

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Discuss critically the contribution that a formal written collection development policy can make to managing the collections and services of a library or information unit, and analyse the constraints to formulating and administering a policy

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1 | INTRODUCTION

To build a library that is able to serve its users' needs, a number of elements should be utilised to accomplish this goal. One of the primary roles that should be carried out by the librarians and managers is planning and development of an appropriate library collection development policy. This would be a stepping stone to the building of a collection that meets the needs of the users.

The collection development policy statement is one of the main elements that present the library's mission. The role of this policy is to examine the current collection in terms of the strength and weakness and also to determine aspects that should be modified which will be used in determining future collection levels, and policies. It also provides a benchmark against which to measure success in reaching those levels. To the extent that they match, collections for the mission and policies also can be a guarantee that the collection being developed serves the entertainment, educational, and research mission of the parent institution or community (Johnson, 2009).

The collection development policy statement is widely acceptable to the most of the information profession and in many libraries as well. It is a written statement of the rules which is a guide to the library's choice of books or other materials. It also includes the standards that are used in accepting gifts, and in

choosing materials. Also, it can address future goals, intellectual freedom, and particular areas of attention (Peggy, 2004).

There are several reasons for writing a collection development policy. The main reason is to have a written policy statement which will serve as a guideline to librarians when purchasing and collecting resources thereby preventing them from purchasing a random set of resources, which will not contribute towards the mission of the library. It may also be used as a guide for the collection of electronic resources which are becoming more significant to libraries in general and consumes an ever-increasing share of library funds. Consequently, choice decisions regarding electronic resources should be done within an explicit collection development policy. This may, however, be a separate policy or an integrated one (Biblarz et al., 2001).

There are many elements which are considered significant in a collection development policy, but the American Library Association (ALA) standard identified three essential elements in the collection development policy which are very significant.

- The first element is the general overview that gives an introduction to the policy and also describes the society the library serves. Additionally, this section introduces the library collection development efforts and defines and explains the operations covered by

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the policy. Other aspects that are generally covered include the aim of the policy, its clientele, a description of the institution, and also an overview of how the collection has been developed. It also includes details on the kinds of the patron or program needs that are to be met by the collection, as well as the general priorities and limitations from the collection that should be included in the policy.

- The second element includes a detailed subject analysis of the collection, the sorts of classes and materials of users that are covered. There are five levels of collecting resources and these are; the general coverage, working collection, instructional, comprehensive and research level (Olaajo and Akewukereke, 2006).

The collection development policy could be written by the library manager or the director of the library. It may also be written by several librarians. The treatment of gifts and donations, methods of selection, weeding and collection assessment, are also included (Johnson, 2014). This essay will discuss critically, the contribution that a formal written collection development policy can make to managing the collections and services of a library or information unit, and analyse the constraints to formulating and administering such policy.

Importance of collection development policy

The collection development policy has an important value in a library and collection development policy statements are considered necessary documents in the library. The prevailing view between information professionals and librarians is that the collection development policy is a valuable tool that contributes to the formation of informed decisions. According to Gorman and Miller (1997), the ideal collection policy is a living document, which is reviewed and revised regularly, and also it guides the processes of acquiring, organizing and providing access to information sources and materials, integrating these into coherent collections, managing their growth and maintenance, and making decisions regarding the withdrawal, cancellation, and preservation. In general, policies facilitate consistency and communication between libraries and information which is a tool that is used for working with the library's community (Gorman and Miller, 1997).

Additionally, a written collection development policy statement is also considered significant as it

serves in identifying the aims of the policy and also to facilitate cooperation and coordination within a library system and between cooperating libraries. It should be written in a good way, and it should serve as a daily working tool by providing the significant guidelines for carrying out the majority of assignments in the area of collection building (Gardner, 1981).

According to Gardner (1981), that policy is a planning document which serves as a resource for availability change, user change and need change. Also, a policy able to draw awareness to these changes can act as a collection of baseline data for current services and as a starting point for development in the future.

As a written statement of intent, the collection development policy statement describes the purpose and scope to collections and the programs and constituencies in the library which are served. At its largest practical level, the plan guides those who routinely use and manage a library's collections (Mack, 2003). Also, it is necessary to determine the ways in which the collection development policy is able to protect libraries against immoral, illegal and unreasonable pressures. In addition, the protection of the prevention of censorship and intellectual freedom can be achieved by including intellectual freedom statements and the Library Statement of rights which can be tailored to the local society (The American Library Association, 1987).

In addition, a written statement can protect the library from pressures to provide irrelevant and unsuitable materials. It also provides guidelines which will clearly guide the library staff in the suitable handling of gifts and help to avoid the burden of inappropriate, disposable and unwanted items. Also by determining the procedures and policy for declining, accepting, accessioning, appraising, processing gifts and acknowledging the potential donors, the library is protected practically and legally (Gardner, 1981). As a result of budget decrease, the cost of materials can be increased so that the library needs protection since they prepare to weed materials and cancel serials from the collection. It also helps to make obvious the operating rules under which these decisions are made in order to protect the library from irresponsible behaviour and charges of bias. The policy also defines the process through which

materials are identified for cancellation, withdrawal and replacement, and by whom.

