

The Art of Collection Development

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By Chris Wyskiel (Brant Law Association) and Helen Heerema (Thunder Bay Law Association)

Slide 1 - Collection development is the identification, selection, acquisition, and evaluation of library resources for a community of users.

- Approach arbitrary and non-arbitrary when choosing resources and that's the balancing act or the art of collection development.
- Nonarbitrary decisions based on necessity reason, or principle. Nonarbitrary factors include considering the budget, the LiRN Collection Development and Maintenance Policy, and the OCLA Core Titles List.
- Arbitrary decision-making comes into play for me. Purchased "The Lion and the Throne: The Life and Times of Sir Edward Coke" by Catherine Drinker Bowen. Coke is often considered the greatest jurist of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. The text was a whim decision and successful. It's been borrowed several times by lawyers, articling students, and myself.

Slide 2 - So A Few Things of Note

- LiRN Collection Development and Maintenance Policy. This well-developed policy provides guidance to selecting titles and formats.
- OCLA's Core Titles List is a collection development tool intended to be used by all of us. The fundamental principle of the list is that a courthouse library should have the information to assist lawyers and other legal professionals in their research whether the library is Local, Area, or Regional. The list covers every area of the law and combines both print and electronic resources available on the e-LiRN platform.
- Westlaw, LexisNexis, and Vex have an extensive collection of e-texts in the e-LiRN Platform. Do not waste precious budget money on purchasing the print texts when they are on the platform.
- We all know there are stubborn holdbacks to using e-texts. Show your users the vast array of titles available and demonstrate how easy it is to get a clean copy of a document. You'll likely get some converts.
- Library budget is the leading factor in acquisition work. Planning and managing the budget is daunting, especially with rising costs coming out of the blue. If you run an upgraded version of an accounting package like Sage you can input your budget and track spending by category. Brant uses an Excel Kardex which logs expenditures for the

annuals, e-resources, and loose-leafs compared to the budget column. The spreadsheet also calculates the percentage increases/decreases year-to-year in order to make an informed decision if the cost outweighs the benefit.

Slide 3 – Collection Analysis

- Collection analysis - it's evaluating the quality of a library collection to determine if it meets user needs and the library's service goals.
- A materials-centered analysis focuses on how many materials in the collection support a particular area of law, the age of the text, the book's condition, and what it contains. Take the time to examine the collection directly - pick up the book, and open it. Look at the title page & verso, T.O.C., and the index. Another materials-centered analysis is completing an inventory and shelf reading – these two things work in tandem and identifies gaps or saturation in a specific area.
- When you're about to begin a collection-centered analysis identify your goal and list the specific tasks you hope to accomplish in order. Consider the logistics of the project, including which parts of the collection will be addressed, who will perform each task when working on a team, and how the work will be coordinated. While conducting an analysis remember that non-current subscriptions can be brought up to date if warranted, labeled with the date of the last supplement, or withdrawn.
- A user-centered analysis is based on a few things such as requests for resources through interlibrary loans, user surveys that you've completed that can pinpoint what the lawyers want or don't want, the analysis of circulation stats, including in-library use of the materials and anecdotal user feedback.

Slide 4 - The Pieces of the Pie

- **Legal Community** - Listen to your users, the legal community. Understand the geographical community in which the library is situated.
- **Assessment** - is the first step towards understanding your collection's strengths, weaknesses, and growth opportunities. Establish some goals and objectives. Define the purpose of the collection assessment. Determine what you'd like to achieve such as identifying gaps or evaluating its relevance against the OCLA Core Titles List. Collect any relevant data. This may include circulation stats, usage stats, feedback surveys, and observations of any library usage patterns. Review collection policies both LiRNs and any internal ones you may have created. Understand any guidelines for adding new materials to the collection and criteria for weeding. Conduct a collection inventory to assess its

current status. Evaluate the content of the collection to determine its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Consider factors such as currency, relevance to practice areas, and alignment with the needs of your users. Analyze data such as those stats to identify popular or frequently used materials or items that may be underutilized or outdated. Analyze any circulation patterns to understand your user's preferences. Are the users gravitating to electronic materials or do they prefer print? Evaluate the physical condition of the materials in the collection including wear & tear, damage, and outdated materials. Determine if they require repair, replacement, or removal from the collection. Don't forget to seek input by conducting surveys or soliciting input from your users on the types of materials they would like to see added or removed from the collection. Based on your analysis and feedback you can identify areas where the collection can be expanded or enhanced. Once the assessment is complete you can develop an action plan for improving the collection such as purchasing new materials, weeding outdated items, or promoting underutilized resources.

