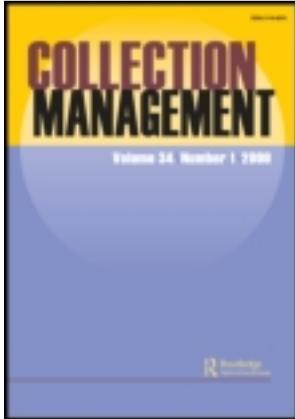


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Rethinking Collection Management Plans: Shaping Collective Collections for the 21st Century

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Rethinking Collection Management Plans: Shaping Collective Collections for the 21st Century

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The emergence of shared print repositories has created new opportunities for libraries to provide cost-effective stewardship through collaborative collection management. This opportunity also presents challenges, as libraries must envision collection management in the context of local, regional, and national priorities. In previous decades, collection management plans were used to communicate an institution's strategies for managing local collections. As libraries prepare to participate in cooperative agreements, formal collection management plans and policies can and should be used once again as a practical framework for decision making. The authors offer practical advice on developing a collection management plan in a collaborative context.

KEYWORDS *collaboration, disposition, collection management, collection management plan, shared print archives, decision support tools, retention, weeding*

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, academic libraries have reached a critical crossroads in collections management. As the scale and complexity of collections grow, space for physical collections is declining and many institutions have reached or are quickly approaching capacity in both high-density storage facilities

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and open collections areas. While the need for storage space continues to grow, university and state resources are diminishing. As a result, libraries are experiencing severe cultural, space-related, and budgetary pressures that affect how they manage collections. While libraries face unprecedented challenges, a growing movement toward shared print archives offers new opportunities for collaborative collection management. A network of state, regional, and national shared print repository initiatives could enable libraries to preserve and provide access to low-use materials with significant space and cost savings (Courant and Nielsen 2010). The viability of a network of “collective collections” is supported by the growing corpus of digital surrogates in trusted archives such as HathiTrust Digital Library, Portico, and the LOCKSS Program. Malpas (2011) projected that, by 2014, more than 60% of the retrospective print collections held in Association of Research Libraries (ARL) libraries will be duplicated in the HathiTrust. Organized on a large scale, *dual duplication*, or the twin availability of the same titles in both print and digital formats, could allow libraries to link the contents of collections in storage facilities to the growing digital corpus. In doing so, they would gain the benefit of both preserving and providing access to two complementary formats for the same titles. In this new age of collaborative collection management, academic libraries will act in unison as networks of shared responsibility for storage and access to print and digital content, rather than freestanding silos of independently owned collections. The system-wide redevelopment of collections will require analysis of the overlap among local print collections, holdings of trusted digital archives, the nation’s high-density storage facilities, local digital collections, and existing shared print archives. (See Figure 1.) Local and collective collection management will take place at the intersections of these elements using an ever-evolving, intricate set of interrelated rules, guidelines, partnerships, and agreements. The very meaning of *collection* is undergoing fundamental changes, prompting questions about how core elements of collection management must be reenvisioned in a collaborative context. How does an individual institution responsibly manage its collection to participate as a node in a regional or national collection? How will consortiums shape coherent collections from the contributions of diverse member libraries? How will libraries maintain the public’s trust, while simultaneously acknowledging that libraries cannot, in fact, keep everything? Libraries must negotiate these and other questions in an environment that will require unprecedented levels of coordination among organizations. Policies and programs that define roles and responsibilities for shared print collections will be essential, both for institutions and their constituents. They will be actualized through specific written plans for managing both local and collective collections. The focus of this article is on local collection management plans that begin to situate individual library collections in a collective context.

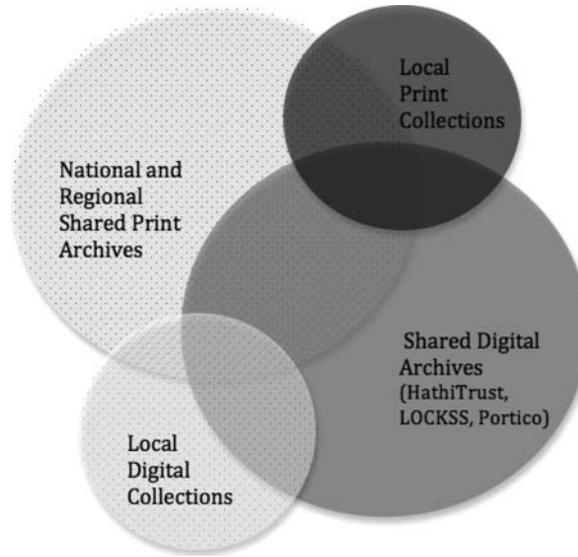


FIGURE 1 Collection management will take place at the intersections of local and shared print and digital collections.

