

Collection Development for Academic Libraries: An Overview^{*}

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The rapid growth of American college and university libraries, especially in state-supported institutions, is one of the most remarkable changes that has occurred in higher education during the present century. No region of the country is an exception to this phenomenon.

Why this emphasis on strong libraries? The best explanation, I believe, is a statement included in a report issued by the American Council on Education, entitled *An Assessment of Quality in Graduate Education*. The statement reads: "The library is the heart of the university; no other single nonhuman factor is as obviously related to the quality of graduate education. A few universities with poor library resources," the report continues, "have achieved considerable strength in several departments, in some cases because the universities are located close to

other great library collections such as the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library. But institutions that are strong in all areas invariably have major national research libraries."

The reasons for what may rightly be described as an explosion of academic library collections in all the American states are complex. Among the important factors are the establishment of hundreds of new institutions of higher education and the enrollment of millions of additional students in colleges and universities across the land. Changing methods of instruction are sending students to their libraries in increasing numbers. Also, there is constantly growing emphasis on faculty research and scholarly productivity. Book budgets expanded steadily during the fifties and sixties, including a limited amount of federal aid to libraries. Extensive new foreign acquisition programs developed following World War II. Finally, the rate of publication of books and journals has been expanding year by year, and libraries have responded by stepped-up acquisition activities. I suspect that

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institutional rivalries are also a not insignificant factor, for a strong library has become a status symbol which lends prestige to a college or university; something to point to with pride, while a weak one requires a lot of explanation to faculty, students, and accrediting associations.

According to U. S. Office of Education statistics, the libraries of the United States contained 45,000,000 volumes in 1900, 75 years ago. By 1970, the number had risen to more than 800,000,000, an 18 fold increase. Of the total, about 350,000,000 volumes are held by college and university libraries.

Another important aspect of the study of library resources is their geographic distribution. In his *Geography of Reading*, published in 1938, Louis Round Wilson found that there were 77 library centers in the United States containing 500,000 volumes or more. All except 19 of the centers were concentrated in the Northeast. Only a half-dozen were located in the Southeast. In a follow-up study published in *COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES* last March, it was discovered that the number of centers holding in excess of 500,000 volumes each had jumped from 77 to 265, 80 of them in the South. There were 9 such centers in North Carolina alone: Asheville, Boone, Chapel Hill-Durham, Charlotte, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Greenville, Raleigh, and Winston-Salem. Among the 6 principal regions of the country, the Southeast ranked third in total volume holdings.

In 1960, *PUBLISHERS WEEKLY* reported that 15,000 new books or new editions of books were published in the United States. Last year, the total had risen to more than 40,000, nearly tripling in 15 years. World-wide, according to UNESCO annual compilation, the number of book titles published is now up to about 600,000, more than doubling in the past 20 years. That gives one some conception of a research library's acquisition problems.

Actually, separately-printed books have become a lesser part of a library's current accessions, especially in universities. The Library of Congress and the Harvard University Library, the nation's two largest libraries, report that about three-fourths, 75 percent of their current acquisitions are in serial form. As anyone who has dealt with them is well aware, serial publications present problems of immense scope and complexity. Nevertheless, serial literature has assumed an increasingly important place in libraries. The learned and technical journals, transactions of academies, museums, observatories, universities, and institutions of all sorts, and the serial publications of governments demand more and more library funds, space, and staff.

Then there is the huge field of non-published or non-book materials. Even more complex than books and serials are such types of material as manuscripts, archives, maps, sound recordings, motion pictures, slides, prints, and photographs. Many institutions are building up extensive collections in these categories.

The dilemma of our academic libraries, particularly those concerned with research, is worsened by the fact that no practicable limit can be set on the number of books and other materials needed even by a single department, or for that matter, perhaps by a single research worker.

It is this situation which has caused research libraries in recent years to search for ways and means to hold in check the mounting flood of printed materials. Thus we have the creation of national, regional, and local union catalogs to locate books in other libraries, saving the necessity for every library to acquire them. We have cooperative purchasing agreements; there are no programs for the centralized housing of little-used books, a plan now under consideration for North Carolina; we have ambitious projects for microfilming large masses of material for preservation and

to reduce their bulk for storage purposes.

