

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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dited by MAGGIE FIELDHOUSE AUDREY MARSHALL

Collection Development in the Digital Age

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Edited by Maggie Fieldhouse and Audrey Marshall



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Foreword

Liz Chapman

The Digital Age has brought us opportunities and challenges. Most library services face attacks from those who believe that we are no longer needed as 'everything is on the internet'. We face challenges from governments who in the light of economic uncertainty fail to see value in public libraries. We face challenges from students whose fee regimes imbue them with entitlement aggression about what a library can and should do for them.

Yet we know that our work in developing collections is important to preserve the past, support the present and plan for the future. Our fundamental responsibilities in collection development have not changed, but our methods have.

One hundred years ago in 1911 the British Library of Political Science (now the LSE Library) reported that in six months it had received and made available 29,287 books; a rate which the Librarian noted was twice that of the British Museum (now the British Library). In those times the Librarian would go out and search for materials. Sidney and Bearice Webb came back from the USA laden with library materials, an agreement to an exchange of publications with Columbia University and a dislike of ice cream.

Building the collection was paramount, but despite vaulting ambitions no collection coull ever cover everything. It was probably never possible, even in ancient Nineveh to bring together all recorded knowledge. We cannot hope to do this in the 21st century, but we do need to develop clear policies on what we will collect and maintain for future generations. Collections on library shelves or in remote physical storage must now be minored by storage and preservation of the digital. We must make policy in consultation with those we serve but also have an eye to the future. It may sometimes seem like a tharkless task but future generations will thank us. Equally we must decide when we need to d) the procuring and when we can pass basic work to others. Finally, and this horrifies some library users, we need to know how to weed out unwanted stock.

This book stands on the shoulders of previous texts, notably Jenkins and Morley's *Collection Management in Academic Libraries* (second edition 1999) and Clayton and Gorman's *Managing Information Resources in Libraries: collection management in theory and practice* (2001). At the end of the 20th century these authors pointed to the speed with which journals were becoming electronic and there was an idea that books might go the same way albeit mor: slowly. Now we are in the enviable position of being able to read a digital version of Sunucl Pepys's *Diary* on a clear portable screen and immediately discover the meaning of acane words or a photograph of a location from a touch of the screen. This implies a different kind of collection development but still requires an eve to future preservation.

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Collection development (building) and collection management (maintaining) are merging as the digital pushes its way to the fore. It is not sensible or economical to develop duplicate collections which may not be used, or for which we might not have space, and at the same time we are pushing services outside our library walls – spinning out content and 'signposts' to offices and homes.

We use networks to spread our collections outwards – both within our institutions and beyond. We use networks to direct our users towards other useful services they may need and to build collections co-operatively with others. Networks help us to operate in an Open Access environment and to build collections in digital repositories. We have our own networks to support our work: professional networks, to share collections and those which intersect with publishers and suppliers. The continued vibrancy of the 30 year old Charleston Conference is one such version of a professional network. Yet despite the advances in technology and the concomitant increased accessibility of collections, our work still depends on people. We need people who can build and bring in collections in all formats. We need people who can explain what we have and how to use it. Finally of course we need people to use the collections we develop. It's all about the people.

In our better moments I hope that library staff would agree that we are privileged to work in an area which is constantly changing and which gives us the opportunity to develop our roles and to learn new ways of doing things. This book will help us to consolidate this learning and move on confidently in collection development.

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