

E-Collection Development Policy

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The paper traces origin, defines e-resources. Deals with the issues of e-collection development policy and problems that can be encountered in e-collection building, access etc.

Keywords: E-resource, Collection Development Policy

1. Introduction

Internet has radically changed libraries. Libraries are making ever increasing use of internet resources in provision of services. Electronic environment goes well beyond just internet/ web resources but those resources are becoming more & more dominant factors. Electronic formats cause libraries to concentrate their attention on overall operations & rethink about systems & services in a way never before required. To some extent it is a question of survival of our field. Electronic information producers can deliver the products directly to the users at home or in the office and increasingly they are doing so. Proper planning, realistic goals & intelligent reorganization of operations will only ensure that libraries plan an ever expanding role in information transfer process in electronic age.

Electronic delivery of information requires delivery platforms, equipment, software, substantial user support & time to access various services & products that producers offer. Few users have time, energy, inclination or funds to handle all these activities effectively. Librarians can & should undertake these tasks, if we do not do it some one else will do it.

1.1 Definitional Analysis

⇒ **E-Resources** : Any electronic product that delivers a collection of data be it in text referring it to full text databases, electronic journals, image collections, other multimedia products. These may be delivered on CD-ROM, Pen drive, via internet and so on are termed as e-resources. Internet has turned out to be prominent source of global information filled with billions of documents. E-resources, web resources, digital resources, online resources, internet resources etc. are synonymous terms.

⇒ **Collection Development Policy** : Collection development policy is library's master plan for building and maintaining its collection. It is a process of making certain that the library meets information needs of its customers in timely and economic manner using information resources produced both inside and outside the organization. It is a plan to correct collection weaknesses while maintaining its strengths.

2. Elements of Collection Development Policy

2.1 Element One: Overview

The statements like "The library is geared to serve the information needs of the customers". Should be given at the beginning of collection development policy document. The other aspects to be covered under this element are:

- Statement of overall objectives of the institution and its library
- A brief general description of the customers, their composition and what changes are likely to occur in future,
- Specific identification of customers, who are primary users,
- Is library going to serve others? To what extent? Will service to others be free or will there be fee?
- A general statement regarding parameters of collection, in which subject, limitation, type of format,
- Library's role in co-operative collection development programme
- A detailed description of type of Programmes or customer needs that collection must meet.

Needs Assessment

E-resources have created several problems for libraries: Print vs electronic; ownership vs access; user needs vs institutional needs; free vs Free; gatekeeper vs user selection, etc.

It is not a matter of either/ or, rather it is a matter of determining proper local mix. Judgment about this depends on information needs of local users, how and where they use it, what type of equipments they have, what network capabilities exists, monitory & equipment resources available to the libraries, etc.

E-resources are becoming more & more important in collection building because library users often prefer e-version, complex searches can be performed quickly e.g. Boolean searches, ease of downloading/ printing search results. E-resources present an opportunity for libraries to provide access to more resources than they can expect to acquire & house. Access of e-resources can be directed to users' home or work place allowing end users to make independent choice about what they want, from what source and how quickly. Access may be cost effective for libraries, even if they pay for all searches and documents ordered.

One advantage of e-resources with print collection is more effective tracking of person using information and what resources he/she has used. Many e-resources have management report software that

allows one to learn how & when users accessed the material. One gets accurate & complete data with less efforts. It is upto the librarian to make effective use of data to provide right information, at the right time, at the right cost.

The myths about e-resources especially e-journals (Hazel WoodWord, 1997) are:

- E-journals provide better access to journal articles.
- Academics & researchers read journals at their office desks.
- Readers want e-journals.
- E-journals are quick & convenient to access.
- Readers know & care who publishes a journal.
- Readers want page integrity.
- E-journals will bypass libraries & make them redundant.
- E- journals will save libraries money.
- Storage & dissemination of e-journals is inexpensive or free.
- Publishers care about readers.
- E-journals will save papers.
- E-journals will save publisher's money.
- E-journals will make subscription agents redundant.
- Only recent issues of e-journals are required.
- All scholarly journals will be available electronically in a few years.
- E-journals are always more current than their print counter parts.
- E-journals provide all graphic materials of their print counter parts.
- E-journals are always accessible.
- All readers have equal access to required computer at any time.
- E-journals will save library staff time & effort in handling journals.