We also have agreements for subject specialization among libraries, limiting the number of fields each has to cover in depth, an area in which Duke University and the University of North Carolina were pioneers; and a widespread system of inter-library loans has grown up.

Viewing this complex state of affairs, prophets of gloom are predicting that we have reached the twilight of the printed book, and that the book as we know it will be replaced by newer media of communication. Lest this prospect unduly depress you, let me hasten to point out that the end of the printed book has been regularly predicted for the past several centuries. Proponents of the manuscript codex were certain that the invention of printing spelled the end of the book. The doom-sayers saw the coming of the bicycle, of the automobile, and of the moving picture as the book's finish, and now we have Marshall McLuhan telling us that television is driving the last nail in the coffin. Still, as indicated, the book's numbers increase yearly, and I am convinced it will still be with us long after such false prophets as McLuhan are mere footnotes in history.

Turning to the specific theme of this tutorial on academic library collection development, a retrospective note may be in order. Pioneer American college and university librarians were strongly addicted to rugged individualism in their methods of book procurement. Funds were limited and collections grew at a snail's pace. Nevertheless, each library was regarded as a completely independent entity, its development proceeding with little or no consideration of its neighbors. It was reliant upon its own resources except for an occasional interlibrary loan.

The first major evidence of a change of direction came with the establishment of the National Union Catalog in 1900 and publication of the *Union List*

of *Serials in the United States and Canada* in 1927. Thereafter, librarians began to view their holdings within a larger frame of reference, as elements of a national resource, the sharing of which could be of immense mutual benefit. The coming of the Great Depression in the nineteen-thirties expedited the process, when such cooperative enterprises were born as the regional bibliographic centers in Denver, Philadelphia, and Seattle, along with numerous local and state union catalogs.

Not until after World War II was there any major effort undertaken toward joint or coordinated acquisition. The first was the Cooperative Acquisition Project for Wartime Publications, sponsored by the Library of Congress. This program demonstrated several points: (1) American libraries could look to their national library for leadership in large cooperative activities; (2) research libraries were able and willing to support a broad program for the improvement of library resources; (3) the idea of libraries combining for the acquisition of research materials was feasible and desirable; (4) and the research resources of American libraries were a matter of national concern.

Profiting from the experience gained in the project for wartime publications, other large foreign acquisition programs followed, notably the Farmington Plan, the Latin American Cooperative Acquisition Project, and the Public Law 480 program for acquiring multiple copies of publications in certain countries where counterpart funds or blocked currencies had accumulated.

These various enterprises culminated in 1965 with passage by Congress of enabling legislation for the National Program for Acquisition and Cataloging, centering in the Library of Congress. The plan places upon the Library of Congress responsibility for acquiring, as far as possible, all library materials currently published throughout the world of potential

value to scholarship and of providing catalog information for these materials to other libraries promptly after receipt. Within their respective spheres, the National Agricultural Library and the National Library of Medicine are active participants in the over-all program. It is apparent that when this undertaking is fully implemented, the world's publishing output will reach the United States soon after it comes off the press, fully cataloged and ready for use.

The concept of collecting in the national interest is being furthered by another type of institution, exemplified by the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago, which now serves a membership of nearly 200 libraries in the United States and Canada. The Center has two main functions: to house and service little-used research materials for member libraries and to acquire selected materials for cooperative use.

From the point of view of the acquisition policies and programs of the individual member libraries, the principal value of such an organization as the Center for Research Libraries is to relieve them of responsibility for collecting a variety of fringe materials, expensive to acquire, seldom needed, and filling valuable space, but perhaps important when needed.

One aspect of the Center's program being rapidly developed is subscriptions for some 10,000 current periodicals, with emphasis on the scientific, for lending to member libraries.

