
Existing Collection Development practices in University Libraries in Sri Lanka - A Study

The Author

P.C.D.S. GUNASEKARA

BSc, MLS (Colombo)

Sr. Asst. Librarian, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Abstract

The study attempts to examine the current practices of collection development procedures in university libraries in Sri Lanka. The study covers all the university libraries (main libraries only) in Sri Lanka and main research instrument for data collection was a self administered mailed questionnaire.

The study shows that most of the university libraries do not have clear and formal policy regarding Collection Development practices. The study also reveals that a significant proportion of the university librarians do not have clear idea with regard to written CD policies and procedures. The study suggests that in order to buildup a pragmatic and user needed collection a formal and written procedure for acquisition, selection, weeding and evaluation for librarians are of paramount importance.

1. Introduction

The libraries are treated as temples of learning and reservoirs of knowledge, therefore the university libraries in particular play an important role in the development of learning. Libraries are important institutions and their role in education has been very well emphasized.

A good library is found essential in an academic institution for high quality teaching and research. The quality of teaching and research depends to a greater extent on the quality of information service provided by the library to its user. This in turn depends on the quality of the library collection.

The term collection development (CD) is the planning for the systemic and rational building of a collection. It is one of the most significant areas of librarianship. It is the backbone of all library services and important for the librarians to develop their collection in an organized way.

According to the American Library Association definition, "Collection Development is the process of planning, building and maintaining library information resources in a cost efficient and user relevant manner."¹ This includes the identification, selection and sometimes procurement of appropriate materials locally, the allocation of the resource budget among different subjects and formats, collection management, analysis and evaluation, liaison with library users, planning and implementation of resource sharing and related programs.

The library collection has to be developed to meet the needs of present and future requirement of the users. It is not possible to satisfy the needs unless the acquisition is planned correctly. The planning for systemic and rational collection; is possible with the support of several routines and operation.

2. Purpose and design of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate current practice in the collection development principles and procedures in university libraries in Sri Lanka. The population of this study covered main libraries of all the universities numbering fifteen libraries. As the population is not very large no sampling technique was used for this study. The entire population was examined.

The main research instrument used was a self-administered mailed questionnaire. It was used to discover the collection development activities and procedures in the libraries

3. Results and Analysis

To get a clear and correct picture of the current practice on collection development, the questions were designed in order to ascertain information regarding the CD practice.

3.1 Assessment of User Needs

Assessing user needs is the primary concern for collection development and it helps to identify actual needs of the users. It is impossible to assess the changing needs of the clientele unless user studies are conducted to determine user needs and their reading interests.

Table No. 1 provides information as to whether the respondents have conducted the user studies in the libraries.

Table No. I : University Libraries that Conducted User Studies

Responses	No. of Libraries	% of Libraries
Yes	7	47
No	8	53
No Response	-	-
Total	15	100

Table I reveals that 53% of the university libraries i.e. 8 out of 15 do not conduct surveys to determine user needs and their reading interests.

Though seven libraries (47%) responded that they have conducted user studies to evaluate user needs, they had not given the method they had used for the same.

University of South Eastern (USE) library stated that they have made use of the case study method to assess the usage of books. University of Jaffna (UJ) and the university of Peradeniya (UP) stated that they have used questionnaire method and interview method to obtain information regarding user needs. University of Sri Jayawardanapura (USJ) responded that they have conducted user studies on the use of the periodicals. University of Ruhuna (URU) and University of Rajarata (UR) responded that they had conducted user studies, but they had used very simple methods to conduct user studies. (Eg. Keep a book or a form at the library for the users to indicate their needs & using user records etc.) These methods cannot be considered as user studies, and they do not give much information about user's needs and their interests. It is clear that most of the university librarians do not pay much attention to conducting user studies.

It was observed that most of the old and large university libraries (University of Kelaniya, University of Peradeniya, University of Moratuwa and University of Colombo) had not conducted user assessment surveys. It was clear from the above that the university libraries in Sri Lanka do not attempt to gain information about user's point of view.

3.2 Library Committee

Most of the Academic libraries have library committees to review and discuss CD activities. This is a sub-committee of the University Senate. Generally the library committee of a university library functions in two ways, in Executive and Advisory capacities. P.B. Mangala has suggested that "the library committee may act merely as an advisory committee. Library committee may form its sub-committee for a particular university library."²

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they had a library committee and whether they evaluate materials to determine their appropriateness for inclusion in the collection.

It was revealed that the 70% of the university libraries in Sri Lanka i.e. 11 out of 15 had a library committee to evaluate materials. Four libraries do not have such committees. Table 2 provides information regarding the composition of the library committee.

Table No.2: Composition of the library committee

Position	No of Libraries
Librarian	11
Senior/ Assistant Librarians	6
Faculty	10
Department Heads	-
Vice Chancellor	5
Other (Registrar, Bursar etc.)	2

It was clear, that composition of the library committee differs from university to university. Most of the university libraries indicated that the librarian and the faculty members served on the library committee and most of them functioned as an advisory committee.