2.2 Element Two: Details of subject areas & formats collected

- Should cover subjects to be covered, type of material to be collected
- Primary users groups for each subject
- Formats can be
- By access: open or gated
- By physical format: CD, DVD, Online
- By contents: books reference books, journals, databases
- Who should select:

Potential selectors include users, library staff in service as well as technical service department, subject specialist, heads of departments, Librarian, etc.

2.2.1 Guidelines for Selection

2.2.1.1 Issues in e-collection Building

E-resources especially web resources do not remain fixed, we get messages like: URL no longer operative, address is provided on 'transition page' but often there is no referring link, contents of the site are often modified to keep them update & we get message 'under construction'. It makes it clear that what you see today may not be available tomorrow. It is a decision of vendors/ publisher what is or what is not included as well as how long. Whether we should choose per search model like OCLC. When source is added or deleted relevant changes in OPAC are needed.

2.2.1.1 Selection Issues

Selection tools like Ulrich international periodical directory, serials directory by EBSCO, Books and Periodicals Online by Nuchine (1997) can be consulted. Four broad categories are considered while evaluating new e-resources viz. content, access support & cost.

2.2.1.3 Content

As with any format content issue should be first consideration. The item should match library as well as institutional goals. Considering cost, material should be useful to large number of potential users. Single user access (will increase que) or multiple users access? How often is product up dated? What is its coverage. Requires at least 30 days trials for full collection to be reviewed. Aspects like quality can be evaluated by URL, accuracy, authoritativeness & long term availability need to be considered. In case of e-journals purchasing decision is made for package and not for single title because of which cost will be substantially higher since it will include cost of vendor support and package of titles.

Another factor complicating decision is that selection of e-resource will involve more staff than paper based selection. The other issues to be considered are technology requirement, capability of the system staff, requirement of public service staff for supporting users of e-resources. Many users need support in locating and using e-titles. Packages from vendors or publishers often employ different search engine which requires staff. Public service staff always wants a voice in deciding what, if any, new e-product to be added in the service programme.

Mary Jean Pavelsek (1998) outlined the guidelines for evaluating e-journals viz,

- Economics;
- Ease of use;
- Archival implications;
- Future accessibility;
- Access;
- Licensing, copyright, distribution restrictions;
- Single or multiple publishers;
- User support;
- If a package-is it all or nothing ;
- Cost per user;
- Technological issues.

2.2.1.4 Access

Second aspect of selection issue is access. The issues to be considered are: availability of material, compatibility of products with local network, licensing cost for single user, multiple users or network users. Type of search engine used by the product, and search techniques used-Boolean or weighted technique. Where we can access e-resources-at library, office, home? When we can access-24/7, during working hours? How-by LAN, internet commercial service? As accessibility goes up, cost will also go up. An ideal solution is having everything available for 24/7, from any authorized location, with full cost capability and no need for local support.

If the access is web based and domain in nature providing IP ranges is fairly straight forward. However, password verification is requirement of some systems and librarians have to decide who will have access to these passwords. There must be testing to determine compatibility with other services. Does the package need Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on its public machines.

E-journals can be acquired either directly from publishers or from aggregators or through consortia.

2.2.1.5 Aggregators

Directory of vendors like international subscription Agents: An annotated directory can be used as a selection tool for vendors.

Aggregators are organizations that develop packages of e-journals. Aggregators enter into the contract of number of publishers to offer their titles as a group. Publishers need not have to invest on marketing,

programming and technology. Aggregators add value to package by providing consistent search engine for searching all titles and add charges for their service @30-40% extra e. g. OCLC, EBSCO, Lexis/ Nexis, etc. Deciding on aggregators' packages entails accepting number of titles-some times substantial number, which we would never subscribe in print, that means libraries have to pay for the titles they do not want. Few aggregators allow library to choose titles of interest.

