COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA LIBRARY (UBL)

Madeleine Fombad[1] and Stephen M. Mutula[2]
[1]Librarian, DaySpring English Medium School
Gaborone, Botswana
[2]Senior Lecturer, Department of Library and Information Studies
University of Botswana, P.O P/Bag 0022
Gaborone, Botswana
e:mail: fombadm@hotmail.com; mutulasm@mopipi.ub.bw

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses collection development practices at the University of Botswana Library that are largely influenced by subject librarians as the drivers of the collection development policy. The paper looks at the challenges facing the library's collection development practices especially in relation to falling book budgets, proliferation of electronic materials, difficulties of dealing with faculty, poor book trade infrastructure, delays in the delivery of ordered books, and problems of evaluation of materials. The paper highlights strategies that the library is employing to deal with the challenges.

Keywords: Collection development policy; Collection development; Collection evaluation; Collection maintenance; Collection preservation; Book budgets; Botswana; Africa

INTRODUCTION

Collection development has been described as one of the most discussed but least understood areas of librarianship (Magrill and Hickey, 1984; Hannaford, 1980). It represents an evolving concept of library collection management devised to answer changing reader demands on library collections (Bloomfield, 1987). As a specialization in librarianship, it was born out of professional need to hire a specialist to identify and locate needed resources and make sure that the library was effective in getting the material it needed. Readers do not simply need access to those books catalogued, preserved and available within an institution; they demand bibliographic and surrogate access to materials outside the country, and often outside their specific knowledge. It is therefore within the province of collection

development to manage these processes and continue to serve readers within such an extended framework. Collection development has always been the basic concern of all types of libraries with approaches in each library reflecting institutional goals, user needs and the library's role within the institution. Collection development within a university library environment demonstrates a wide variety of development patterns.

The University of Botswana Library (UBL) has a collection of more than 300,000 books, 10,099 pamphlets, 13,813 reference materials, 3,242 multimedia resources, 1,475 journal titles and forty different databases on CD-ROM. The collection also covers international and local newspapers, as well as calendars and prospectuses of universities across the world. The Special collections houses materials on and about Botswana, as required by the Legal Deposit Act. In June 2001 the library moved to a new state-of-the-art building designed to hold over 50 PCs for students, with a seating capacity of 4,000 readers and shelving space for 850,000 volumes (Rosenberg, 1995).

UBL's library procedures, namely cataloguing, serials management, acquisitions, circulations, catalogue search and access to examination papers are automated. The library was first automated in 1992 using TINLIB, but due to teething problems, the system was replaced in the year 2000 by INNOPAC Millennium system. INNOPAC is an integrated library system, which supports the cataloguing, acquisitions, online public access catalogue, serials management and circulation modules. The system has the capacity to handle sixty simultaneous users.

The use of CD-ROM databases was introduced in the library during 1992/93 when a CD-ROM server was installed and became operational in 1995 (Rosenberg, 1995). Currently, the CD-ROM server can be accessed over the university's Intranet. The university's examination questions can be accessed online and the library has full Internet connection with access to various other online databases worldwide.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AT UBL

University libraries exist to support teaching, research and public service programmes of the university. University libraries are obliged to respond to a multiplicity of academic needs and interest groups. The University of Botswana was established by an Act of Parliament on 1st of July 1982. The institution remains the country's sole university. Its mission is to be the leading academic centre of excellence in Africa and the world. To accomplish this, it intends to expand the

intellectual and human resource capacity of the nation and the international community. UBL was established along with the university. It is the main academic and research library in the country. Under Section 10 of the National Library service Act of the country, UBL is also designated as the legal depository for all documents published in Botswana.

