Collection and Assets Management: One University Library's Journey to the Future

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Abstract

Academic libraries worldwide have witnessed a number of trends and paradigm shifts over the last decade. It is vital for university libraries to develop a collection of high standards to satisfy academics and researchers for supporting the vision and mission of a university. The area of collection development and management is the most important part of any library. This paper reports on the problems and prospects of collection and asset management of the University Library of Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT). The insight for the paper comes from the authors' first-hand experience supported by literature review. Detailed information regarding the purchase of books, serials, policies regarding the acquisition, and changing trends and problems were collected from the official records with the help of a structured data sheet. The study discovers the current trends in collection and asset management in CUSAT and point out the changes likely to be adopted in future.

Keywords: Collection Management, Asset Management, Collection Development, University Library

1. Introduction

Collection management is a set of interrelated activities involved in building and maintaining a collection of library resources to serve the needs and wants of its clients (Kennedy, 2006). The process of collection management includes evaluation of existing collections, making decisions about withdrawal, transfer and preservation. There are numerous challenges, trends and paradigm shifts occurring worldwide in collection development and collection management in libraries. Rapid development in ICT, information overload, changing trends in scholarly communication, diversion of funds, fiscal constraints are the major factors influencing the process of acquisition. The purpose of this study is to trace out problems and prospects of collection and asset management of the university library of Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT), Kerala. Since all the state funded universities in India are working on the same pattern, the problems faced by them are identical. An understanding of challenges and trends in collection management shall help to shape the future roles of university libraries in India.

2. CUSAT: An Overview

CUSAT is a premier science and technology university in India. The university has three campuses. The main campus is situated at Thrikkakara, 15 kilometers away from Cochin city and one campus at the heart of the city. CUSAT has a campus at Pulinkunnu, Alappuzha District for engineering studies. CUSAT has currently twenty eight departments of study and research offering postgraduate programmes across a wide spectrum of disciplines in frontier areas of science and technology. During the last decades of its existence, CUSAT has registered steady growth and has earned recognition as one of the highly reputed and

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internationally acclaimed Indian universities. The university has academic links and exchange programmes with several institutions across the globe.

3.   Cochin University Library (CUL): A profile

The University library system of CUSAT was established in 1977. The university library is situated at the main campus. The library system of CUSAT consists of one central library and 21 departmental libraries. CUL acts as the central agency to cater information requirements of all CUSAT community. The CUL has more than one lakh resources which comprise books, patents, theses and dissertations and bound volumes of journals. Presently it caters to around 6000 users. The CUL was one of the earliest libraries to automate its functions with the aid of MHO programme of Netherlands. It used Adlib software up to 2009. Now this is the first University library in Kerala to use Koha library management system for central library as well as department libraries. The holdings of the central library and departmental libraries are accessible through the union catalog of the University (http://cusatopac.cusat.ac.in).The university library purchases an average 2500 books per year mainly on the basis of recommendations from the heads of the departments. The annual budget allotment for books and journals for the current financial year (2012-13) is 175 lakhs. Out of this, 65 lakhs are allocated for books, 10 lakhs for e-books and remaining 110 lakhs is meant for journals. The library subscribes to151 foreign journals, 52 Indian journals and 12 databases. Besides this the library provides access to more than 7000 online journals available through consortium.

4. Trends and Shifts in Collection Management (CM): A Review

A review of literature confirms that libraries are in the midst of a profound transition as a result of the impact of various factors. Bracke (2010) analysed the patron driven collection development of books in Science and Technology areas in Purdue university library and found that patron driven selection is one of the successful ways to augment collection development on demand. Waheed (2012) highlighted the key issues on challenges faced by libraries in CM of e-books in Pakistani perspective. Demas and Miller (2012) reviewed challenges of CM during the emergence of shared print repositories. Chandal and Saikia (2012) reviewed that in spite of innumerable advantages of e-resources, there are certain problems relating to their acquisition, maintenance, management, etc. Armstrong and Lonsdale (2005) stressed the need for a national model license, identifying the issues of licensing of e-books. Sun and Chen (2012) proposed a new stack management model by changing the layout of the book stacks and management principles as well as employing RFID to facilitate effective space utilization. Vasileiou, Rowley and Hartley (2012) examined an e-book management framework and identified the processes associated with it including: collection development policy, budget, evaluation and selection, license negotiations, cataloging and delivery, marketing/promotion, user education, monitoring and reviewing. In short the review of related literature pointed out the following issues and challenges in collection management.