RETHINKING COLLECTION MANAGEMENT PLANS

The terms collection development plan, collection development policy, collection management plan and collection management policy, and collection policy are frequently used interchangeably in the literature. These terms are used to describe a formal written statement of the principles guiding a library's selection of materials and the criteria used in selection, weeding, and acceptance of gifts; they provide guidance on collections maintenance (Johnson 2009). The local collection management plan is a direct outgrowth of the past few decades of experience with collection development policies, but the emphasis shifts from prospective collection development to management of existing collections. This addresses the fact that it will be critical over the next decade to focus on the careful management of our legacy collections, certainly not to the exclusion of prospective collection development, but with greater discipline and intention than has been common practice in recent years. In previous decades, collection policies served primarily as a vehicle for communicating an institution's strategies for prospective collection development and, secondarily if at all, as guides for managing existing collections. Today, the need to articulate principles and guidelines for stewardship is greater than ever. For the purposes of this article, the term collection management is used more narrowly to refer to the set of decisions and activities made after items are already part of library collections, including collection consolidation, transfer to storage, weeding, preservation,

format migration, deduplication, and a range of other activities designed to maintain the overall usefulness and integrity of a collection or a set of print collections.

The authors argue that libraries should take the time to write formal collection management plans in preparation for participating in shared print archiving programs. These plans will serve as a practical framework for decision making locally and will provide a strong foundation on which to build as libraries begin to manage their collections collectively. And they will articulate for both internal and external audiences a clear collection management strategy that begins to locate an individual library's collection management activity in a broader collaborative context. This article briefly describes the larger policy and planning framework for developing shared collections programs and locates the idea of a local collection management plan within this framework. It then outlines the elements of a collection management plan, for example, collection situation and outlook; collection management goals and strategy; collections analysis and decision support tools; provisions for discovery and access; guidelines for retention, weeding, and disposition; and methods of outreach and communications. Finally, the article provides a brief overview of the issues inherent in each element of the collection management plan and a list of questions that should be considered in writing the plan.

A SHIFT TOWARD COLLECTIVE PLANNING AND POLICY

Modern collection development plans and policies were introduced in the 1970s, when emphasis in the profession began to shift from focus on local development of collections to embracing more active management and sharing of existing collections. When Paul Mosher gave the keynote address at the first Collection Management and Development Institute in 1981, he challenged librarians to move toward a new vision of collection management, which encompassed a broad range of policy, planning, analysis, and cooperative activities (Mosher 1986; Branin 1993). Perkin's influential *Guidelines for Collection Development* provided an early example of collection management planning; a quarter of the publication was devoted to a "review of collections," which entailed essential components of collections management (1979). The reasons given for written collection management plans and policies are numerous. The American Library Association (1989) characterized them as a necessary tool that "defines the scope of existing collections and maps the future development of collections." Perkins (1979) added that they could be used to "clarify objectives to staff, users, and cooperating institutions." Ferguson (1995) supported the use of written policies as a means of defining scope and to "thoroughly think through the issues and put down on paper what purpose will bind their decisions." Bostic (1988) described the

visionary role of policy in considering the “the long- and short-term needs of the community it serves.” Biblarz (1992) contended that the process could illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of a given library collection. Presently, Atkinson (1986) argued that the function of management plans and policies was not merely aspirational and procedural but political as well. He advocated for collection policy statements in part for their rhetorical function, particularly in times of change, risk, and opportunity:

“...the policy should show faculty and students that the reasons the library contains certain materials and not others are part of a rational, consistent, publicly announced plan... administrators should be led by the policy to recognize that optimum use is being made of materials funding, and... consortial partners should also be moved by the policy to view the collection development operation as stable and reliable” (p. 141).

