

Collection Development in Libraries: Principles and Practices for Undergraduate Students



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Introduction

Libraries, irrespective of type, size and purpose are established with the aim of providing basic information resources either in printed or non-printed form to their user communities. The size, nature and contents of the library collection however, depend upon the objectives of the library and the needs of the clientele. On the other hand, Gates (1990) observed that materials collection depends upon wide knowledge of available materials and the ability to evaluate them and to choose those which will contribute most effectively to the achievement of the library's purposes. Therefore, in public libraries where the aim is to provide services to the generality of the citizens of a given area, not minding their race, religion, age, political affiliation, status and area of specialization the scope of collection is unlimited.

Collection development in public libraries is therefore diversified and intended to cover every field of human knowledge. Thus, the collections must be as numerous as the number and type of its users.

In academic environments such as Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education etc, the aim is to gather enough information resources to supplement the curricula activities of such institutions. In special libraries such as those of Research Institute, Radio Houses, Newspaper Companies, collection of library materials is topical in the sense that they are made to tilt with the singular objective for which the parent organizations are established.

Collection development in big library system is a function reposed in the Collection Development Unit (CDU) of the library. It is the duty of the CDU to ensure that basic guidelines and procedures are followed in equipping the library with the most current information resources through a variety of means. This is the more reason why the CDU of libraries are regarded as the heart of the library just as the entire library system is the heart of the institution or organization that established it.

Concepts of Collection Development

Collection development has been defined variously by different authors. Librarians glossary of terms defined collection development as the process of planning a stock acquisition programme not simply to cater for immediate needs but to build a coherent and reliable collection over a number of years, to meet the objectives of the service. Collection development could also be viewed as the activities that enhance the assemblage and provision of a variety of information materials to meet the desperate needs of library users. It should be noted however, that it is an effort made by librarians to ensure that they gather the totality of printed and non-printed documents to satisfy the current and anticipated information needs of their users.

Types of Information Materials Acquired

Initially, libraries were stocked with a variety of printed materials that could support the aims and objectives for which they were established. These materials ranged from manuscripts, monographs, journals, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, pamphlets, research and technical reports, reference materials, archival sources, government documents to theses. With technological development, sources from which information could be created, stored, retrieved and disseminated have increased to cover the non-book materials. These materials are variously referred to as audio/visual and non-printed materials. Currently, they are referred to as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). These ICT materials include things like radio, television, films, CD-ROM, computer and all other electronic and wireless gadgets from which information could be sent and received instantly. Today's ICT also provide for immediate feedback if there is need for that. It is now expected that for libraries to meet the most current information needs of their ever increasing and sophisticated clientele, collection development must include all forms of ICTs.

Methods Used in Collection Development

The enhancement of the stock of the library is achieved through a variety of methods. The popular methods include the followings:-

(a) *Purchase*

Collection development through purchase is the most dependable means of acquiring relevant and up-to-date materials in the library. By purchase is meant a situation whereby the library draws out a list of all the information resources required to support its objectives at a given time and

pays for their supply. Purchase of library materials are usually effected through placing orders, nationally (locally) and internationally for materials published within the country and abroad respectively. When materials are placed on order, duplicate copies of such orders which are usually in the form of prescribed cards and or ordinary listing in alphabetical order are kept in the library file for purposes of a reminder when need arises or cross-checking the materials when they are finally supplied. In most cases, Local Purchase Order (LPOs) are usually issued to the supplier to serve as an instrument of payment to be later processed for issuance of cheque for actual cash for purchases made locally. The purchase of journals from outside the country however requires that the library subscribes to the needed titles and deposit money with the publishers. Purchase of newspapers, magazines and other locally published periodicals are usually settled on cash and carry basis except for where contrary arrangement has been made to that effect. Provisions are however, made for their subscription.

(b) Exchange of Materials

Duplicate copies or unused materials from one library are often exchanged with other libraries where they could be useful. The aim of this exercise is to ensure that the right book gets to the right user at all times. It is also aimed at boosting collection development of the receiving library.

(c) Gift/Donation

Out of their magnanimity and love for the development of the library, individuals, organizations and friends of the library undertake to give gifts/donations to significantly improve and enrich the library collection. As the name connotes, these category of collection development is free of charge. When gifts/donations are presented to the library, the donor is usually acknowledged. In some cases however, decision has to be taken on whether to accept or reject gifts and donations because some come with strings attached.

(d) Legal Deposit

Legal deposit is a law that makes it mandatory for publishers to deposit specific number of each title published with the National Library of Nigeria. Osunkoya (2009) opined that decree No 29 section 4 (1) – (4) provides that publishers should compulsorily deposit their published materials to the national library. Publishers in this category include Federal, States, and Local Governments and private companies. The law provides that the Federal Government will deposit 25 copies and the states

10 copies of their publications. Publishers are to deposit 3 copies of each published materials to the national library at their own expense. Out of this three copies one is sent to the University of Ibadan Library to update its collections. In case of default, the publishers are charged 50 pounds.