UBL comprises the main library in Gaborone, the capital city of Botswana, and three branch libraries, namely the Faculty of Technology and Engineering Library, also in Gaborone, and the Centre for Continuing Education Library in Francistown, about 500 km North of Gaborone. The other branch library, the Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre Library, is in Maun, 1000 km away from Gaborone. The mission of UBL is to contribute to the university's vision of being a leading centre of excellence in Africa and the world. UBL, wielding the responsibility of being a legal depository, extends its responsibility to the larger non-university community and thus opens its door to the general public. The library attempts to collect non-teaching materials in subjects such as music, arts and architecture. The primary responsibility of the library however, is to meet the research needs of the teaching staff, and the academic needs of the students enrolled in the university's seven faculties, namely Faculties of Business, Education, Engineering and Technology, Humanities, Science, Social Science and Centre for Continuing Education. The library also maintains a special collection section which holds government publications, publications on and by the Southern African Development Corporation (SADC), pamphlet collection, the University Archive collection, local newspapers, press clippings and conference proceedings. The library's collection also includes books, periodicals, microforms, electronic and multimedia resources, all listed in the library's electronic catalogue.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF UBL

A written collection development policy is an important tool for guiding all activities related to planning, budgeting, selecting and acquiring library materials (Magrill and Hickey, 1984). It is one of the first pieces of evidence in determining whether a library is engaged in true collection development. University libraries are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of having a strong and constantly updated written collection development policy (Bostic, 1988). Collection development policies provide guidelines in the selection of material and the allocation of funds. A written policy provides the rationale for the selection of individual items and ensures consistency and balance in the growth of collections.

UBL's collection development policy was promulgated in 1994. The policy was revised and refined in 1998 to take into account of the changes in information technology; changes in collection needs based on the change of the collection programmes; and the needs of a new Faculty i.e. the Faculty of Business. UBL's collection development policy is a written guide to formal selection policy statements, which relates the library's collection practices to the university's teaching, research and other programs. It is intended to assist the subject librarians to choose library materials with greater consistency for addition to the collection. It also provides a general framework for a coordinated collection development programme in the library. Besides, the policy informs the university, faculties, students and administrators as to the scope and nature of the existing collection. The heart of UBL's collection development policy is the subjects offered at the university. The various subjects offered at the seven faculties in the university are analyzed under statement of purpose, general collection guidelines and observation, and qualifications by subject subdivisions.

At UBL, subject librarians are responsible for developing the collection and also ensuring that collections are managed in the light of the library's mission and that of the university's. It is the policy of UBL to buy the latest books in the market, however, retrospective collection of back issues or out-of print items are purchased if recommended by the academic staff. It is also the policy of the library not to purchase multiple copies of books or other materials. However, duplicate copies may be purchased subject to justification normally presented by the academics Except for Botswana-published materials where the library gets a copy through legal deposit and five copies through purchase, subject librarians are obliged to select at least 110 titles each month. As for serials, they have become a considerable expense to UBL's annual fund and shelf space. Consequently the development and management of serial collections is carefully monitored and reviewed by subject librarians, Faculties, and the Serial Selection Committee, which is the ultimate decision making body. The library looks for two kinds of skills in the librarians chosen to work in the collection development department; firstly, having a strong subject background or an interest in developing and expanding one; and secondly, having the ability to work with people in an academic or research setting.

UBL'S BUDGET

The primary funding of UBL is the government via its institutional allotment. The Acquisitions Coordinator/Deputy Director in the acquisitions department does the allocation of funds to the various departments. A lump sum is allocated to each faculty that is then split up and allocated on a subject-by-subject basis. The subject librarians regard their allocated budget as a positive method of controlling spending because curricula needs are reflected in budget allocations. It is also possible at any moment to tell what has been encumbered and what has been expended. This form of budgeting apportionment helps in monitoring spending. UBL uses list checking, accreditation evaluations, statistics for expenditures and volumes, with approval plan reports at the end of the year, to provide feedback on the direction of collection building.

UBL has difficulties in incorporating into the policy what the highest price would be for a particular item or what percentage would be spent on what type of material. However, Blackwell publisher conducts annual surveys and issues average prices of British and American Publications to UBL. Where a subject librarian detects that the price of a title is unreasonable above the average price of the subject, he or she consults the Acquisitions Coordinator for a final decision.

