

Chapter 18

Issues in Collection Development Planning: Supporting the College of Health Sciences and Human Services and the School of Nursing at Murray State University

Julie Robinson
Murray State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter is intended to provide practical advice for academic librarians with collection development responsibilities in the health sciences, including Nursing and Social Work. Highlighting the processes and procedures at the author's institution, the chapter will focus on collection development responsibilities that are needed to support both undergraduate and graduate programs in several of the disciplines stated above.

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are often confronted with decreasing budgets while institutional programs and curriculum remain the same, and in some cases actually expand. They are challenged to acquire the most relevant resources needed to maintain a collection that supports the research and curriculum needs of the institution and this challenge is compounded by the ever-changing formats of the available resources. By analyzing various collection development factors and the

needs of the institution, both in terms of curriculum and research, libraries can construct a working strategy to facilitate the most effective method of collection development, including new approaches to old methods. An example of an integrated collection development process is presented at the close of this chapter.

Murray State University (located in Murray, Kentucky) is a growing four-year regional university that serves a student population primarily from western Kentucky, southern Illinois, and western Tennessee. Its overall student population,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-1897-8.ch018

however, draws from 41 states and 45 countries (Murray State University, 2010), with a total student population of over 10,000, distributed among five regional campus sites in addition to the main campus location. The organization of the College of Health Sciences and Human Services (HSHS) and the School of Nursing (SoN) at Murray State University was created to support research in the following fields: nursing, social work, gerontology, nutrition, dietetics, food management, communication disorders, occupational safety and health, and wellness and therapeutic sciences (which includes athletic training, recreation and leisure services, and youth and nonprofit leadership). Six research and instruction librarians are attached to specific colleges/departments within the university to support instruction, research, and collection development in those areas as subject specialists. The research and instruction librarian serving as the subject specialist to HSHS and SoN has the primary responsibility of recommending and selecting for faculty those items to be included in the reference, circulating, and media collections for those disciplines.

Using the example of Murray State, this chapter will explore the myriad factors that come into play and must be considered by library professionals during the collection development process. These factors include, but are not limited to: budget, programs supported, areas of study/ research, departmental/program accreditation, accessibility, authority/reliability/relevance, institutional collection development policy, material format, circulation/usage and assessment data, deselection and updates, physical space, departmental / program growth, and parties involved in the collection development process.

BACKGROUND

With the current downturn in the overall economy, libraries (public, private, and academic) are cutting collection budgets, creating additional challenges

for collection development. As budgets decline and research trends, enrollment, and curriculum remain the same, the selection of materials that best meet the needs of the patron becomes even more critical and complicated. As additional course offerings are added at an institution, demands are placed on library collections to acquire new and update existing materials to support such changes. As stated in a 2009 article by Anne Marie Austenfeld, “academic library collection managers need to be among the first people on campus to know about new program initiatives” (p. 211). The challenge for library professionals (including the dean, reference librarian, and technical services, acquisitions, and cataloging staff) is to maintain relationships with faculty and administrators in the academic departments they are serving to ensure any changes in programming, curriculum, and research areas are communicated as soon as possible so that the library involvement necessary to support these changes can be determined. Subject specialist librarians should maintain a working knowledge of trends in research and curriculum in their subject areas to better anticipate future program growth and changes. As subject librarians familiarize themselves with these topics, collection development will flow more efficiently, minimizing the frustration that can occur when trends change and those engaging in collection development are caught unaware of these changes.

As enrollment at Murray State University has risen and new programs and curriculum have been added (most recently a doctoral degree in nursing practice), the demands placed on library resources have increased. In turn, it has become necessary to evaluate and acquire new resources (electronic, print, media) to support these additions. As the librarian responsible for collection development in the areas of nursing, health, medicine, social work, nutrition, and dietetics, the author has focused on developing a core collection to support research and teaching. This challenge—ensuring selection of the appropriate variety of resources to support the academic curriculum currently offered—ex-

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