A similar, though much smaller operation is sponsored by an organization known as the Associated Colleges of the Midwest, which maintains a periodical bank in the Newberry Library in Chicago. Some 2,500 journals are currently received and 25,000 bound volumes and over 30,000 microforms are held for lending to the members, mainly college libraries, scattered through the Midwest. The reasoning back of such cooperative schemes is that they make

available a considerably wider range of periodical literature than the smaller libraries could afford individually.

On the other hand, the idea has certain limitations. As Fremont Rider pointed out some years ago, "On one matter, our scholars all seem to be amazingly unanimous; they all seem to have a desire — to the layman a sometimes quite incomprehensible desire — to have their materials available, not in New York or California, but under their own fingertips wherever they may happen to be working." Some academic administrators, however, are welcoming the periodical bank plan with enthusiasm, seeing it as a device for economizing on their libraries. Faculty members and students who may have to wait a minimum of 24 hours every time they wish to consult a periodical article are likely to be less happy.

It should be recognized that programs of library cooperation, especially in universities, must depend principally upon institutional attitudes, specifically on the willingness to rationalize graduate and research activities. Libraries can hardly move faster or farther in inter-institutional agreements than their parent universities are willing to go.

Every state in the union has seen the mushrooming of its institutions of higher education in recent years. Former agricultural and engineering colleges and teachers colleges have been transformed, in many cases overnight by legislative fiat, to the status of general universities. The financial implications for the states are staggering, if all these institutions are to become universities in fact as well as in name. A major item of cost is library expansion, including the building of university-level collections. Can the states allow each library to grow separately and independently? Is it realistic to expect that state legislatures will provide the generous support required for building strong libraries? Is it feasible for state-

supported university libraries to work together to bring maximum library service to their users at costs somewhere within reason? These are questions that will be confronting librarians increasingly if the current economic crisis persists into the indefinite future.

Let me turn now to another topic, the library staff's responsibility for collection development. In the past, book selection in college and university libraries was regarded as a faculty prerogative on the assumption that as experts in their field faculty members were best qualified to determine what publications were important and desirable. The result was that the library acquisition department staff was often reduced to mere order clerks. A radical change in attitudes and practices has occurred in recent years, especially in university libraries. Collections are being built in large part by subject specialists on the library staff. In some institutions, the entire professional staff may be involved to some extent in book selection.

The reasons for the change are reasonably clear. Professors nowadays are a different breed of cats from those of a generation or so ago. In these times, professors are occupied with their own research and writing, with governmental and industrial contracts, with foreign travel, with consulting and lecturing, and committee assignments, because of which a majority have no time for or interest in the building of library collections. They simply have too many other concerns to do a conscientious and thorough job, though they expect the books to be there when they need them.

In an ACRL conference talk several years ago, Robert Miller, Director of the Indiana University Library, looking back on 25 years' experience as a university librarian, commented that he had "known only a handful of faculty men who were bookmen in the sense that they used

judgment in submitting recommendations in their own fields and who had some knowledge of key books and journals in related fields." Dr. Miller added that he had known only two faculty members whose book knowledge extended into other areas and who approximated the knowledge of antiquarian book dealers.

My own experience, based on 40 years as a university library director, closely parallels Dr. Miller's. The number of faculty members who are eager and willing to participate in building library resources is always limited. In retrospect, the leading figures in collection development in the University of North Carolina, New York University, and University of Illinois during my administration were a small but highly potent group of faculty members, representing a variety of disciplines. Their advice and guidance in the building up of resources were invaluable. These individuals possessed an extensive knowledge of their own fields, past and present, and usually of related areas; they checked new and antiquarian catalogs as fast as they appeared; they were aware of the state of the book market; they were familiar with the library's collections, what was there and what was lacking; and they maintained constant pressure on the librarian and the university administration for more book funds.

On the other hand, I have never believed that the faculty should have sole responsibility for building a strong library. The departmental librarians, the personnel of the acquisition and serials divisions, the reference and circulation librarians, and catalogers should all contribute in varying degrees to the total acquisition program. There is no question in my mind that librarians must do more selection than in the past if the quality and usefulness of our collections are to meet the future needs of students and faculties. In short, we must take over full supervision and responsibility for selection.