SELECTION AND ACQUISITION

At UBL, selection of relevant literature for the library is a coordinated effort between subject librarians and the Faculties. Users are also invited to suggest titles to be ordered. However, strict subject coverage has been observed and the materials are ordered only through the relevant subject librarians. Unfortunately, studies have shown that faculty library liaisons do not always provide reliable means of developing collections in support of the interest of the departments because some librarians may select titles in areas of their own interest and expertise (Cline and Sinnot, 1981). Orders arising from the flood of publisher's catalogues most often emerge from academics' requests. Book trade bibliographies, national bibliographies, Blackwell pre-selection slips, periodical literature and review media are useful guides that are of particular interest to UBL's subject librarians involved in selection. It is worth noting that like most other academic libraries, UBL is relying more than before on review media as a selection tool because they are far selective in their choices and also because of the increasingly restrictive financial conditions. UBL obtains some of the more important generalist book reviewing publications such as *Choice* and *Library Journal* from the United States, *Times*

Library Supplement and *British Book News* from Britain, *Southern African Review of Books* from South Africa. A whole host of book reviews are garnered from journals in various subject fields. However, to ensure quality selection, subject librarians are encouraged to base 50% of selection on review media and the other 50% on other selection aids.

At UBL, the selection and acquisition department function as equals and in mutually supportive capacities. The subject librarian makes decision regarding collection development and maintenance, while the acquisition department is responsible for ordering and processing. The acquisition department provides subject librarians with Blackwell publisher's book pre-selection order forms to facilitate selection of the books. The selection department also generates orders that are sent to and processed by the acquisition librarian. Acquisitions are done by tendering and UBL most often rely on a local dealer known as *Botsalow*.

GIFTS AND EXCHANGES

Gifts and exchange are two common ways of acquiring library materials without direct purchase. Gifts and exchange materials can have an impact on allocation of funds and may fill in the need for certain materials so that purchase is not needed. For many libraries, gift materials and funds have been very important in building their collections. The library's collection can be enhanced by solicited and unsolicited gifts of money (Magrill and Hickey, 1984).

UBL encourages and where appropriate, solicits gifts and donations that are useful, provided that such offers have no restriction attached to them. Prospective donors are often requested to send a list of materials being offered in advance so that they can be assessed for suitability and those not suitable are turned down. The library has been receiving a lot of gifts and donations from lecturers and international organizations such as the World Health Organization and the World Bank. Recently the World Bank made some valuable donations to UBL's Social Science Section.

UBL has developed its own methods of handling gifts. There is a formal process where all incoming gifts go to the technical coordinator who then distributes them to the subject librarians. The subject librarians evaluate each material as to its suitability and relevance to the subject. If found relevant, it is then sent to the technical service department to be processed. If it is not relevant, then it will be donated to other library institutions in the country where it can be useful. UBL has, and continues to make a lot of donations to school libraries in the country.

MAINTENANCE AND PRESERVATION

At UBL, what used to be called weeding, replacement, bindery, repair, and duplication is now termed maintenance. Weeding is the removal of an item from the library's active collection for the purpose of either discarding it or sending it to storage (Bonk and Magrill, 1979). The reasons for weeding can either be to allow space for new material and easier access to the collection, or to improve the services to the users. The subject librarians make the decision from time to time on how to handle worn out books, or other library materials from the collection; whether to bind, mend or withdraw them. Weeding is an integral part of maintaining the collection at UBL. Collections in the computer science section are increasingly being weeded as they have become out-dated with the advancement in information technology.

The decision is made from time to time to send little-used materials to offsite storage. Off-site storage of materials is made to the other branches in Francistown and Faculty of Engineering, and accessible to patrons on request at the circulation desk. Even though the library has moved to a new and larger library, the computer science section of the library has already started to grapple with the problem of space. Little-used materials are currently being identified, withdrawn from active collection and boxed; and users provided with total bibliographic access to this resource through the use of the library's online public access catalogue.

Efforts are made in preserving the most valuable or heavily used items in the collection. The installation of electronic gadgets has reduced the un-authorized removal of bound volumes from the library. However, unscrupulous users are still mutilating materials. Photocopying facilities are readily and inexpensively available on all floors of the library. The library maintains a sizable budget for the bindery, which it outsources to a commercial bindery. At designated intervals, separate parts of the periodicals are bound into one physical volume. UBL also uses in-house repairs to fight the ravage of time and use. Heavily abused periodicals frequently needed by users are backed up with another subscription and permitted only through controlled access. It is the subject librarian's duty to recognize and identify what materials need attention. It is worth noting that serious preservation efforts have been taken into account in the library's larger new location on campus by adding temperature and humidity controls to the facility.