How much benefits/ value does the library gain as a result of expenditure? Pricing models vary from vendor to vendor and for single, institution or consortia. One can identify more than 50 varieties in pricing models.

Staff and customer/user comfort level with chosen product is important. Outstanding contents but difficult to use may not be cost effective purchase An unused resource is wastage of funds.

Technical issues of network compatibility, stability and compliance with general standards are key factors. How much support is available from vendors? During what hours, how authentication is handled? Domain access- recognizing IP ranges is a low cost option for libraries, however, remote users with private internet service providers will not have access without special arrangement such as proxy server. Some vendors place restrictions on who can use the material. Such restrictions create problems for library service staff-how to identify user types and monitoring what is being used. If purchase is through consortia and a person visiting another campus which is part of that consortium, can the visitor use the service without violating the license agreement, since his home institution is also providing the same service.

Another aspect to be considered is who will archive the material? How & for how long?

Library has to maintain file of license agreement to review agreement & notify staff for new requirement. Library staff will need training to be familiar with new product. Users also need assistance in downloading, printing etc. for first or second time.

Libraries have to take decisions whether to own or access the collection? Considering escalating prices of journals whether to fulfill 'just in case' need i.e. owning material or 'just in time need i.e. accessing the material. The second option saves space & cost

If we have taken decision to provide access through aggregator or vendor then while evaluating vendor the parameters to be considered are:

- Type of access provided
- Quality/content of data base
- Ordering options (users/Library)

- Costs & what is covered (copy right fees)
- Delivery options (fax, e-mail, overnight mail)
- Reliability (does the service meets advertised delivery)
- Payment options (credit cards, invoices, prepaid deposits)
- Customer service availability (End users & Staff only)

2.2.1.6 Support

Support should be prime consideration during selection process. Issues that needs to be considered are staff training, quality of documentation / user manual, whether there is toll free telephone, e-mail address for vendor support, reliability of vendor / producer; bugs in software, compatibility of hardware and software.

If journals are accessible from offsite whether through proxy server or other means, what support exists in the library and in the institution for offsite patron who have trouble in using the resource.

Pricing

Dual pricing is found for individual and institutions, another pricing mechanism is by size of service population (access based). Transaction based pricing (OCLC) is another pricing mechanism based on fixed number of searches and every search will be counted including misspelled searches. Buying package from aggregator-all or nothing? buing access to titles of not in interest. If print copy is subscribed free access is given to e-copy or with 10 to 15% extra price. Prices of e-journals are escalating as more & more publishers are entering in e-publishing market it is wave of future & is challenge for librarians to handle this wave, (Bill Robonett, 1998).

The most obvious costs are initial cost of product and ongoing charges for updates. In addition to base fees is networking fees, connecting & telecommunication charges, display / print charges, downloading charges, computer and other hardware cost, power fluctuation, data corruption, computer hackers, viruses, theft, maintenance cost, etc. select cost effective format which will meet needs of large number of users.

2.3 Element Three: Miscellaneous Issues

The legal, financial and technical issues relating to electronic acquisitions and processing work as well as to other activities and services are important issues. Copyright problems, making it available to users by

providing list of sources with link for licensed products. Decision about service provider-lease line, ppp or dial up/broad band.

Other Issues to be considered are:

- Handling complaints about collection
- Deselection and discard i.e. evaluation based on use
- Preservation policy

3. Conclusion

Librarians dealing with e-resources will be confronted by questions about equipment requirements, pricing policies, bibliographic control, archival access, staffing implications and user needs. Librarians need to balance various elements, demands, constant adjustment in provision of cost effective services. One has to keep up-to-date on changing technology, changing players in market place, user needs and wants.

E-resources is the wave of future, it will be an ongoing challenge to libraries for years to come. By engaging in careful planning including preparation of e-collection development policy, employing sound selection criteria and monitoring use of resources, libraries will be able to meet the challenge.

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