Similarly, Fyffe (2002), in discussing the risk inherent to increased reliance on digital resources, emphasized the need to articulate risk to the scholarly communities served by librarians and that “greater responsibility for the choices presented by evolving information services should be returned to the scholarly community that creates and uses the scholarly literature” (p. 60). The “risk” described in Fyffe’s appeal is closely correlated to one of the challenges of shared print initiatives: namely, that libraries must convince scholars, faculty, and other stakeholders of the validity of a massive “draw-down” of redundant holdings and increased reliance on shared collections. This must be done without overselling the ability of librarians to succeed without strong support, moral and financial, from their communities. Fyffe’s emphasis on the need for transparency and engagement with the scholarly community is a reminder that policies should not only describe the desired direction, strategies, and criteria for moving forward in collaboration but also lay out the risks, costs, and benefits. A policy should both present a clear argument to campus constituents and invite their participation in the planning process. While traditional collection plans and policies were frequently praised, they were often simultaneously underutilized. If institutions had a written policy at all, it tended to be too vague to be useful, and it was considered by some to be unnecessary (Snow 1996). Nor were policies regularly made available to stakeholders and peer institutions; in a survey of ARL libraries, Straw (2003) found that 44% of the institutions studied did not make collections statements available on their Web pages. In recent years, however, a number of institutions have adopted traditional elements and rhetoric of collection management plans for use in shared print agreements. Researchers and practitioners invested in collaborative collection management now argue strongly for formal planning and policy documents. This shift reflects both the aspirations and the complexities of interinstitutional

dependency. In 2004, Bishoff and Allen referred to these characteristics of successful partnerships among cultural heritage institutions:

1. *Vision*: A compelling picture of possibilities and, specifically, how to get there.
2. *Impact*: The addition of real productivity and value, the ability to produce tangible results.
3. *Intimacy*: Closeness, sharing, and mutual trust; a level of closeness that moves far beyond transactional relationships (Rackham et al. 1996).

Written statements, then, should be used to define and cultivate these characteristics among institutions with distinct missions, collections, and user groups. Reilly echoed this notion; in a 2003 Center for Research Libraries report that addressed success factors in cooperative collection management, he cited a strong consortial culture with mechanisms for cultivating trust: specifically, a “paper infrastructure,” that formally allocates costs and benefits, defines “specific roles and benefits of the invested parties and thereby distribute risk,” and “promotes a clear understanding of the equity that each holds in the shared resource—in this case, the repository collections.”

Formal plans and policies are frequently used to articulate complex issues of trust, risk, and benefit in the context of shared ownership of collections. The most common examples are policy documents associated with shared print agreements. A 2008 study of existing shared print collections revealed that 80% of the policies reviewed included an explicit retention commitment and 53% included explicit commitments to permanent retention of at least some of shared materials (Malpas 2009). The retention agreement can be viewed as an incentive to participate, invoking both a sense of trust among participants and demonstrating potential impact, namely, by creating an opportunity for deduplication of redundant local holdings at some institutions while “raising the visibility and value of print archiving commitments at others” (Malpas 2009). The same study indicated that the majority of existing shared print policies allowed for exemptions under some circumstances, including recalls of contributed items. By allowing that some holdings will not be subject to the same guarantees of preservation and access, these clauses mitigate the risk of shared ownership. Payne (2007) also identified the need for formal policies that address benefit and risk in relation to access, specifically, the circumstances in which libraries can rely on access to shared copies if they choose to weed their own. Schonfeld and Housewright (2009) added that policy should address contingency plans for redistributing materials to other parties if the repository becomes unable or unwilling to maintain its commitment. The need to formally define the roles of individual institutions in a collaborative environment further suggests the importance of formal collection plans or policies. The emergence of shared print repositories is challenging assumptions that preservation of the written record falls

primarily to large academic institutions. As O'Connor et al. (2002) pointed out, there is an important distinction between cooperation and collaboration in the context of shared print:

“Cooperation in a library situation implies that the larger cooperate with other libraries recognising that the small will be unable to contribute to the same extent. ‘Collaboration’ recognises that all libraries, large and small, are under pressure and that each can contribute to the solution in different but ultimately useful ways for the benefit of the whole. . . . Cooperative storage is essentially the sharing of a space within a facility while collaborative storage implies a shared approach to the collection in terms of growth, shape, management and access” (p. 3).

Schonfeld and Housewright (2009) expressed concern that, without explicit plans and policies, it would be difficult for institutions to evaluate which collections would be retained and for how long:

“ . . . many small colleges have long seen preservation as the purview of research universities and have made local de-accessioning decisions on the assumption that other libraries have made a commitment to maintain print collections in perpetuity. . . . Informal arrangements, based on unspoken assumptions about the behaviors of others in the community, are clearly inadequate relative to expectations” (p. 7).

