

Collection Kaleidoscope. Get the "One-Stop" Shop for Research via Your Catalog

Article

Collection development has evolved for school librarians to include much more than what appears on the physical shelf. Collection development refers to the process of building and maintaining the library's entire materials collection, encompassing print, non-print, electronic, and remote formats. The collection development process includes the formulation of guidelines and procedures, coordination of acquisition activities, budget formulation and allocation, needs assessments, collection evaluations, selection, resource sharing, and deselection.

Our Physical Resources

Evaluation and maintenance are still a necessary part of the job for collection development. Librarians still have to physically assess titles on the shelf. Each spring I often find myself walking the stacks to find worn and tattered copies. I don't always have to do that though as sometimes the popular titles reveal their issues at the desk upon check-in. A page falls out or the cover appears really tattered, giving clues that it may be time to repair or retire a copy of a book, and then perhaps purchase a new one if the popularity is not waning.

Deciding What to Remove

Often times it is hard to know what needs to be removed. I think about my own nonfiction section, and the little circulation some of those books see for the majority of the school year. Poetry, for example, sees a rush of circulation once a semester, and is generally tied to projects that focus on poetry and poetry criticism. The same is true for our social issues books (capital punishment, teen pregnancy, right to life, etc.) Many of my faculty still require a print source with research projects, and so these books, while mostly neglected, do get a little attention each semester of the school year. We also maintain a print collection of the Poetry for Students and other sets similar to these as we still have teachers that want their students to understand the process of finding poems based on a search criteria in the print editions as well as the digital subscriptions. Times have changed though in how to do a poetry criticism research project, especially now that many of our sets devoted to criticism have become available online with database subscriptions. Gale's *Poetry for Students* is just one we offer that students now turn to first, before ever looking on a shelf in the library. Our financial emphasis has moved away from having the print editions for that set on the shelf, and now instead is focused on that and other poetry digital database subscriptions, and with good reason. We have multi-access for our students, and unlike our print copies, these are always available, albeit with an internet connection.

The Digital Landscape Is Changing...Again

Providing access to digital resources (databases and pathfinders) has also had a shift in delivery. In recent years a lot of time has been spent developing webpages, wikis, and other online resources to connect our students with reliable digital material. Many of those avenues meant our students had to look in multiple spaces in our digital resources. Many learning management systems and library management systems now offer librarians the ability to add those subscription databases as a searchable source when searching the library catalog. Now searching via the library catalog for my students gains them a list of not only print resources from my collection, but also relevant links to the subscriptions I have invested in to match their research needs. Many vendors are moving in this direction, making it possible for students to quickly locate and view all the databases schools have invested in right along with the resources from the print collection. The program used in my own teaching context is Destiny's OneSearch. With some simple matching of our subscriptions and dedicated IP addresses for authenticating student logins, students can now login from anywhere and not be asked to remember logins or passwords. Schools using MackinVia also have the same ability. This same capability can be set up for some learning management systems as well. More and more library management systems are making it easy to add your own school's purchased databases to the catalog or LMS for a single sign-on/single search for students.

Maximizing Investments for Collection Development

This is the future of libraries with multi-faceted collections that include a variety of ebooks and digital resources. Enabling librarians to steer students toward reliable, vetted information using digital and print resources that match the curriculum via the catalog maximizes the financial investment made for collection development. Patrons are exposed to all the library has to offer via a single search, including print and digital content. Who doesn't want to make connecting students, teachers, and the school community as easy as a single search? And who doesn't want great stats to share with the powers that be who decide funding for school libraries?

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