- **Selection** - Review text/e-resource requests and ILLO requests. If you keep circulation statistics pull any reports. However, usage isn't always a good measure of the value of an item. There is a text in my library *The Law of Subdivision Control in Ontario*, 4th ed. by Troister that gets used maybe 1-3x per year. Does that mean it's not valuable? – no. It's a seminal text in a niche area which means a smaller number of potential users – it's worth the shelf space. Be aware of the type of materials you are selecting for acquisition and access. Not all texts and not all e-resources. Balance is the key.

Visit conference vendor booths and get the latest news on any upcoming resources. Take their catalogues, and lists or visit their sites. To acquire the resources for your library it might be necessary to review and negotiate contracts with the publishers. I would encourage you to communicate and build trust with the publishers. Work with them to try to bundle e-resources or negotiate a better price. Don't be afraid to haggle if you need to. Ask for recommendations from colleagues or users. Read reviews written by experts in the field. Take advantage of discounts and publisher sales. You can ask for a free trial of an e-resource or text – try before you buy.

When determining whether an e-book is a suitable replacement for a print volume, consider the importance of the content, the need for current versus perpetual access, the replication of the graphical print content within the e-book, the stability and usability of the platform, and the ongoing costs. Be mindful that e-resources can prove a challenge to some users and requires some form of training on the use of the resource. If and when an opportunity for a grant arises take advantage. It will bolster or refresh a

collection. As a system we work with other libraries to support resource sharing and collaborative collection development and management through our interlibrary loan system and the OCLA Core Titles List but at the end of the session is a proposal for another possible collaborative tool.

- **Maintenance** - Regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of the changes you've made to the collection. Track circ stats if you have them, gather feedback from library users, and reassess the collection periodically to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of your users. Weeding materials is also part of maintaining the collection.
- **Outreach** - Let users know what's new in the library or spotlight a specific collection area such as Employment Law. Promoting and marketing is a key component in making your users aware of new acquisitions and the collection in general. Don't hesitate to ask your users what they've thought about a particular resource. They'll give you an honest opinion if the resource was helpful, or not, and why.

Slide 5 – Car and Books

- According to the American Library Association (ALA) weeding, piracy, pruning, or the deselection of material is critical to collection maintenance.
- All materials are considered a potential weed taking into account accuracy, currency, and relevancy.
- When evaluating physical materials consider space limitations, the edition, format (loose-leaf, text or periodical), physical condition, and the number of copies you have.
- Weeding speaks to competence. You have an old loose-leaf on the shelf that's been canceled for 15 years. The lawyers shouldn't be using it and it creates an opportunity for an inexperienced law student to rely on information that's dinosaur-age out-of-date. Leaving the material on the shelf shows a lack of care for the collection. It's about optics as well. A library full of used old, musty books creates the perception of a tired unused collection.
- Start with the obvious items in your collection to weed and you'll be able to move up to the questionable items – should I – shouldn't I? Put texts on a cart and hide them for 6 months. Did anyone ask for them or notice that the books weren't on the shelf? Sometimes those texts end back on the shelf and sometimes they don't.

Slide 6 – Piracy, Weeding, De-Selection

- It frees up space & gives a fresh look to the library - After weeding your space will be more visually appealing. Optics is everything.

