

Chapter 12

Impact of Open Access on Library Collections and Collection Development Services: With a Case Study of OA From the University of Namibia

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ABSTRACT

The growth of open access (OA) journals has been rapid and substantial. While still not the predominant form of journal publishing, OA journals of varying types have impacted the scholarly communication ecosystem in a profound way. Libraries and librarians have been at the front lines of this effort from the beginning, working with researchers, funders, and institutional administrators to bring out substantive change to the unsustainable models of costly dissemination of research. After over 20 years of progress in both the transition from print to online, as well as opening access to read, how have OA resources fit in with academic libraries' collections? Are OA resources currently considered part of a library's collection? If not, will they ever be? More broadly, what has been the impact of the open access movement and OA resources on library collections, the concept of library collections, and the practice of collection development? How has the impact of OA on collections differed between libraries in the Global North vs. the Global South?

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LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AND COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Collections

There are many writings on the subject of library collections, but few address the underlying concept. Typical definitions in glossaries and handbooks refer to “accumulations” or “sum” of “materials” “owned” or “provided by” a “library” (ALA Glossary and LibrarySpeak). Based on interviews, Lee found several criteria on which both librarians and faculty converged (Lee, 2000), that is, the library’s collection is a *selective* set of resources, the content of which is considered *stable* and (relatively) *permanent*, which are represented in the *catalog*, and the rights with which to access are *managed* by library. The faculty interviewed continued to equate co-location of physical materials within the library facilities, if not the specific buildings, to the library’s collections, and did not consider materials held in remote locations or joint repositories as part of *their* library’s collection. Indeed, the users did not necessarily associate the online resources to their library because they accessed them through separate listings or their own bookmarks (Lee, 2000).

Based on these criteria of “library collections”, how, then, would Open Access fit in? Are OA resources currently considered part of a library’s collection? If not, will they ever be? More broadly, what has been the *impact* of the Open Access movement and open access resources on library collections, the concept of library collections, and the practice of collection development? How has the impact of OA on collections differed between libraries in the Global North versus the Global South?

Concepts of Library Collections

Michael Buckland examined the overarching roles and scope of collections, describing library collections as “subsets of changing membership drawn from the broader set of potentially collectible materials in order to achieve the goals of the library by facilitating access by the population they serve,” and that the “development of library collections, then, is essentially concerned with the placing in libraries of copies of pre-existing materials. It is, at root, a logistical exercise to improve service” (Buckland, 1989, p. 216).

A key aspect of this concept of collections that is relevant to this chapter is the *placement* of “pre-existing materials” to facilitate access by the library’s patrons. This concept goes beyond any discussion of “ownership” and gets to the heart of the *purpose* of the collection. This conceptual understanding of collections could support the inclusion of digital open access materials which are selected based on needs perceived by the librarian. Buckland’s use of “pre-existing materials”, however, contrasts with the changes to the publishing environment in the last twenty years. As libraries have pushed for true reformation of publishing and scholarly communication, especially towards Platinum or “true” OA, some have inserted themselves earlier into the scholarly communication cycle, hosting open access platforms, essentially *creating* new content. This idea of “flipping” collections will be discussed later in this chapter.

The conception of the collection and its purpose is not only timeless but also universal. Library collections at institutions of higher education serve the same purposes and functions in African nation as in European or American. Ifidon, for example, listed such purposes of African university libraries, notably meeting the academic and research information needs of students and researchers (Ifidon, 1990). Librarians from all parts of the world who have written on collections and collection management issues reference many of the same key concepts and philosophies of collection.

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