As libraries and library stakeholders enter the era of shared collections management, they are attempting to redefine roles and responsibilities, as well as risks and benefits, for a new generation. They are also acknowledging that, without formal plans and policies, it is unlikely that the consolidation of legacy print collections can be managed successfully. In addition to local collection development policies, formal plans and policies are needed to govern shared print programs and shape shared collections and collection management plans to guide local stewardship in the collective context.

WHY THE COLLECTION MANAGEMENT PLAN MATTERS

Libraries are on the cusp of one of the most far-reaching, national-scale collection management initiatives in modern history. While the value of shared collections is indisputable, the risk, challenges, and the potential for failure must also be acknowledged. Libraries have shifted emphasis away from collection management, as staff and budgets are prioritized to support outreach, information literacy, liaison activity, and other services firmly embedded in direct service needs. The emergence of shared print and digital collections will make it possible for libraries to discard unprecedented amounts of materials, freeing up valuable space for technology, special

collections, exhibitions and public performance, group research, and classroom space. But to do so, they must make irreversible decisions about discarding unprecedented amounts of materials accumulated over the past century—using resources that are limited and systems that are intricate and fallible. At stake are the relationships that have been cultivated with faculty and scholars, the credibility of cultural heritage institutions as stewards of the printed record, and the long-term survival of scholarship in its original form. Libraries will need campus-wide support to navigate issues of ownership, enforcement of retention commitments, and funding for long-term stewardship. Increased reliance on shared copies, increasing transfers of materials to off-site storage, and the disposition of duplicate materials are potential minefields. Rather than masking these issues, success will require transparency. Internally, this will require broad-based discussion within the library and among partnering libraries. Externally, consistent education, outreach, and public relations with faculty and administration will gradually generate understanding and support for collective stewardship. A collection management plan should be used for communicating policies, criteria, and guidelines for managing print legacy collections.

WRITING A COLLECTION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Stueart and Moran (2007) identified several characteristics of good policies: They are consistent, flexible, and written and they serve as guides rather than rules. A collection management plan will evolve continually over time and should be created in a format that can be easily revised and shared. Ideally, it reflects the development of an increasingly nuanced strategy. A collection management plan should also strike a balance between *usefulness* and *usability*, that is, it should have enough explicit detail to be useful to the reader but should not be so detailed as to be overwhelming. Ten to fifteen pages might be sufficient for staff and partner institutions, with a shorter version for external audiences. The process should inform and engage library staff, beginning with a small team that develops the plan, followed by an invitation to all staff to comment on drafts. In the interest of transparency, the collection management plan should be posted on the library's Web site with an invitation to submit questions, suggestions, and concerns. Ultimately, the plan should generate discussion at campus forums, as discussed in the "Education, Outreach, and Communication" section. The following are potential elements of a collection management plan for libraries that are currently participating, or considering participation, in a shared print program:

1. Collection goals and strategy
2. Collections analysis and decision support tools
3. Bibliographic records, discovery, and access

4. Selection for retention in open stacks, in storage, and for transfer to special collections
5. Selection for weeding
6. Guidelines for disposition of withdrawn materials
7. Education, outreach, and communication

This not a comprehensive list, but is meant rather to address key issues in shared collection management. In the actual writing, the elements could be combined or split, expanded or deleted, as befits the situation of a particular library. While it will not be possible to address all issues in one plan, the discipline of thinking through these issues and deciding which are most important to address in the plan is invaluable.