(e) Photocopies

Photocopies are forms of collection development in libraries to the extent that the action does not breach the Copy Right Law. Photocopy is the duplicating of an original document by the use of photocopier machines. The use of photocopies is however, encouraged in libraries to avoid mutilation and outright stealing of library materials.

(f) Inter-Library Loan

Inter-library loan is derived from inter-library cooperation. Inter-library cooperation is an idea or understanding between two or more libraries to come together in order to share their resources through the provision of materials on loan to each other. In that respect, an agreement is usually reached and signed between cooperating libraries, especially in terms of the number of books to be loaned and the specific period they could either be returned or renewed. Inter-library loan increase library collection temporarily and facilitate users to have more access to information resources that may not be available in their own library within the period which the agreement last. There is need for increased library cooperation in Nigeria to overcome the current dwindling financial support for library development.

(g) Weeding

Weeding is another form of collection development. It involves the librarians going through the materials on shelves to determine the extent to which they have been utilized. If a material, after a long period of being acquired into the stock is found not to be used, it is weeded or withdrawn from the shelf for possible exchange with other libraries where there may be need for it. The main aim of weeding library materials is to ensure that, at all times useful materials are maintained in the stock. Other basic reason for weeding materials is to determine their physical capability of remaining on the shelf. If found defective, they are withdrawn for re-strengthening through binding if the pages are still intact. Where a considerable number of pages are missing, it is always advisable to completely withdraw that item from circulation. Weeding is usually done periodically. The library determines when to carry out the weeding exercise.

(h) Evaluation of the Collection

It has become imperative to evaluate library collection to ensure that all areas represented by the collection are, as far as possible equally provided for. This exercise serves as a guide for further acquisitions in making sure that there is a balanced collection for all disciplines. Evaluation is also another way of determining the extent of usefulness of materials in the collection in addition to ascertaining their currency. After the evaluation exercise, the librarian is expected to make up for where there are deficiencies.

Collection Development Policy

In order to achieve a balanced collection of information resources in all areas of the library's specialization, a written collection development policy is designed to guide the selection of library materials. Collection development policy is a set of rules and regulations that may have to be followed when it comes to acquiring materials for libraries. To successfully implement these policies or rules, a library committee, is often put in place to interpret the policy and act accordingly. However, it is expected that to have a well thought out policy, there must be input from both the librarians and the users. The policy usually put into consideration some or all of the factors enumerated below:

- (a) The purpose of the library
- (b) The needs of the user community
- (c) The number of copies per title of a material to be acquired
- (d) The form in which a material is presented to be considered for its purchase e.g. hard or soft cover.
- (e) The cost of the individual material item to be acquired
- (f) The durability of the material
- (g) If the material has an alternative
- (h) The present collection of the library in given areas
- (i) The supplier
- (j) The edition / year of publication
- (k) More importantly, the financial position of the library.

Procedures involved in Collection Development

Collection development is an activity that involves many processes before materials finally arrives in the library. The complexity of the processes vary from library to library depending on the objectives of the library, its size and number of staff charged with that responsibility. Below are procedures involved in collection development.

(a) Selection of Materials

In practice, the selection of materials for a library means making, from day to day, small decisions, each involving numerous bits of information. It is however, necessary that the Collection Development Unit (CDU) of each library should construct a frame for decisions to be taken. This could be general principles and policies to be used as a guide in selecting individual information resources or books. Selection is therefore a process whereby the librarian and other selectors choose from numerous alternatives of a material to boost the information resources that support the activities of parent organization which the library belongs. In effect, selection means maintaining alive, balanced, up-to-date collection both in subject content and in kinds of materials. It also involves withdrawing materials which are little used or obsolete as well as adding new materials (Gates, 1990).

It has often been argued that selection of library materials is the sole responsibility of the librarian only, irrespective of the type of library. This argument is premised on the nature of training librarians received from their various library schools coupled with their experiences in handling materials in the library. The other view of responsibility is that it should be left to the users since, as specialists they know more of those materials that could benefit them at all times. None of these ideas should be discarded outright. It must be emphasized that the two, librarians and the users have a lot to say about materials to be stocked in the library. Therefore, while the user should be given the opportunity to participate in the selection process, the librarian in addition to his own role in selection takes a final decision of what is to be acquired. Some professional librarians have however, noted that the building and shaping of the collection is very close to the heart of librarianship, involving, as it does, the essential philosophy of the profession. Broadus (1981) observed that not only is book selection one of the most fascinating tasks in the intellectual world, but it is also the most important, most interesting, and most difficult of the professional librarian's responsibilities. Simonton (1986) however reported that the question of responsibility for these decisions, who should exercise it, and how the responsibility can be shared remains subject for continuing discussions in the literature. Meanwhile, he quoted Sheehan (1963) to have opined that the ultimate responsibility for selection of books is the librarian's and added that librarian's most valuable assistants in this job are members of the faculty (users). This idea supports the idea of collective selection of library materials between the librarians and the users.