In this connection, Rogers and Weber, in their *University Library Administration*, conclude that "one type of book fund, the departmental allotment, is passing from the scene in most universities," because book funds are more affluent and library staffs are more competent. The authors added that: "Blanket order arrangements have contributed to the relinquishment of the allotment system also because many books are acquired across the whole range of disciplines."

Not everyone agrees with that point of view. Another experienced university library administrator maintains that in his institution the library has excellent support from the faculty because it has a voice in how funds are spent. A happy middle-ground solution to this question is for the librarian to draw upon faculty advice, guidance, and participation to whatever extent they are available.

Reference was made to blanket or standing orders. This increasingly popular device gives a new dimension to problems of book selection. What effect the collapse of the Richard Abel empire may have remains to be seen, though there are probably enough other firms in the field, such as Blackwell's and Baker & Taylor, to carry on. For university libraries, especially, the standing order scheme has numerous advantages, if dealers, publishers, and categories of material are chosen with care.

The reasons for the growing popularity of standing orders and approval plans are complex. Several particular factors appear to have influenced librarians in their acceptance of such plans. The proverbial rate of increase of printed materials has made new selection mechanisms imperative. The volume of publication and the rise in staff costs have forced libraries to seek methods of selecting the most books in the quickest way. So has a trend towards larger book budgets in academic libraries. University

libraries moving into approval-plan buying have often acted at a time when large amounts of new money were added to their book budgets, permitting approval purchases to be added on top of the regular acquisition program. Also, the sudden expansion of a college into a full-fledged university or the creation of an entirely new institution places heavy responsibility on librarians.

Paramount to many librarians is the saving in time and clerical labor in acquisition procedures. To have the books ordered with minimum clerical and routine work, perhaps with catalog cards provided, saves time for other, more important activities. A further advantage may be a saving in time for the user, for an efficient standing order plan should insure the prompt receipt of the most current materials. As foreign acquisition programs have expanded, there is a need to acquire materials from areas of the world for which no adequate bibliographic tools exist. The national bibliographies and reviews on which our traditional selection system depends are simply lacking for most countries.

Once the librarian has been freed from the routine ordering of current materials, new and more challenging areas in book selection open up. The faculty and library staff will have more time to spend on antiquarian and backfile ordering, with opportunities to appraise and correct the weaknesses and gaps in their collections.

Nevertheless, despite these obvious, at least theoretical, advantages of standing orders and approval plans, there are problems and certain dangers risked by a library in their extensive use. For example, serial publications present problems. Many duplicates may be received as a result of exchanges, blanket orders, and simultaneous publication in more than one country. Too much ephemeral and marginal materials may be sent, while

pertinent books may be overlooked in a blanket order shipment. Furthermore, there is a question of complete coverage. How can a library be assured that its jobber is supplying it with all worthwhile publications? The same problem is posed, perhaps in more acute form, in the case of foreign publications. Can librarians trust their European dealers, for instance, to send all important books on blanket orders?

More serious than the omission of an occasional single title is the fact that jobbers not infrequently overlook certain types of publications central to an academic library, for example, publications emanating from various departments of universities, art museums, learned societies, and private membership organizations. Such publications may not get into the regular book trade and there is little or no profit for dealers in handling them.

Still another objection voiced by critics of standing order plans is that the major academic libraries of North America, by utilizing the services of a small number of jobbers and dealers, are building book collections that are too similar in both strengths and weaknesses.

What all this boils down to is that librarians should not and cannot rely solely on dealers for book selection. Final responsibility for book selection is something that librarians cannot afford to abdicate. The entire book selection procedure is one of the most fundamental and challenging functions of the professional librarian. The significance of the librarians' role comes out in research studies which show that on the basis of actual use by library readers, most used books are those selected by librarians, second, from the point of view of demand, are the books selected by the faculty, and the least used are the titles chosen by book jobbers.