Collections Goals and Strategy

This element of the plan captures a library's current situation and outlook, its vision and goals for the future, and its overarching strategies for managing collections. It answers the questions, "Where are we now?", "Where do we want to go?", and "How might we get there?" It provides an overarching framework for practical decision making. It references the library's mission, and it situates collection management in the broader context of the library and its parent institution. In describing the current situation, the size and scope of collections should be defined, including subject areas, geographic and language parameters, and formats. Collection strengths should be highlighted here, as well as subject areas that are priorities for broader collection development. This might be as simple as referring or linking to existing written collection development policies. The plan should also broadly describe current collection management activities, including any collaborative initiatives already taking place. The library's goals for collection management for the next three to five years should also be described, including specific subject areas, genres, or formats that are priorities for preservation or digitization. The goals may require more frequent review to reflect changing emphasis on collecting areas as academic programs are created, expanded, or discontinued. Finally, this element should highlight the role of collaboration as an overarching strategy for collection management. It should define the roles and responsibilities the library is willing to assume in future collaborative endeavors, and it should state its motivations for shared collection management: to broaden or deepen specific collections, to provide access to a collection more comprehensive than the library could build on its own, to ensure preservation of cultural heritage materials through distributed responsibility, or to free up space for classrooms, a learning commons, or exhibits. Current institutional strengths that could enable collaborative collection management should be identified, as well as organization-level issues that must be addressed, such as funding, infrastructure, or expertise.

Questions to Consider

- What is the collection profile? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the collection? What are the primary geographic and language parameters?
- What are the key collection needs over the next three to five years? Which collections, subject areas, formats, etc., are priorities for preservation, digitization, etc.?
- Which parts of the collection will receive priority for retention in print form? Under what circumstances will digital surrogates alone suffice? What digital repositories meet the library's criteria as trusted repositories?
- What trends can be identified from use data, including circulation statistics, Web site traffic, gate counts, etc.? To what extent has print circulation changed?
- Does the library aspire to be a "collection of record" in any specific subject areas? What unique contributions could it make to national print and digital collections? To what extent have unique or little-held materials been identified?
- What role will the library play, if any, in regional and national archiving and resource sharing efforts? Is it willing to assume responsibility for retaining a portion of its collection as part of a shared print agreement, either on-site or in a storage facility? Will it rely on other institutions to retain copies of a portion of the collection?
- To what extent does the library already rely on other institutions or organizations for collection access? Are there subjects, formats, etc., that it assumes will be retained by other institutions?
- Are there issues that impede participation in a shared print agreement, such as budget or space issues, lack of infrastructure or expertise, etc.?
- How does collection management planning relate to future plans for the library's physical space? How much (or what percentage of) space is currently allocated for shelving? How much space is currently available in the library stacks? In a storage facility? Which areas of the collection have reached or are nearing capacity?
- Does the current configuration of space support or impede the library's overall goals? For example, if the library envisions an environment where users can engage with special collections materials, a goal might be to allocate more space for exhibits and classrooms.
- How might a collaborative collection management plan benefit users? In what ways might it hinder access?
- What are the library's goals in joining a shared print archiving program?
- Which, if any, shared print archiving program(s) could the library join? Is the program based on shared central storage, distributed archiving, or both? What does the collection profile look like?
- Does the shared print program include a policy-making role for faculty of member institutions, e.g., serving on an advisory board?

- What are the policies on optimal or minimum number of copies retained within the consortium?
- What is the duration of retention commitments made by participants in the shared print program?
- What level of validation is required for copies retained on behalf of the program: e.g., page, issue, or volume level for journals? Is there any provision for ensuring that “best copies” (in terms of physical condition) are retained and/or that completeness of journal runs is ensured with a mechanism for filling in gaps?
- What provisions are in place to secure patron access to materials in the shared print program? How frequently can materials be delivered to campus? What is the length of the loan period? What provisions are in place for digital delivery and/or print on demand access? Does the program allow patrons to use materials on-site? Can patrons request long journal runs and groups of specialized materials?

Collection Analysis and Decision Support Tools

Collections analysis will play a vital role for libraries preparing to manage collections in the context of regional and national needs. Institutions must compare their holdings with those of other institutions to identify overlaps and gaps at the consortial level. Duplicate holdings must be identified, as well as potentially scarce or unique items. Data will also be used to assess the values and outcomes of collaborative initiatives and to demonstrate need and provide justification for further funding. As institutions and consortia advance toward data-informed strategies, a collection management plan must address the need for local methodologies, tools, expertise, and infrastructure to support evidence-based life-cycle management. Collection review and evaluation has proved to be a challenge for libraries in past decades. However, decision support tools have the potential to significantly reduce the labor (or cost) involved in decision making for retention, weeding, transfer to storage, preservation, and transfer to special collections. These tools allow librarians to set criteria (such as usage level, dates of publication, languages, number of copies available worldwide) and comparison groups (peer institutions, HathiTrust Digital Library, etc.) and then review the resulting “pick lists.” Although rules must be developed and data analyzed up front, these tools ultimately save time by decreasing the need for item-level review. While some libraries may choose to create their own decision support tools, there are also a number of existing tools that could be used in the planning process. OCLC’s WorldCat Collections Analysis is a Web-based service that provides analysis and comparison of collections based on WorldCat holdings. The Getting It System Toolkit team at SUNY Geneseo developed a free open-source tool called the Gift and Deselection Manager,

