of those results.

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# Charleston Observatory and the Global Library Survey

by **Allen McKiel, Ph.D.** (Dean of Library and Media Services, Western Oregon University, 345 N. Monmouth Avenue, Monmouth, Oregon 97361; Phone: 503-838-8886; Fax: 503-838-8399) <mckiel@wou.edu>

**Editor's Note:** In 2007, the **Charleston Conference** began the **Charleston Observatory** which was designed to be the research arm of the **Charleston Conference**. When **ebrary** and **YBP** approached the **Conference** about the **Global Library Survey**, it was decided that **CIBER** was the ideal partner. Accordingly, **ebrary** initiated the fourth in a series of library surveys this fall. It was constructed by the Department of Information Studies, **UCL Centre for Publishing and CIBER** research group with input from librarians around the globe. The respondents to the survey were self-selected from **ebrary's** email list of just over 10,000 international librarians and just fewer than 20,000 American librarians. The survey was designed to provide information on the effects of the global recession on libraries and to elicit insight on alternative ways librarians would respond to it. — **KS**

## Respondents and Institutions

Of the 835 respondents (3% response) who participated in the survey, the majority were from the US with 62.3%, followed by the UK with 12.7%. The remaining 25% of the responses were from the rest of the world. With respect to the institutions, 39.5% were from public universities or colleges, 24.1% from private universities or colleges, 7.6% from community colleges, 6.9% public libraries, 5.4% government or agency libraries, 5.3% corporate, 2.4% non profit corporate, 2.0% high school, 1.6% national libraries, and 1% hospitals.

When asked which title best described their role in their institution, 32.1% of those responding chose head or dean of library services, 14.1% collection development or acquisition librarian, 11% electronic resources librarian, 7.7% technical services librarian, and 1.3% serials librarian. The remaining 27.9% selected none of the above. Their decision-making roles were reported as 41.5% making the final decision, 36.8% making recommendations, 14.3% provided their views for decisions and 7.4% did not play a role.

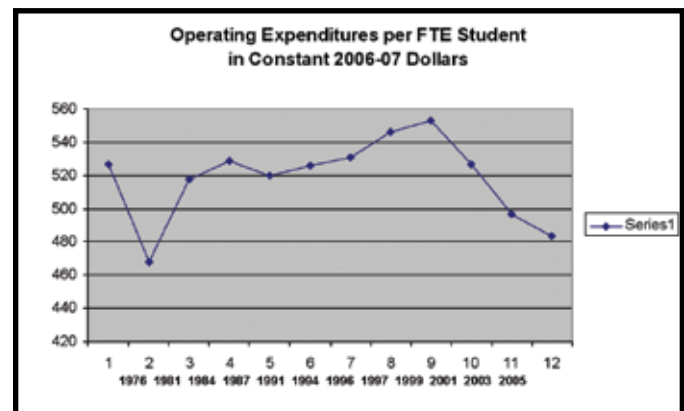
When asked how many registered users including faculty, students, and staff were at their respective institutions, 55.7% reported less than 10,000, 15.9% reported between 10-20,000, 17.2% reported between 20-40,000, and 11.3% over 40,000.

## The Financial Outlook

On average, the respondents reported that their total library budgets were down 3% from last year, and they expect an additional loss of 1.7% next year and a .7% additional loss the second year out. The average total projected loss over three years is 5.4%. Of the respondents, 42% reported that their total library budgets were down, and 15% reported them up; 32% reported that their total library budgets had stayed about the same, and 11% reported that they were unsure at the time of the survey. For those reporting that their budgets were down, the average decrease was just under 9%. For those reporting that their budgets were up, the average increase was just under 6%.

For comparison purposes, I have included library expenditure data for the period 1976 through 2005. The chart below

was constructed from **US Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics** data and shows library operating expenditures per student FTE in constant 2006-07 dollars for selective years over the 29 from 1976 through 2005. Expenditures fluctuated sometimes dramatically. After an initial drop from 1976 through 1981 of 11%, expenditures rose to a peak in 1999, which was 5% above 1976. Expenditures then declined by 14% between the years 1999 and 2005. The low point in 1981 corresponds to the beginning of the 1981 recession, which reached peak unemployment of just under 11% and lasted for two years. Most of the funding loss was restored by 1984. We could see a similar phenomenon with this recession, albeit perhaps exacerbated or elongated by the already downward trending trajectory since 1999.



## Impact on Resources, Personnel, and Operations

This survey was designed to stimulate thought on how best to cope with the economic downturn by looking at a survey of responses to questions about the current situation in libraries. The experiences vary from dramatically worse off than last year to much better off than last year with the balance tipping downward. The remainder of the survey provides a view of how these libraries are planning to respond to their particular situations. The responses throughout reflect the pattern of the budget losses or gains reported above.

When asked which areas of expenditures (for resources, personnel, services, or infrastructure) the changes in funding would affect, 41% of the responses across all four categories expect no change in expenditures, 31% expect decreases, and 28% expect increases. Of the 31% of the responses that anticipate decreases in expenditures, 36% designated resources, 25% personnel, 20% infrastructure, and 19% services. Of

Year	1976	1981	1984	1987	1991	1994	1996	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005
\$ per FTE	527	468	518	529	520	526	531	546	553	527	497	484
Rate of Change		-11%	13%	2%	-2%	1%	1%	3%	1%	-5%	-6%	-3%

US Department of Education – Center for Educational Statistics – Institute of Education Sciences – Digest of Education Statistics – Table 424. [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/tables/dt08\\_424.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/tables/dt08_424.asp)

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