Rapid growth in size and scope of library collections

Focus from Collection development to management of library collections

Attempts at cooperative collection development

Economic constraints

Digital information system

Expectations and needs of different users

Limitations in library staff and budget adaptability

Change in the scholarly communications system

Ownership and control of information in the digital information system

Managing storage of print collections

Digital formats

Licensing issues

4.1 Collection Management at CUL

4.1.1 Print Books

Books are acquired on the basis of priority list of latest publications recommended by various heads of departments in the University. The total amount allocated for book purchase is almost equally allotted, depending on the courses conducted, among the different departments/schools. In the budget, 10% is kept apart for reference books, 5% for general books and 85% for subject books. The list of books belonging to reference, general, and subjects is placed before the book selection committee for approval. They are purchased from standard vendors who supply the items within a stipulated time.

The bibliographic details of the books are entered into the KOHA database, an open source integrated library system. Books are classified according to Universal Decimal Classification (UDC), and catalogued as per AACR-2, and made available to the users at the new arrivals rack for for a fixed period of time. From there, the books shall go to different stacks viz. reference, social science, science and technology, fiction etc. The library provides open access to all categories of collections. The web based Online Public Access Catalogue allows the users to retrieve their subject interests through different search options. The list of new books is also published under a separate link "new arrivals" on the library website as an easy access point to all forthcoming titles available in the library collection. This service allows the users to reserve their books well in advance.

4.1.2 Online/E-Books

In the current financial year, an amount of Rupees Ten Lakhs has been earmarked for the purchase of e-books whereas in the previous year only 5% of the total budget was utilized for procuring e-books (50 titles). Publishers offer e-books mainly in two models-

Single user model in which the e-book can be downloaded in a device   (e-book reader or a stand alone computer).

Multiple user model, usually referred as online books that is accessible on 24x7 mode.

 E-books can be purchased directly from the publishers or from e-book aggregators. Different purchase models are being offered by these agencies

Pick and choose option: We can select and purchase the required number of titles from the publisher's catalogue for a one time payment. Free perpetual access for these items is provided by most of the publishers.

Subject collections/packages: Almost all the publishers offer subject packages. A subject package may include the e-book titles published in that specific subject till date. Subject packages are offered in subscription mode.

In CUL e-books recommended by department heads have been selected only from those reputed publishers who provided "pick and choose" option with perpetual access. All the publishers offer IP authenticated access of e-books across the campus network. A downloadable link is provided in the OPAC for accessing e-books. Hence when a user searches for a particular subject book, a list of both print and e-books will be displayed in the search results. The e-book link takes the user to the webpage so that the title can be directly accessed from the publisher's website. A separate link is also provided in the library website as "E-books" to browse all the available e-books in a single window. (http://library.cusat.ac.in/eg/ebooks.php).

4.1.3   Print Journals

CUL's collection development policy insists to purchase journals according to the priority list of heads of departments of CUSAT. CUL follows centralized purchasing model. Presently the university library subscribes to 203 print journals. Most of the print journals are acquired by directly from the publishers. The library depend vendors for the rest. 'Kardex system' is used for recording the details of periodicals. They are are displayed in the periodical hall according to alphabetical order.

4.1.4 Online Journals and Databases

CUSAT central library witnessed a gradual growth of e-journals during 2003-2012. In this period, the library acquired both bibliographic databases and full text databases along with online journal versions of print journals. Currently 36 online journals and 12 full text databases are subscribed by the CUL. Besides these online databases, CUL provides access to more than 7000 online journals through UGC Infonet digital library consortium.

Effective access of online journals is ensured through University library website (http://library.cusat.ac.in). The CUL website is a gateway to the information resources,   activities, functions and services. One of the major components of library website is E-Gate way. E-gateway grants direct link to all e-resources accessible in the campus, which includes CUSAT subscriptions, e-resources under UGC Infonet digital library consortium and INDEST consortium. A common platform for searching e-journals is provided under a link

'Find e-journals'. In addition to this, to fulfill various user requirements, subject wise, publisher wise and alphabetical wise e-journal lists are provided. Besides these three major components, the portal provides access to the list of print journals, magazines, CD-ROMs, Online databases, newspapers (subject and alphabetical wise) and direct link to print+online journals being currently subscribed to the university library. Direct links to vast collection of open access directories and journals are provided under the heading 'Open Access Resources'.