In deciding which materials to select, the following ideas should serve as guiding principles.

- (i) Available financial resources: the quantity of materials to be selected for ultimate purchase will be determined by the amount of money made available for that purpose. Whatever amount that is given should be shared between all areas of the library's collection and must not be spent in a way that creates imbalance in the collection.
- (ii) Contents: the contents of books must be evaluated to determine its scope and usefulness to the user and whether it will bring some new and worthwhile information to the collection.
- (iii) Currency: the time (year) a material is published goes to determine its recency. The year of the copyright rather than the date on the title page should be used to judge more accurately the effective data of the book's ideas.
- (iv) Trustfulness: the accuracy, not sloppiness in verification of data and presentation of facts should be paramount in the minds of the selectors.
- (v) Freedom from Bias: any material to be selected in the library should provide a fifty-fifty percent idea on all issues treated.
- (vi) Authority: authority has to do with the experience of the author in the area in which the work is presented. This can be judged from the qualifications of the author.
- (vii) Experience of the publisher: this needs to be established to determine the worthiness of a book for library selection. There are popular publishers that, without hesitation, their works could be recommended e.g. Macmillan publishers, McGraw-Hill Book Publishers etc.
- (viii) General factors: these include considering the quality of paper used, typography, physical size, inclusion of illustrative materials where necessary, availability of an accurate index and the type of binding to determine its durability.
- (ix) Use of selection tools: for efficient selection of library materials to take place, the selectors must make use of selection tools in order to get the necessary bibliographical details about each material to be selected. A variety of tools are available to be distributed to all participating selectors by the library. Examples of these tools include; bibliographies, indexes, books in print, book review digests, publishers' catalogue, book reviews in newspapers, references made in books and technical journals and a host of others.

Conclusively, in selecting materials for any library, the selectors must keep in mind the balance of treatment of issues raised in the book and its quality compared to other available alternatives.

(b) *Placing Orders*

It must be stated from the word go that the acquisition of library materials require a great knowledge of publishers; the sources of hard-to-find and out-of-print materials; the comparative advantages of buying directly from publishers or through a dealer; and an understanding of ordering policies and procedures and of practices and policies regarding gifts and exchanges. However, when a final list of books to be purchased is drawn, a decision is taken to employ the services of publishers or booksellers to supply them. Suppliers are directed to supply books contained in the list within a specific period of time and subject to insignificant variation in their quoted prices. As mentioned elsewhere, where books are placed on order, duplicate copy of the list is filed into the acquisitions file. This is to make it possible to serve the supplier with a reminder if there is delay in supply and/or to facilitate cross-checking the items against the list when they are supplied. The duplicate copy also makes it possible to ensure that materials ordered are actually those supplied in the right quantity and quality. When placing orders, it is advisable to choose a publisher because of the inherent economic advantages that accrues to it.

(c) *Receiving / Checking*

When the supplier supplies the ordered books to the library, it is the responsibility of the Collection Development Unit (CDU) to receive and check their appropriateness. In addition to the duplicate copy of the list filed for this purpose, the supplier usually accompany the books with a Proforma invoice. The Proforma invoice is a list that gives details of books supplied or about to be supplied as the case may be since some suppliers prefers to send it in advance. The details covered by the Proforma invoice include the number of copies per title, the author, title, edition, place of publication, publisher, date, unit and total cost of each title. It is usually signed by the manager of the supplying company. The CDU then cross-checks the materials by comparing the duplicate copy of the unit with the Proforma invoice.

If the supply is found to be in the right order, the CDU also check to establish that all materials are in perfect condition. In that direction, the quality of binding, typography, contents and other factors that affect the quality of a material are examined. Any material that is found to be lacking in the above quality is rejected and a replacement copy sought.

Another essential aspect of examination of the book is the cost. The cost may or may not be the same as quoted, as a result of production and market forces (inflation). A meager difference in the price of supplied books is not enough to reject it. However, a substantial increase over the quoted price which may lead to difficulties in payment is to be rejected.

