

Chapter 5

Understanding the Nature of Design and Its Implications for Design Collection Development

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is meant as an overview of collection development for design disciplines in higher education including selection, planning and assessment, budgetary issues, and marketing the collection. It addresses the specific challenges of design collection development to meet the technical, theoretical, and research components of the design curriculum. These challenges include its cross-disciplinarity, transition within the fields from technical know-how to whole system thinking, the selection of trade and academic materials, and format and access issues.

INTRODUCTION

Collection development librarians are expected to perform the varied responsibilities of selecting materials in various formats, weeding, identification of web-based open access resources, writing and revising collection policies, monitoring and reviewing approval plans, budgeting, assessing and evaluating the collection, as well as outreach and liaison duties. These tasks are no different for librarians that are responsible for design collec-

tions in central libraries, branch art and architecture libraries, and art and design school libraries. Although the type of library, institution, and design programs determines the depth of the collection and the formats collected and housed, the role and function of the design librarian is the same.

This chapter is meant as an overview of the major aspects of design collection development, especially for librarians that are new to design. The decision to cover general design collection development issues is based on the fact that all

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design fields have the same fundamental characteristics: cross-disciplinarity, sense of innovation, whole-system thinking, and the cultural, sustainable, technological, and commercial aspects of design. Moreover, a holistic approach to design reflects growing collaboration among designers in different areas of specialization as represented in the design literature (Poggenpohl, 2009; Gill & Lilly, 2008). However, although there are core characteristics that link all design disciplines and form the foundation of design collection development, as design librarians, we must also be aware of the specialized needs of each field. Due to the number of design fields, it is not possible to adequately treat the specialized issues and resources for each in this chapter.

Although they support professional programs, design librarians today are expected to select materials and provide research assistance for students and faculty who are not only interested in the practical aspects of how to design, but most importantly, as academics who study why design happens (Poggenpohl, 2009). In order to adequately meet both needs, librarians must first understand the nature of design and how it is taught in higher education so that they may better develop collection policies and make decisions. Especially for the librarian that is new to design, it is imperative that she/he work closely with students and faculty in order to comprehend the complexity of design projects and the materials, subject areas, and strategies that effectively support them.

DESIGN COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND THE LIBRARY LITERATURE

Much of the collection development literature focuses on art history, architecture, and the fine arts. There is very little written specifically on design. Even the recent publication, *The Handbook of Art and Design Librarianship* (Gluibizzi

& Glassman, 2010) does not effectively deal with issues in design collection development. It consists of a collection of essays useful for some aspects of design collection development, in particular Tomlin's (2010) chapter on transformations in scholarly communication in art librarianship and King's (2010) chapter on collection management. However, it does not address the professional and technical components of the design curriculum. *Information Sources in Art, Art History and Design* (Ford, 2001) attempts to bring together both art and design resources and issues, but chapters cover broad topics like collection development, cataloging and classification, and general reference sources that fail to address design specifically. The publication *The Art Librarian* (Wilson, 2003) also treats art and design librarianship as basically the same. Although there are commonalities between art and design disciplines, they are also fundamentally different. The purpose of design is utilitarian and is meant to serve the client's interests, whereas art subordinates usefulness for the sake of its own purposes in that aesthetics supersedes function. This differentiation is important for the collection, because it means that design students and faculty are interested in a host of technical, professional, and research materials that are alien to art research. Creating a product for a market means that designers, unlike artists, must take into account a variety of factors such as: federal and state government requirements, business and marketing practices, or technology.

Architecture collection development resources tend to be very specific to the field or address very specific topics like materials collections (Hindmarch & Arens, 2009). These resources may be useful for certain design collections, but they are not broad enough in scope to benefit a selector who is interested in building general design collections. The fact remains that even for architecture, general treatments are dated, such as *The Architecture Library of the Future* (Kusnerz, 1989) which is a collection of papers from the 1987 symposium that covers information resources, technology is-

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