COLLECTION EVALUATION

The usefulness of any collection can be determined by looking at how well the library satisfies its patron needs. According to Okoro (1985), "an elegant library building is a white elephant unless it houses materials appropriate for the users", "a sophisticated system for information retrieval is pointless if it affords access to the wrong documents", "an impressive structure of staff management is a luxury unless it organizes staff in a way which facilitates the library's main purpose." These are all reminders of the importance of evaluating a library's collection. The American Library Association's Resources and Technical Services Division Guidelines on Collection Evaluation (1979) says that collection evaluation helps determine whether a collection is meeting its objectives, how well it is serving its users, in what ways or areas it is deficient, and in what remains to be done to develop the collection. As Mosher (1989) noted, every librarian is anxious to be able to answer the question *"How good is my collection?"* A number of techniques can be used to achieve this end; these can be qualitative, or quantitative, simple or complex, costly or inexpensive, time-intensive or time-economic, one-time or on going, and can be applied to the study of the collections or collection effort of any type of library (Mosher, 1989).

There are various methods for evaluating the quality of a collection such as; having it evaluated by a specialist in that field, the use of reading lists, bibliographic checking, numeric counts, formulas and standards, interlibrary loan analysis, checking against the catalogue of other libraries, implementation of user surveys, analysis of machine readable cataloguing data and the use of collection maps and Scat analysis.

The use of collection map, numeric counting and the Scat analyses are the most favoured techniques used at UBL. Collection map has proven to be a useful tool in presenting an overview of the collection in graphic form. This method enables the librarian to tell at a glance the weakness or strength of a collection. Numeric counting is the count of volumes by subject classification breakdown made from shelf list card counts or from automated data files (Mosher, 1989). The UBL subject librarians literally count Dewey numbers. This has been facilitated by the use of the OPAC. The Scat table enables the librarians to see what the library has and relay it to the different curriculums. Collection evaluation is an ongoing exercise, preferably carried out annually to check how much has been achieved, and to correct the imbalances.

IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES ON COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

As a result of the availability of electronic resources, it is possible for libraries to tap into periodicals, books and electronically maintained communications. By a simple telephone or email request today, one can retrieve the collection that one wants. Most publishers are releasing their work in both printed and electronic transmission forms, which do not need to be acquired, nor need selection (Jeramillo, 1988).

It is the policy of UBL not to miss out on new information communication technology (ICT) resources and therefore collects and subscribes to relevant electronic resources. On the issue of choosing between CD-ROM and online databases, the librarian decides normally on the basis of subject to cost considerations, but with CD-ROM more often as the first choice. The onus is on the subject librarian to come up with titles of CD-ROMS in their field, which they feel, are desirable; fill in CD-ROM recommendation forms of which a final approval is given by the CD-ROM selection committee. There is a wide range of CD-ROMs and other electronic databases available via the campus network in the main library. Each floor is equipped with computers, connected to the campus network, providing access to the Internet and wide range of computer software.

At UBL, the selection, ordering, receipt, cataloging and routing of materials are accomplished with little or no professional effort. Librarians can now acquire full bibliographic description of books in machine-readable format and on tape. Many Internet tools are now available for identifying resources on the Net. Tenders for acquisition are now being done online. Reference texts like directories, encyclopedia and handbooks are searchable in full form online. One can say that the wealth of materials today no longer depend on the size of the library budget because advances in technology has prompted the adoption of resource sharing technique and purposes. For example, UBL is a member of SABINET and any materials not available in UBL may be obtained from other members of SABINET or other document delivery services through the Inter-Library Loan Service. Through the use of the Internet, UBL users are able to search CD-ROM, OPAC, EBSCO host, and the EMERALD databases and retrieve documents electronically. The online access to textual material has presented new capabilities in searching.

CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

It is a big problem in UBL to solicit the co-operation of the teaching staff and a much bigger problem to keep up their co-operation and their interest in recommending titles for purchase. It is also a problem to get more of the teaching staff individually or collectively through Faculty Library Committees to be involved in selecting books for the library. It is also a normal practice for new courses to be introduced in the faculties without the lecturer informing the library to build up a core collection to support the course and fill the gaps in the existing collection.