Miscellaneous Activities of Collection Development Unit

After the new books have been received, the next activity is to ensure that they are formally added to the existing stock. By so doing, all new materials undergo some rudimentary processes in the CDU. These include:

- (a) *Stamping*: all new materials are stamped with ownership stamp of the library. The ownership stamp makes the document in question the legal property of that library since it bears the name of the institution, date received and signature of receiver. The stamp is used in various parts of the book, especially the title page, centre page and the last page of the book. It must however, be noted that where ever books are stamped, it should not obliterate writings.
- (b) *Accessioning*: all materials acquired into the library stock are accessioned in order to give them specific position in the entire collection. Books and related documents are therefore given serial numbers as they come into the library. A register is opened for that purpose. Through accession list, it is possible to tell the number or quantity of books in the library at any given time. That is to say that it tells the strength of library collection. Accession numbers are written into various parts of the book. Some libraries, for convenient reasons have devised secret pages where these numbers are written. This serves the purpose of identification in case of theft and mutilation. It should be noted that in the accession register, full bibliographic information about the document is recorded. These include the serial number of the work, its author, title, place of publication, publisher, date of publication, source of supply and the price of each book.
- (c) *Labeling*: the first steps in making new materials available for use by the library clientele begins from the CDU by pasting or labeling all materials with the date due slip, book card and book pocket. The date due slip is designed to provide spaces for stamping the date a book is due to be returned to the library when borrowed out. The book pocket contains enough bibliographic

information, such as the accession number, author, title and classification number of the book. The book cards which are inserted into the book pockets contain the same bibliographic information as the book pocket. All these materials are pasted at either the inside front or back covers of the book as there is no fast and hard rules about where they should be pasted.

Another important duty which relates to the above duty is the identification of which section of the library each book should be stocked. That is the determination of whether a book is a fiction, non-fiction or reference material. Any material identified to be a reference work is labeled with "reference only" slip. Thereafter, all materials are passed to the Technical Services Unit (TSU) for further processing.

Censorship in Collection Development

Censorship is the act of examining parts or whole of textbooks and other information resources and banning those that are considered offensive or a threat to the security of the nation or community from getting to the public. The extent to which censorship has affected collection development in libraries, especially public libraries that expected to collect everything under the sun, cannot be overemphasized. This is because materials that readers yearn for are those affected by the law. The need to embark on censorship of certain publications or parts there of is to allow peace to reign, especially if the contents have to do with negative comments about any religion and cultural practices of the peoples of a particular community. Publications that are obscene and blasphemous in nature are outlawed to avoid the effect its circulation may have on the readers and the reactions it may generate among religious followers. A typical example is a book titled "The Satanic Verses" by S. Rushdie which did not only lead to its ban but also a directive by the spiritual leader of Iran, Ayatoh R. Khomeini to execute the author wherever he is found. He is still believed to be in hiding after some decades of the publication of his work.

Problems of Collection Development

Collection development in all types of libraries is bedeviled with multi-faceted and hydra-headed problems. Prominent among these problems are:

- (a) *Lack of Funds*: This has been identified by researchers as a cog in the wheel of progress as far as collection development in Nigerian libraries is concerned. It is assumed that libraries play an important role in enhancing the attainment of prescribed

objectives that led to their establishment by institutions, organizations and even individuals. Unfortunately, libraries hardly survive their initial welcome before they are partially neglected. In Nigeria, all types of libraries are suffering from financial handicap which makes it impossible to perform the services according to expectations.

- (b) *Lack of required materials locally*: It has often been emphasized in the body of literature that books, especially those in the area of science and technology are not written and published in Nigeria. The cost and procedure of bringing them into the country and clearing them constitutes serious problems to collection development by many libraries in Nigeria.
- (c) *Non-challant attitude of librarians*: Many librarians in leadership position of their libraries have adopted a 'sit and watch' attitude over issues that affect the development of their libraries. Despite the fact that many of them have the opportunity to air their views or to be heard, they tend to relax after initial efforts. Success demands that you try and try again as many times as possible.

How To Overcome The Problems

In order to overcome the above enumerated problems, the following steps should be taken:

- (a) Various governments, institutions and organizations that initially recognised the need and purpose of establishing libraries in order to achieve specific goals should go beyond verbal recognition of such libraries. It is the actual recognition of the roles which libraries play in supplementing the attainment of desired objectives, especially in research and development as well as getting the users adequately informed in their various areas of specialization that will lead to adequate financial support for library development.
- (b) Every author and potential authors should be encouraged to write in their various areas of engagement. Writing should not be left to a few in the Association of Nigerian Authors and lecturers in institutions of higher learning. All professionals must be encouraged to write.
- (c) Nigerian publishers should not only see publishing as a matter of money making by charging exorbitant fees for publications. They should, as a priority consider the development of their nation, as

far as provision of information resources at affordable prices is concerned.

- (d) Irrespective of the type of library, librarians must live up to expectations at all times. In doing so, they are expected to blow their own trumpets as many times as possible in order to realize the objectives for which their profession and libraries are established.

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