Purpose of collection development policy

The main purpose of a written policy statement is to clarify both flexibility and stability in the collection building process. Also, a written plan should be developed and grown with the collection. While the policy forms a basic framework for proposed increase, it is necessary that it is examined at regular intervals to guarantee that it continues to provide an acceptable pattern for efficient collection building. (Gardner, 1981).

Collection development policy is supposed to be very important for the following reasons:

First it helps to set standards or rules for weeding and the selection of materials. It is also a form of assurance that the library will commit itself to serving all parts of the community, both present, and future.

Secondly it informs administrators, users, and other libraries of collection scope and facilitates coordination of collection development among institutions.

Also it serves as a tool of complaint handling about inclusions or exclusions and also contributes to the operational efficiency regarding routine decisions.

, and it helps to ensure continuity in collections of any size and provides a pattern and framework to ease the transition from one librarian to the next.

, and also it helps minimise personal bias by selectors and to highlight imbalances in selection criteria. It also demands that librarians think through the library aims and commit themselves to these aims in identifying long and short range needs of users and to establish priorities for allocating funds.

In addition ,It provides information to assist in budget allocations. Also, it provides a means of staff self-evaluation, or for evaluation by outsiders and serves as an in-service training tool for new employees.

Finally, it helps demonstrate that the library is running a business-like operation (Clayton and Gorman, 2001).

In addition Collection Development Policies (CDPs) should be as the summary to be easy to follow and

also it must be updated.

There are many libraries that have collection development policy statement including national libraries, academic libraries, public libraries and commercial libraries. For example British Library Collection Development Policies (CDPs) is considered a short and easy to follow whereas Wellcome Trust Collection Development Policies (CDPs) is more practical ,but much more longe.

Problems affecting collection development policies There were some problem which affected the collection development policy during the past decade. The first issue is related to the information explosion, especially with increasing number of researchers, the quantity of the research and publishers. This implies that libraries are faced with the daunting challenge of providing access to all information despite the increase of information.

The second issue involves the struggle between the provision of quality information and meeting high demands. Libraries require accurate and current information and they must also get and provide access to the materials. The impact of technology is also important as this has increased the problem in obtaining information. To illustrate, libraries do not only have to also have to provide the materials in suitable alternative formats. Libraries are also working to contend with rising cost of materials in conjunction with the decreasing space in their physical facilities. (Osburn, and Atkinson,1991).

According to Snow (1996), a collection development policies has to be founded on a continuous evaluation of the library's stock and this process is confusing and challenging. According to the author, a written collection development policies are just wasted words. Revising the policy is also time-consuming and never-ending, albeit essential. The main weakness of the policies is the inflexibility and inability to adapt to changes in the parent institution. Collection development policies have no value in the area of resource sharing in consortia, as was hoped to be the case in most of these co-operative ventures because each library needs immediate access to certain items and therefore tends to develop its library collection, not a popular collection (Snow 1996).

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Another issue revolving around policies is related to electronic materials. This involves the additional cost of electronic resources and maintenance of the technological trends that help to maintain the selection of electronic sources. There is also a continuous upsurge in the use of audio and visual library materials and these require constant evaluation. Responsibility for money spent is somewhat evident in development policy documents, but nowhere more substantial than in the assessment of the collection. Among these areas are the archiving and collecting of electronic journals, the internet and its relationship to collection building cooperative efforts in the preservation of materials and collection development (Mack, 2003). For these reasons, there are many libraries in existence that do not possess a written policy especially considering the time and energy required (Hoffmann., and Wood, 2005).

Collection development policy should not be considered a problem because its benefits outweigh its problems. In fact, some of the issues can be solved by things such as electronic media except for reference tools, the internet and cooperative ventures which are recognized as alternative solutions to the money problem. Librarians at many academic libraries and large public libraries find it increasingly difficult to give up control of their collection to consortium development while librarians at smaller and perhaps less prestigious institutions are making great strides with smaller but more successful network and consortia (Futas,1995). Also, digital resources are crucial in collection development policy to many librarians and information professionals.

2 | CONCLUSION

In conclusion, collection development policy serve as a guideline to help libraries to determine which information resource has a value to the library and which needs to be abandoned. The process of building and developing this policy must involve all people related to the library such as librarians and library users to guarantee that this policy will serve its purpose. This policy has many advantages to the library

and helps it to carefully select the materials that will be included in its collection. However, there are some challenges that face libraries while using this policy in the acquisition process. The libraries are not able to acquire all information resources available as this will cost too much. Additionally, there are new types of information resources that might not be included in the policy which requires updating this policy regularly. The availability of this policy in the libraries is a necessity, but there is a need for caution while developing it to be suitable for library goals and users.

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