which can be used in conjunction with weeding projects or gifts processing. Sustainable Collections Services offers a commercial decision-support tool for monographs in academic libraries that combines circulation and item data with WorldCat holdings, Hathi Trust Digital Library holdings, and authoritative title lists. The Center for Research Libraries and the California Digital Library are collaborating to produce a decision support tool for journals that is expected to be available in 2012.

Questions to Consider

- What kinds of data must be collected about local and regional collections? Does the library currently have the infrastructure and expertise necessary to analyze this data?
- In what ways can collections analysis support the ongoing developing of the collection management plan?
- Will the library develop in-house support tools, use existing tools, or use a combination of both? What are the capabilities or limitations of existing tools?
- What criteria and comparison groups will be used to develop “pick lists”?
- Is the library’s circulation system optimally configured to provide data about how frequently (or how recently) an item has circulated?

Bibliographic Records, Discovery, and Access

At a 2012 Print Archives Network meeting, Lizanne Payne recently remarked, “the single biggest improvement we could make to support shared print efforts would be detailed local holdings for all libraries.” Accurate and useful bibliographic records are essential to collaborative collection management. Libraries preparing to participate in shared print programs should make every effort to ensure that materials that are eligible for collaborative collection management are cataloged to a level that allows holdings analysis and cross-collection comparison. The plan should also include provisions for updates of local holdings statements and improvements to bibliographic data. No library has perfect bibliographic data, and this can be a labor-intensive project. While data vary widely across institutions, they can be normalized using a common control number (such as a valid OCLC number or Library of Congress control number) to enable comparisons across collections. Individual institutions or consortia can sample records to determine the nature and degree of variability and data issues. OCLC reclamation projects are often a useful precursor to consortial collection management activities. A major obstacle in shared print archiving has been the lack of infrastructure for sharing metadata about retention and preservation commitments. However, work is under way to define a metadata standard. In 2011, OCLC began a

pilot study to explore the feasibility of using the MARC 21 583 Action Note field to disclose commitments in the local holdings record. The study focuses on serial titles, which often vary greatly in terms of completeness and physical condition. Required subfields will be used to declare that a title has been retained, note the date the retention commitment began, and specify the institution that is registering the print archiving commitment. Additional fields can then be used to note whether a title has been reviewed for condition or completeness and to describe both the extent to which a review has been carried out (title level, volume level, or issue level) and the outcome of the review (e.g., whether the journal run was complete, whether there were condition issues). In addition, OCLC is establishing new institutions symbols to identify the library or storage facility's print archive locations. It is hoped that standardized use of the MARC 21 583 field will enable libraries to distribute responsibility for print preservation of long journal runs across multiple institutions.

Questions to Consider

- Are there bibliographic records for all general collections materials? How accurate and complete are the library's bibliographic records in general? Are there limitations that might affect collection management decision making?
- How accurate are the holdings statements for journals and other materials in series?
- Has the library done an OCLC reclamation project? How might a consortium handle issues identified in a reclamation project?
- What kind of copy-level usage data does the library have access to? Is the circulation system optimally configured to provide this data?
- What steps should be taken to prepare for a new protocol for using the MARC 21 583 field?

Selection for Retention in Open Stacks, in Storage, and Transfer to Special Collections

As libraries continue to grapple with limited space and resources, life cycle management, or "continuous collection management," will be a standard mode of operation. Libraries must establish a framework that addresses the operational and organizational aspects of managing collections. As collections are systematically moved through the various stages, the collection management plan should provide guidelines about which materials will be retained in open stacks, which will be transferred to special collections, which will go to local off-site storage or a regional shared collections facility, which will be digitized, and which will be withdrawn. Over time, discipline

and subject classification-specific criteria should be added to the plan as it develops. Guidelines should take into account both the initial investment to acquire, catalog, and provide access to the materials, as well as the ongoing costs of retention. Among the key issues to consider in formulating retention policies are space considerations on campus, availability of off-site storage, preferences for print or digital formats, retention guidelines for specific formats (newspapers, films, sound recordings, maps, etc.), criteria for a trusted archive for digital surrogates, and last copy guidelines. At the consortial level, the issue of “last copies” is particularly relevant for libraries participating in collaborative collection management programs. A number of consortia have policies to retain a last copy of every unique title, thereby ensuring retention of at-risk content. Examples of consortial last copy agreements include the Virtual Academic Library Environment of New Jersey (2009) and the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (2006). At a minimum, an individual library is advised to fashion a last copy policy that ensures the preservation of locally produced and locally important publications. This can often be the basis of a library’s contribution to regional and national collective collections.

