Chapter 81

Shaping the Librarian's Library:
Collecting to Support LIS Education and Practice

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ABSTRACT

Library and Information Science (LIS) is primarily a graduate program of study which prepares students for careers in librarianship and other information professions. However, faculty and students are not the only users of LIS collections in campus libraries; academic librarians also need LIS information to support their research and practice. Effective collection development for LIS is grounded in a well-thought-out policy statement and employs time-proven strategies including title-by-title ordering, approval plans, standing orders, and judicious acceptance of gifts. A well-rounded and responsive collection spans several publication formats and includes works from publishers that specialize in LIS content as well as non-commercial grey literature. The challenges that LIS selectors face include the proliferation of distance education programs, the interdisciplinarity of the field, the shifting landscape of electronic publishing, serial price increases, the drive for assessment, negative perceptions of the quality of the literature, and the need to promote collection use. Because there has been little written about LIS collection development practices, there are many opportunities for further research.

INTRODUCTION

Library and Information Science (LIS) collections reflect the diversity of academic programs in the United States and abroad. These programs range from traditional "library schools" that prepare students to work as librarians to the newer "iSchools" that engage in teaching and research on a broad range of social and technical subjects. In many instances, LIS materials are integrated into larger collections; on some campuses, however, separate LIS libraries persist. While most collections are funded by the university's library, others are supported, in whole or part, by the schools they serve. LIS materials may also be collected for users outside the context of higher education. For example, public library systems, state library agencies, and library associations may build collections to support librarians in their day-to-day work and professional service.

The work of developing and managing library collections encompasses a range of activities, including assessing user needs, identifying and choosing materials, purchasing and licensing published content, creating access points, marketing the resulting collection, evaluating its use, and, in many cases, planning for its long-term preservation (Disher, 2007; Johnson, 2009). This chapter focuses on the central act of identifying and selecting LIS materials. Because few selectors have responsibility for LIS as their only assignment, this chapter is intended to provide a general overview of the issues and challenges in shaping an LIS collection, especially as these may differ from other academic disciplines. Following a discussion of user characteristics and major information formats in LIS, the elements of a core collection will be outlined and ongoing strategies for selecting new materials will be described. Several trends and challenges will be discussed, and strategies for responding to them will be proposed. At present there is a dearth of both research and practical information about LIS collection development, so the chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research.

BACKGROUND

Library and information science is "an interdisciplinary domain concerned with creation, management, and uses of information in all its forms" (Estabrook, 2010, p. 3287). LIS is organized as a separate discipline but draws on the theories, methods, and literatures of many other disciplines. Related fields include computer science, management studies, education, history, sociology, media studies, and literary studies. A recent study of LIS doctoral dissertations from 1939 to 2009 reveals how LIS scholarship has moved away from its initial concentration on problems in librarianship (Sugimoto, Li, Russell, Finlay, & Ding, 2011). LIS programs typically prepare students to work in information service agencies such as librar-

ies and archives; however, graduates from these programs also find jobs in information software industries and in a wide spectrum of commercial and nonprofit organizations. Although building a collection to address the breadth of this field is not an easy task, the practice is grounded in a long tradition.

Even before he founded the first library school (the Columbia School of Library Economy) in 1887, Melvil Dewey began collecting materials for a special library to support its curriculum (Kindlin & Engle, 1975). Prior to the emergence of specialized journals and books for the fledgling profession, annual reports and other publications issued by libraries were highly prized as information sources (Lear, 2006). The first library science libraries also housed general resources, such as reference books, that students were expected to examine and evaluate for their coursework. Well into the twentieth century, some writers argued that LIS libraries ought to serve as laboratories where students could gain practical experience working with materials typically found in general libraries (Fingerson, 1973; Kiewitt, 1978), but the counter-argument that laboratory collections are "artificial" and do "not reflect the larger world of information availability" eventually prevailed (Prentice, 1987, p. 11).

As the knowledge domain of LIS broadened out during the 20th century from a concentration on libraries to encompass information science and aspects of communications and information technologies, LIS selectors necessarily expanded the scope of their collecting. Newer topics did not displace older ones, but rather added to the competing priorities for collection development (Via, 1992). This dynamic continues to the present day, as LIS programs add new courses and research initiatives on data curation, museum studies, bioinformatics, medical informatics, knowledge management, online game design, and more.

Given the scope of the field, what is the ideal size for an LIS collection? This question lacks a simple answer. Many years ago, Robert

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