Although ICT has reduced the problems caused by geographical location in such cases where tenders for acquisition are now done on-line, and on-line publishers catalogues fetched electronically, it still takes a considerable length of time between the order of a title and the receipt of a book. UBL librarians do not have that privilege to physically examine the book first before purchase. This makes things difficult in instances where the order placed may not be appropriate to the collection it was intended for. Books from overseas are still invariably late in arriving, taking six to eight weeks; meaning that library users must be prepared to wait for the books they are very much in need of, and sometimes the books may arrive when the pressing need for them is gone.

Like in most other libraries in developing countries that are far from centers of book trade and auctions, purchasing materials that are out-of-print is another big problem for collection development at UBL. For example, antiquarian catalogues (offering out-of -print materials for sale) received in the library can be treated urgently and orders dispatched with maximum haste, but there is no guarantee that the books will still be available when orders are received.

The problem of bibliographic control is as ancient as the written word (Okoro, 1991). Bibliographic tools are not often very adequate and readily available at UBL. The librarians' lack of knowledge on the statistics of the world publishing output inhibits collection development.

Crunch or recession is not a new thing in developing countries and Botswana has recently been suffering the same fate. Since the library is funded by grants from the government, fluctuation of the state budget directly affects the library's operations irrespective of its fairly flexible budget that varies every year to take account of the rate of inflation. The purchasing power of the US Dollar and the Sterling Pound

continues to erode, while the purchasing power of the Pula continues to slacken. As a result, UBL's acquisition has been curtailed. Unlike in the past when the university could acquire more than one book, today it is the policy of the library to acquire only one copy.

The shortage of subject librarians is also a problem at UBL. The University of Botswana has a Department of Library and Information Studies (DLIS) that provides training for librarians from Certificate in librarianship to a Masters in librarianship. However, very few local senior librarians so far have received training from this department. Few are currently receiving training abroad. Most of the local librarians receiving training at DLIS are mainly at the Diploma and Certificate level.

There are also many challenges involved in integrating electronic resources and technologies into the process of collection development in UBL. Beyond task-oriented considerations, such as the selection process itself, there are large-scale managerial issues under consideration such as the budget, policy, personnel, and the technology.

According to Atkinson (1989), there are two ways of building a collection; either on the basis of publications, or on the basis of use. The collections of UBL, like most other university libraries today are user-oriented, being heavily influenced by the lecturers and students. UBL boasts one of the best books, non–book, and electronic collections in the region. Its collection policy has been carefully considered and is opened to refinement, and the prospects of collection development in UBL remain very bright. At UBL, collection development practices are defined by the university's needs.

REFERENCES

American Library Association. 1979. *Resources and Technical Services Division guidelines for evaluation of library collection.* Chicago: America Library Association.

Atkinson, R. 1989. Old forms new forms: the challenge of collection development. *College and Research Libraries,* Vol. 50, no. 5*:* 507-531.

Bloomfield, B.C. 1987. Collection development: the key issues in collection development option for effective management. Paper presented at the

Conference Of Library And Information Research Group. London: Grahams Taylor.

Bonk, J.W. and Magrill R.M. 1979. *Building Library Collections*. London: Scarecrow Press.

Bostic, M. J. 1988. A written collection development policy: to have and not. *Collection Management,* Vol. 10, no. ½: 89-99.

Cline, H.F. and Sinnott, L.T. 1981. *Building Library Collections*. Toronto: Heaths.

Hannaford, W. J. 1980. Collection development in ten small academic libraries: a report of the Council of Library Resources. *ERIC Document Reproduction Service, ED1900741979:.4-5.*

Jeramillo, G.R. 1988. Computer technology and the impact on collection development. *Collection Management*, Vol.10, no. 1: 1-13.

Magrill, R. M. and Hickey, D. J (eds). 1984. *Gift and exchanges: acquisitions management and collection development in libraries*. Chicago: American Library Association, p. 176 –190

Mosher, P. 1989. Collection evaluation analysis: matching library acquisition to library needs, In: *Collection development in library treatise,* by Stewart, R. and Miller, G.B. Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press.

Okoro, O.M. 1985. An assessment/evaluation of the library of the College of Agriculture, Umuagwo. A paper presented as part of the course: Building and development of library collections 11 February, 1985, unpublished.

Rosenberg, D. 1995. *University libraries in Africa: a review of their current state and future potential.* London: International African Institute.