

Chapter 3

Out of the Ordinary: Collection Development in Support of Business Curriculum and Research

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of business research is to gather information in order to aid decision-making. While there are many different users of business information, this chapter will focus on those in an academic setting. A wide variety of general and specialized resources exist to support the teaching and research needs of business students and faculty. For several reasons, the nature of these resources is complex and can be confusing. This chapter analyzes various types and subject areas within the discipline of business and considers various criteria used to select the most appropriate resources for curricular and research needs. The chapter recommends ongoing stewardship of the resources and suggests various methods of educating users about them.

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of business research is to gather information in order to aid decision-making or solve a particular problem. While there are many different users of business information, this chapter will focus on those in an academic setting.

A wide variety of general and specialized resources exist to support the teaching and research needs of business students and faculty. The nature of these resources is complex due to the fact that business problems often require multidisciplinary solutions and, unlike many other subject disciplines, business resources consist of many specialized types of information resources.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1897-8.ch003

The objectives of this chapter are to define and analyze various types of business information that are appropriate for student and faculty research and to consider various criteria used to select the most appropriate resources for curricular and research needs. Selected resources are mentioned as examples; however, the intent is not to describe an exhaustive bibliography of resources. Several books and articles have been written on the subject of specific sources for finding every conceivable type of business information. The additional reading section includes several of these bibliographies.

Finally, collection decisions related to business do not end at the point of selection and acquisition. Selectors working with business collections and information need to maximize use by students and faculty of these unique and often expensive resources by promoting them and educating users about how to best use them. These resources are often complex and unique. Thus, to develop a community of users, the librarian may need to do extensive outreach and training on how to use a resource and the type of information that can be found within that source.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, there have been numerous mergers among information producers, publishers, and vendors. There has been a migration from print to electronic, specifically to Web access. The availability of more free and open source information is increasingly challenging fee-based providers. While these specific factors have hit the world of information access and acquisitions at large (not just the area of business) there are qualities unique to the realm of business that make it especially complex and challenging for users. First, business resources use a highly specialized vocabulary that is not necessarily familiar to most students or beginning researchers. The products researched in a business environment—whether stocks and securities, companies and industries,

or global markets and laws—are often unfamiliar to a beginning student and require a basic introduction to terminology before the resources are understandable.

Second, business research can be made doubly complex by the need to go beyond a national perspective and understand global markets and trade, bringing an international perspective to bear on the discipline. While most disciplines have an international component or approach, the study of trade and commerce especially requires an international lens. With resources available in multiple languages, referring to a range of political figures and entities, and subject to current events across the world, the business researcher must know about a broad range of issues to make sense of the resources.

Moreover, business is a discipline in which currency is crucial: industries, technologies, economic conditions, and political environments change minute-to-minute. It is one discipline in which data is updated by the minute, daily. Many other disciplines in the humanities, education, and social sciences are not subject to this constant influx of new information that is relevant to even a beginning researcher.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The complexity of business information is addressed in several sources. Lavin (1995) points to three reasons for the complexity: business events are rapidly changing; business is closely tied to the economy; and business problems require multidisciplinary solutions. For these reasons and others, a broad range of business information is used in business research. Knowing the types of information available can be extremely helpful to a business librarian attempting to cover all or most of them in their collection. Soojung Kim (2009) reports demand for seventeen types of business information, including case studies, company profiles, industry reports and market research reports. In a survey of students, Abels, Griner, and Turq-

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