

## Chapter 9

# A Question of Degrees: Collecting in Support of the Allied Health Professions

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### ABSTRACT

*Librarians responsible for allied health or health sciences materials collect and maintain resources, such as print and electronic books and journals, non-book materials, such as anatomical models and flashcards, citation and full-text databases, and point-of-care resources. To simplify the process, there are selection aids for all stages of collecting as well as methods of assessing a collection's strengths and weaknesses. Librarians who are involved in the collection development process will find support from professional organizations that provide opportunities for further development of skills and knowledge, venues for presenting, and avenues for members' to share advice and expertise. This chapter will provide guidance for the librarian new to collecting in the health sciences on each step of the process and point to best practices to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.*

### INTRODUCTION

Allied health librarians have many choices available when selecting materials for the collection. Gathering as much information as possible from stakeholders and patrons will help with the decision-making process, as will creating a collection development plan or strategy. Professional memberships with the Medical Library Association

(MLA), the Special Library Association (SLA), or the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) will help librarians stay current with new trends in collection development and provide opportunities for continuing education. Librarians collecting in support of health science programs will want to consult one (or several) high-quality selection aids, such as *The Medical Library Association's Master Guide to Authorita-*

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*tive Information Resources in the Health Sciences* (Thompson, Higa, Carrigan, & Tobia, 2011), for advice in acquiring print books, e-books, non-book sources, journals, and online resources. Collection development librarians have a large number of online resources to choose from in the health sciences, including citation databases, anatomy resources, drug resources, and point-of-care tools.

Even the most well thought out collection strategy cannot be executed without careful consideration of one major aspect of collection development—managing a budget. Library budgeting has many factors including the amount of money available, unexpected expenditures due to changes in the curriculum, and fluctuation in the pricing of books and journals. Budgeting for e-books can be more complicated than for print books since there are many models used to acquire e-books, such as subscription, purchase, or patron-driven acquisition. Finally, libraries must budget for journals which can be extremely variable due to the annual increases in prices. Some of the ways to handle this, which will be discussed later in the chapter, include acquiring journals individually or through vendor packages.

This chapter sets out to provide helpful information about collecting medical materials including print books, e-books, non-book materials such as anatomical models and flashcards, journals, electronic resources, and point-of-care tools. Much of the information is based on the author's personal experiences of taking a collection that was badly out of date and turning it into a useful and dynamic resource for undergraduate students studying biology, chemistry, athletic training, exercise science, and healthcare administration and graduate students studying a physician assistant curriculum.

## **BACKGROUND**

Most academic libraries will need to collect medical materials, if only at a very basic level. The

basic collections may support pre-professional programs such as pre-med, pre-physician assistant, or pre-physical therapy. Students in these programs are often required to write papers to reflect their future careers while they take such classes as microbiology, developmental biology, or anatomy and physiology. These patrons will want books, either print titles or e-books; journals, preferably with electronic access; databases; and anatomy resources. Health science collections are also used to support students as they move from the pre-professional to professional degrees. Professional collections will need a more robust collection of materials ranging from the same materials used by undergraduates to mobile-friendly applications and point-of-care tools users can deploy while on clinical rotations.

No matter the size or focus of the collection, all libraries involved in collecting medical materials will have some of the same considerations and follow similar processes. Gathering information about classes, programs, students, and faculty will help with all collection decisions. It is extremely important for librarians with collection responsibilities to be available and to listen to patrons using the collection so that they feel comfortable expressing their needs and sharing any gaps they observe in the collection. Creating a traditional collection development plan may not be appropriate for all libraries, but the process of writing some kind of guidelines will aid in conceptualizing the current state of the collection and its future directions.

## **PRE-PURCHASE PLANNING**

### **Gathering Information**

Before collecting any materials, the librarian should gather information from the campus to define the scope of what should be collected. One way to accomplish this is to schedule meetings with stakeholders, such as school deans, department

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