5. Collection Management Challenges

5.1 Print Resources

There is a trend of decline in number of journals subscribed over the years due to the increase in the price of the journal and conversion rate of foreign currency. In the case of print journals the increasing cost compelled CUL to cut many print subscriptions. The librarian has to decide what is to be cancelled based on the user community who will suffer the least. Space management and preservation cost are another challenges of print journals in CUL. Print journals are bound and stored in separate section named "bound volumes". Storage space is a grave challenge faced by all university libraries and CUL is no exception. Storage space is deficient to accommodate back volumes of journals and new titles in book stacks. At present book lofts are being raised in the stacks to store less used books. Unless immediate steps are initiated to expand the library building and formulate explicit norms for weeding out used and worn out books, it will be difficult to manage the overcrowded stacks. Binding and at times rebinding of worn out books is done periodically to preserve the existing collection.

5.2   Online Resources

As far as access is concerned online resources are the ideal solution for users. They permit full-text access via computer terminals irrespective of the location of users. One of the major problems with online resources is the issue of archival. Unlike print resources, electronic resources cannot be considered a permanent addition to a collection. Payment for a database or e-journal covered by a license is having time limit to use the particular product. This payment is not for the outright purchase of the product or for ownership of all the rights of a particular product. Very few publishers will in fact guarantee access to what you have paid for after you stop subscribing to their electronic product.

Below are some issues to take into consideration when selecting databases:

Some publishers may provide the archived information on a CD-ROM, usually at an additional cost, but many do not.

Check it and become more familiar with reviewing licenses for databases.

Setup a trial to see how the database is delivered (IP address or password) and test the usability of the database.

Consider periodicity of usage statistics, because it is one of the reliable methods for collection evaluation, one of the major components of collection management.

In most cases the cost of e-books is more or at par with hardbound print version. This is negligible when compared with its value added features like multiple user access, search-retrieval facility, downloadable and printable options, etc. Publishers consider the reference books in electronic format as a different category and put them under a pricing option different from that of e-books. Even though a one-time purchase is possible for e-references, all the publishers charge an additional annual fee for updating and maintenance/ hosting for which a particular amount should be kept apart from the normal budgetary allocations in future.

A server has to be kept solely for downloading e-books, when the library plans to procure more e-books and maintain it for future use. At present the   e-books can be accessed only in the campus intranet. It can be extended to more users for use outside the campus through a secure password. As there is no issue of running out of space, e-books are the best solution to counter collection management issues. Policies are to be framed to make a cost-effective and optimum utilization of the funds received, keeping in view the needs of all university departments. User evaluation has to be conducted regularly to assess the awareness, needs and the extent of e-book usage to plan for the future. Collection management approaches of different university libraries can be examined to hold the growing print collections and alleviate or prevent shelf space constraints. University libraries need to co-operate with national or international network programs to avoid unnecessary redundancy in collections and to better meet patrons' information needs. This would allow institutions to maximize the usage of the existing resources of technology and infrastructure. (Agee and Sarah, 2007)

6. CUL Model for Asset Management

Intellectual outputs are considered as the assets of any university. It includes theses, dissertations and research reports produced by the faculty, research scholars and students of the university as part of teaching learning and research. The CUL maintains an institutional repository for preserving the intellectual outputs of the university. The CUL repository (Dyuthi) archives the intellectual outputs; preprints, post prints, theses, conference proceedings, teaching and learning materials and other scholarly publications of the scientific community of the CUSAT. The repository contains more than one thousand documents.

7. CUL – Future Directions

The CUL faces several challenges in collection management. To conquer the challenges, the library has to implement some strategies that may include the mechanism for evaluating the collection and methods of ownership and control of digital information. The process of providing advanced training on Integrated Library Management systems, Space management, Collection Management, Information Literacy, Search Strategies etc has to be enhanced.

Government of Kerala sanctioned to CUL a sum of rupees 8.30 crores under the modernization programme of university libraries. The amount is intended for new library building, ICT infrastructure development and the acquisition of e-journals and databases. New building may resolve the space problem, a crucial challenge in print resource management. The implementation of new inventory tools like RFID, CCTV etc shall facilitate collection management. The library professionals need advanced training in Koha software to manage all modules in the database.

8 . Conclusion

 ''A library is an investment in humanity in its progress and its struggles and its traditions'' (Paterson, 1999). To prove their value and relevance, libraries must endeavor to provide the right information to the right user at the right time with a right expense of financial and human resources. Collection management is a challenging arena in the digital age. The awareness of many new and evolving types of resources, selection of new materials in a wide variety of formats, evaluation of its relevance and usage, are enormous tasks in all types of libraries. The management of an academic library requires systematic planning and continuous learning.

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