Incidentally, it may be noted, the larger a university library becomes, the less selection is involved in its growth. Not

all fields are covered comprehensively, of course, but in areas of primary concern to the institution, the library is likely to be engaged in *collecting*, not *selecting*. Completeness becomes the main goal.

In measuring quality in college and to some extent in university libraries, there is a tendency to think in terms of standard lists. There are values as well as dangers in the practice. Standard lists naturally make all libraries alike, they discriminate against good books not fortunate enough to be listed, and soon get out of date. The hazards may be illustrated by *CHOICE*, the most common tool for book selection in college libraries. *CHOICE* uses hundreds of reviewers, many of them amateurs, ill-informed, and biased. Such a guide should be used with caution, but if one recognizes their limitations, standard lists selected and recommended by experts and specialists are helpful in the development of library collections. They help to insure against serious omissions.

One other aspect of collection development on which I would like to expound briefly is the role of microforms. One of the most useful devices that modern technology has provided libraries is microform reproduction. Since the microform roll came along in the nineteen-thirties, a variety of other forms have been invented: microcards, microprint, microfiche, and most recently ultramicrofiche. Microreproduction projects have proliferated, miniaturizing large bodies of newspapers, manuscripts, archives, journals, early printed books, and other types of specialized research materials.

The reasons for the microform revolution are diverse. Some promoters are convinced that the traditional book is obsolete, as noted previously, and they want the whole great world of literary materials turned into a microcosm. Better-informed persons, however, have recognized the potentialities and limitations of the new media. They have seen the value of

micro-reproductions in preserving fragile records, in saving war-endangered materials from possible destruction, in increasing the availability of unique and rare items, in saving storage space, and in the case of works of highly specialized interest, for original publication. At the same time, they realize that by no means all library collections are as useful in micro-reproduction as in their original formats. In short, we have here an extraordinarily important and versatile device for strengthening library resources and services but we should view it as only one weapon in our varied arsenal, a means to an end.

From the point of view of colleges and the smaller universities, the answer to the microform question, as with any other library materials, is selection. Exactly the same principles should govern the purchase of micro-reproductions as standard books and periodicals. Almost without exception, originals are preferable to microtexts, because they are nearly always easier to use. Frequently, however, it is a microtext or nothing.

Reproduction of material in full size is also having a dramatic effect on library acquisition activities, that is, publication in near-print form by photo-offset and similar processes. Since the coming of these processes, it has been stated that no books should be considered out of print, assuming that somewhere copies are available for reproduction. The importance of the fact is accentuated by the requirements of the many new "instant" university and college libraries. In the past, it would have been virtually impossible for such libraries to have acquired the numerous basic periodical files, collections of historical sources, and reference works needed by a research library. The material had gone out of print and was simply unprocurable. The latest edition of *Guide to Reprints* lists about 200 firms engaged in reprint publishing, in the

United States and abroad. Their productions include complete runs of general and special journals, society publications, bibliographical and other reference works, series dealing with special subjects, and innumerable individual book titles.

The advisability of buying current publications, such as much used periodicals, in anything except the original paper form is questionable. Some space and binding costs may be saved, but at the expense of satisfactory service. There is a temptation, which has to be resisted, to be swept off one's feet by the inspiring thought that here is an opportunity to provide one's library clientele with rare books and journals and great masses of primary sources hitherto unavailable to it. If these little-used materials are to be bought with funds more urgently needed for current publications, on the other hand, librarians have to use their best judgments in deciding which should come first.

In summary, the task of developing a strong college or university library collection is never completed. It calls for the best efforts of the faculty and library staff, working together. Subject specialists on the library staff can supplement and complement faculty experts to insure thorough coverage of field of interest. Each library should clarify its goals by adoption of an acquisition policy statement.

Beautiful buildings, well-trained staffs, and the most modern cataloging and classification, circulation, and reference systems can compensate only to a limited degree for the absence of strong collections. The first essential in an academic library is to possess the books, periodicals, government publications, newspapers, pamphlets, maps, and other materials required to meet the institution's objectives in instruction and research. Future generations will doubtless praise us or condemn us mainly on the basis of what we preserve and pass on to them.