- There is something about seeing part of an empty shelf that makes me so giddy. Maybe it's the possibility of adding new titles especially if I have some extra funds.
- Easier Access - The weeding process makes books easier to find...literally. Instead of pulling a book from a packed shelf, you can remove it with ease and that's so important for your user!
- Finding Gems - My favourite post-weed wake-up moment is when a user finds books they didn't even know existed.
- By removing the "extra" books, they can see and access titles that were previously jammed on the shelves, and never signed out. They often think some titles are brand new, but no, they were hiding amongst the excess!
- Remove the Problems - Just like finding gems, you need to get rid of the duds. I always feel so satisfied when I remove a damaged or outdated book. This is the most important motivation for me to weed my collection.
- The act of weeding gives you greater familiarity with your collection – its strengths and weaknesses.
- Weed with a partner. You can remind each other of your established guidelines and offer different perspectives while examining gray-area questionable items.
- Decide what section(s) to weed. I do one section of the library at a time.
- Depending on how much you want to do during a year, divide it up into periods that work for you and your schedule. You can also weed more than once in the same section.
- Try and find some uninterrupted time.

Slide 7 – Typical Questions to Ask

- Is there a newer edition of the title and do you own it? Keep in mind that a book can still be valuable even if it's no longer current. Researchers typically need to know what the law was for a specific period and older resources are excellent for historical reference.
- How much is the text used? Check your usage statistics and any user feedback on the item.
- Is the information available electronically? Something to keep in mind is that some electronic versions of a text omit images, diagrams, tables, etc.
- Is the book owned by another library? Check the catalogue as to who owns the text. Keep in mind there may be multiple copies in multiple locations. If only you and one other library owns the material I'd keep it.
- Is the information in the book still correct? Does the book have any historical value even though it's not current?

- Visibly damaged materials, such as broken spines, missing, or torn pages should be weeded and replaced if they can't be repaired.
- Consider oversaturation in certain subject areas. If you have too many resources in the Personal Injury section balanced by only having 1 lawyer in the jurisdiction practicing that area that's a call to weed the area

Slide 8 – Message in a Bottle

- Promote the collection. I like to call it “user education” so that the user is aware of what's available in the library and how to access the resources.
- Market your new acquisitions using a newsletter, digital display, book displays, memos posted to the website, or emailed to the members.
- For your digital display use a photo of the book(s) or e-resource, provide a brief synopsis, or tap into the top 3 reasons to use the material. You could even do an author/title spotlight.
- Upsell your collection to drive borrowing statistics. If the user is looking for Business Law in Ontario by Paul Atkinson and you've just purchased Emond's Advance Corporate Legal Procedures and Advanced Corporate Business Transactions point out why the texts could flesh out their research.
- Harness the power of an eye-catching book cover and get creative with book displays. For instance, use books with all red covers as a display. Create subject displays i.e. Criminal Law Texts, Real Estate Law Texts, etc.
- If you use Instagram, X, or Facebook use those tools to market the collection.

Slide 9 – New Book Request Form

- I get quite a few requests from the members during the year via email so I recently decided to post New Book Request Form on the website – my newest bit for outreach. I'm trying to encourage the members to request a possible purchase differently. Once the Form is filled out it's sent to my inbox. Keeping track of the requests will be easier.

Slide 10 – New Acquisitions

- Example of my new acquisitions list that is circulated to the members and posted on the library page of the website. It's simple but effective.
- Because we are a smaller library the list is generated 4 times per year. The doc includes the title and KF # and the LSO CPD's are hyperlinked to the catalogue or AccessCLE

Slide 11 – Proposition

- Sometimes I struggle with the purchase of a text or e-resource even after doing some research into the title. The publisher will sell me the benefits of a title or resource but what about harnessing the vast experience in the room?
- What about keeping a running list of titles on the off chance we have monies to spare and maybe include a brief point or two about why the purchase was a good one?
- I'm not proposing we keep a list of annotated texts but one-off purchases. For example one-offs such as Williston & Rolls on Costs + USB/LexisNexis, Contracts for the Family Law Client/LexisNexis, Evidence and Investigation: From the Crime Scene to the Courtroom, 3rd Edition/Emond.