Questions to Consider

- What kind of usage data are available, and how will they be used to select materials for on-campus retention?
- How might decision support tools be used to identify materials for on-campus retention, transfer to off-site storage, or weeding?
- How will on-campus retention guidelines reflect disciplinary differences in the use of scholarly literature, in both print and electronic formats?
- Under what circumstances will the library retain print materials that have been digitized? Under what circumstances should these materials remain on-site?
- Are there indexed collection segments (e.g., newspaper or journal runs) that are particularly suitable for storage? Are these materials already included in a shared print archive? Are there collection segments that are not particularly suitable?
- How can the loss of “browseability” be mitigated by improving intellectual access to materials stored in an off-site facility (e.g., add more subject headings, tie to printed indexes, scan or purchase tables of contents and indexes)?
- Will last print copies be accessible in the open stacks or held in storage?
- What criteria can be used to identify general collections materials that should be transferred to special collections or to “medium rare” collections?
- What criteria can be used to help identify materials that may be vulnerable to theft or damage and should be transferred to a “medium rare” location? How can these criteria be effectively applied? Through a shelf review?

Through the use of decision support tools? Can projects to identify rare materials be combined with weeding or inventory projects?

Selection for Weeding

Until recently, many academic institutions tended to avoid weeding on a large scale, often opting instead to send less relevant or duplicate material to off-site storage. However, the emergence of shared print strategies and the growing availability of digital surrogates, coupled with an urgent need for space, may usher in the “Golden Age of Weeding” (Lugg and Fischer 2008). Several weeding manuals, notably *CREW: A Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries* (Larson 2008), cite use data and relevance to the local collection as primary criteria. These criteria, while important, were largely a function of local collection values, priorities, clientele, and programs. While it is important to establish local criteria, collection management plans should address changing guidelines and approaches for weeding in a collaborative context. For libraries participating in shared print programs, local weeding requires a coordinated approach. Increasingly, weeding is linked to the availability of digital surrogates, both for journals and monographs. Policies for weeding must also be closely tied with programs for last-copy retention. Libraries planning to withdraw materials must first determine whether the item is a last copy in the consortium, state, or region. Seaman (2005) noted that, in the case of collaboratively managed collections in a shared repository, “unnecessary duplication” is relative; duplication in one institution might be an important third copy to another. While the need to free up space may be a strong motivation for libraries to weed their collections, traditional approaches generally required item-level review, which has often prevented libraries from taking on weeding projects. As discussed earlier, decision-support tools may be the most feasible means for responsible weeding, particularly for libraries looking to take on large-scale projects to reduce the collections footprint. Lugg and Fischer (2009) advocate for a rules-based approach that adopts elements of approval plans; using support software, a “disapproval plan” is created by running profiles against lists of low-use titles, which are checked against WorldCat, peer institution holdings, Google Books, and a variety of other databases to determine the regional and global availability or scarcity of an item.

Questions to Consider

- What are the library’s goals in weeding? To improve “browseability”? To assure relevancy of the collections? To free up space?
- Has a collection analysis been conducted to identify areas of the collection that might benefit most from weeding? What criteria will be used?
- Are ongoing weeding programs preferable to large, one-time projects? For staff? For patrons?

- Does the library have the capacity for deselection projects? Does technical services have the staff capacity to process withdrawn materials? To secure digital access rights HathiTrust and other shared digital archives, records must indicate that a withdrawn title was previously owned.
- Does the library's weeding criteria take into account the holdings of other libraries?
- What safeguards can be put in place to prevent regrettable errors in weeding? How might the library partner with faculty in developing goals and criteria for weeding projects?

