

Collection Development and Resource Sharing – A Reexamination

D. RAJESWARI

Sri Padmavati Mahila University Library, Tirupati - 517 502

Abstract

Taking into account the objectives and resources available, every library has to evolve a pragmatic and positive approach for developing its collection to meet the information needs of its users. The problems encountered by the libraries in India for this, however, are shrinking budgets, rare and out of print books, and lack of comprehensive and up-to-date tools for non-book materials. The author describes the efforts made by INFLIBNET in the area of library networking and resource sharing and concludes that the collection building and resources sharing using sophisticated technology will take some time to set in.

Introduction

The collection development activity is a coordinate effort in which the authorities, the users and the library staff have to take active part. Some policy statements should provide information about potential users and their information needs, the resources, and the availability of resource sharing among the libraries. Taking into account the objectives and resources available, every library has to evolve a pragmatic and positive development policy which helps to meet all the reasonable information needs of its users. The users studies have provided the librarians better means of assessing what the users expect from the libraries, their demands can not be met from the internal resources of any one library. Resource sharing arrangements have spelt the death knell of the old, concept of 'self sufficiency'. It is now difficult to call some one as the user of a particular library as his information needs can be met only from the resources of the region.

The ticklish question is how to draw a dividing line between what an individual library should buy from its resources and for which it can depend on the resources of the sharing system. In other words the present collection activity is more dependent and complimentary to the collective decision of the resource sharing system.

Problems of Collection Development in India

Shrinking Budgets

Every year more documents are published. The information is also increasing. There is a heavier demand for the sources of information. The budget allotted to most of the libraries however, remains static year after year. Prices of books and other reading materials are going up continuously. Availability of more literature, the increasing demand for it and inadequate money to purchase adequate literature to meet the growing demands, creates a serious problem in collection building. Even the libraries of the richest country do not have enough money to purchase available reading material to meet the demands of their users. Though the problem of shrinking budget is a universal one, it is quite serious in India.

For higher education and research the Indian scholars and researchers mostly depend on foreign publications. Since foreign books are costly, Indian University libraries have not adequate grants to purchase the adequate foreign publications to meet the growing demands of the users.

Rare and Out of print books

Besides the current publications there is always a need to add to the library collection such publications as are now rare and out of print. Personal collection of some scholars and book lovers may have many rare and out of print publications worth acquiring for a library. The owners may also be persuaded to give away such collections to the library as gift.

Non-Book Materials

Recently the non book material has become an important part of the library collection. In India there are very few suppliers of non-book materials. The lack of comprehensive and up-to-date selection tools for non-book material further adds to the problems of the libraries.

Library Networking

Information dissemination and resource sharing are two of the major objectives of INFLIBNET programme. To meet these objectives successfully an efficient document supply service is of paramount importance. Coopeative acquisition/collection development, a spinoff of resource sharing is advocated by INFLIBNET. Libraries in a region will be requested to develop their collections based on mutually agreed

acquisition profiles with a view to minimise duplication in acquisition. A librarian will discontinue subscription to a journal only if he/she is confident of getting a copy of an article from this journal from other library in the shortest possible time. This confidence will come only if the network services perform well.

INFLIBNET proposes to provide a variety of network services to its users. The successful implementation of the network services will depend to a large extent on the willingness of the participants to cooperate with each other with a sense of 'give and take'.

Conclusion

The paper is based on the assumption that the collection building is mainly confined to the printed documents and the resource sharing using sophisticated technology will take some time to set in.

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