Disposition of Withdrawn Materials

Disposition has long been one of the most politically charged aspects of collection management, and libraries have perhaps cultivated the misperception that everything can, in fact, be kept forever. But as institutions gain confidence in a national network of shared print collections, complemented by the availability of an ever-increasing collection of digital surrogates, they will likely begin divesting duplicate copies from the collection on an unprecedented scale. While libraries welcome the opportunity to free up valuable space, they may not be prepared for the potential logistical, legal, and political issues that may arise. It may be perceived as yet another betrayal of the public's trust, a *Double Fold* redux. Because of the potential political consequences of disposing of materials, the collection management plan should include a disposition policy that outlines criteria and processes for disposing of withdrawn materials and addresses any related considerations, such as institutional laws or rules governing disposition of property and public relations considerations in withdrawing gift materials. The public may be more sympathetic to the concept of disposition if the library makes a good effort to find homes for withdrawn materials. Plans should highlight the positive aspects of withdrawing materials: library book sales, donation programs like Books for Africa, or sales through vendors such as Better World Books or Zubaal Books.

Encouraging faculty to participate in the process is equally important in maintaining the public's trust. Metz and Gray (2005) reflected on the communications aspects of a project to withdraw 160,000 volumes and move 270,000 volumes to storage over a seven-year period at the Virginia Tech Libraries. Sharing criteria and guidelines for the project with faculty members, giving them the opportunity to review items selected for discard, and offering discarded materials to relevant departments all contributed to the success of the project. The involvement of faculty also provided an additional safeguard against making regrettable errors in the weeding process.

Questions to Consider

- How much effort is the library willing to invest in finding homes for withdrawn materials?

- Will materials be recycled if they cannot be reused? What are campus policies on recycling?
- What efforts should be made to prevent “dumpster diving” by faculty and students? How will the library communicate the rationales for withdrawing materials, and who will be responsible for the message?

Education, Outreach, and Communication

Libraries may be tempted to limit public communication about shared collection management, preferring to downplay decisions to participate in shared print collection initiatives to avoid drawing scrutiny. This is particularly true when discussions turn to deduplication of collections. However, the risk of not communicating with campus constituents—and thereby losing the public’s trust—is far greater. As stewards of community resources, librarians have an obligation to inform, educate, and engage the larger community in major collection management decisions and programs. For most institutions, the first task in securing support from the community is to educate and persuade library staff. Like users, many library staff have a strong emotional investment to the physical collections and may be reluctant to participate in shared print programs. To effectively communicate with outside stakeholders, library staff must understand the relevant facts, potential benefits, and rationale for repository storage, shared print collections, and deduplication. The library should also prepare staff to handle objections they may encounter from the public.

Gaining support of the administration, for example, the chief academic officer, is the logical next step. Discussions with the appropriate faculty governance group (e.g., library committee) are essential. Outreach and education are not one-time projects. It often takes several years to raise the level of real engagement with the issues and garner support of appropriate guidelines, criteria, strategies, and plans. Large-scale collection management projects can be a good time to secure the support of the administration and of faculty opinion leaders in communication and outreach efforts. Once a collection management plan is in place, communications plans should be developed to ensure effective communication for specific projects. While questions, complaints, and criticisms may be inevitable, a carefully managed plan may prevent them from turning into a crisis.

Questions to Consider

- Does the library have public relations plan? To whom will questions and complaints be directed? What is the plan for communication, education, and public relations?

- How will the library tap into the expertise of the faculty? How can they be involved in discussions of the library's space needs, collection strengths and weaknesses, collection management plan, and shared collections initiatives?

CONCLUSION

While the potential benefits of shared collection management are strong motivations for libraries to enter into consortial print agreements, they must first understand and articulate the potential risks as well as the methodologies, tools, and infrastructure necessary to ensure success. By demonstrating overarching collection management principles and strategies and by engaging the community served in thinking about and participating in stewardship of its collections, the collection management plan can inform and improve decision making. While the planning process may generate more questions than it answers (as evidenced here), it can be used as a starting point to generate discussion. As the plan continually changes, it provides an opportunity to periodically reengage colleagues throughout the library and campus constituents in discussion of how the collection is evolving and being managed. Planning, though time-consuming, is justified by its importance to future success. The authors will be putting their ideas about writing collection management plans to the test over the next few years and encourage readers to do the same. Share your results with us and with each other. Collectively we can build a body of experience and develop templates to guide the writing of coherent and convincing plans for managing our legacy collections as a system-wide resource.

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