3.3 Selection Practices

Book selection is the primary and most important element in the collection development process. Decision on the selection of materials is very important at this time of budgetary constraints.

The study investigated the persons responsible for book selection in university libraries. Most of the university libraries in Sri Lanka had their selection of library materials done by the librarian and the faculty. (See table No.3)

Table No 3 : Responsible persons that initiate the selection

Initiator	No. of Libraries	% of Libraries
Librarians	12	81
Heads of Acquisition	04	30
Faculty	10	66

Library Committee	07	46
Other (Students etc.)	01	07

Table No.3 reveals that in most cases librarians are responsible for book selection. 66% of universities (10 university libraries) have indicated that their selection is done by the faculty and librarians.

Rayland argued that "selection by faculty only lead to major problems and that librarians should carry it out, help by faculty only in specific areas."³ But Onadiran and Onadiran recommended that "the teaching staff should be encouraged to get more involved in book selection."⁴

The librarian should select materials in all areas so as to maintain the overall quality and balance of the collection. But in specific subject areas faculty participation should be solicited so that this knowledge will be greatly utilized in building a quality and relevant collection.

Further Table No.3 makes it clear that the library committee was responsible for the selection in 46% of the libraries. Generally the committee consists of Vice-Chancellor, Heads of Departments, Librarian/Assistant librarians and members of the faculty staff. Therefore, selection decisions of the library committee could be used to develop a wise and balanced collection.

Table No.3 shows, that the four University libraries had their selection done by Head of Acquisition division (Acquisition librarian). Developed and large libraries with large Collection of library materials, are organized into various sections namely acquisition, Cataloguing, Reference, Reader Services, Periodical Section etc. Heads of such division become experts in their fields according to their work experience. Especially in book selection it is very important. It helps to buildup user oriented collection.

Only one library (UP) had mentioned that the library welcome recommendations from the students. Students are the main user-clientele group in the university library. Their suggestions and recommendations could be used in order to develop a user based collection.

3.4 Use of Selection Tools

Selection tools play a vital link between selection and acquisition. No selection process can function effectively without proper use of selection tools. To select library materials correctly and wisely use of such tools is necessary.

Libraries use various tools in selection practice. These tools may differ from library to library. To ascertain the selection tools used by librarians, the respondents were asked to indicate the tools used in selection. Types of tools were named and respondents were asked to mark the tools used by them. Tools used for selection are shown in table No.4

Table No. 4 : Tools Used for Selection

Tools	No of Libraries	% of Libraries
Book reviews	14	93
Publisher's announcements	15	100
Book in print, Monthly catalogs & vendor's list	13	92
Professional journals & announcements	11	78
Journals, Bibliographies, Abstracting & Indexing Journal	08	57
Other (Eg. Media etc.)	01	07

The survey shows that the majority of the respondents used all the selection tools which were indicated in the table No.4 for selection. Yet University of Sabaragamuwa((US), University of Wayamba (UW) and University of Buddhashrawaka Bikkashu (UBP) do not have Books in Print & Journal Bibliographies. Due to lack of funds they, may be not in a Position to acquire more expensive selection tools. The survey reveals that the publisher announcements are the most used selection tool in university libraries.

Under the category "others" the USJ library mentioned media as the selection tool. Though media is not used heavily in our libraries as a selection tool it gives more current and up to date information for the librarians.

3.5 Acquisition Practices

Acquisition of library materials is obviously one of the most important activities of the university library collection development process. Efficient acquisitions always help to build-up a fairly balanced collection.

3.6 Methods of Acquisition

Generally the acquisition of library materials is done through approval plan system, on advanced payment, on cash transaction system, on credit or combination of above methods.

The study examined what methods of acquisition are used by the university libraries.

Table No. 5: Methods of Acquisitions

Method of Acquisition	No of Libraries	% of Libraries
Approval Plan	8	57
Advanced Payment	11	73
Cash Transaction	8	57
On Credit	9	60

Table No. 5 shows that approximately 73% of the total respondent libraries have used advance payment method for their acquisition.

Approval plan method is a very important acquisition tool for many libraries and undoubtedly affected to CD on many universities. One of the great advantages of this method is the freedom to return a book, if so desired, upon review by both librarian and faculty. Though most of the foreign countries deal with approval plan system, it is not much used in our country. Out of the 15 universities only 8 libraries used this method for their acquisition.

Library resources required are mostly obtained from abroad by academic libraries. In case of foreign purchasing most of the libraries use advance payment method. Table No.5 showed that 73% of the university libraries have used advance payment method for their acquisitions.

In the case of local purchasing most of the libraries acquired material on credit basis or some times on cash transaction.

The survey results reveal that most of the university libraries used combination of all methods above, for their acquisitions.

3.7 Acquisition Policy

Every library should have a sound acquisition policy in order to plan a wise and effective acquisition. A codified acquisition policy will help the library staff to buildup a fairly balanced collection.

The respondents were asked whether they have a procedure manual or a written policy for acquisition of materials. None of the libraries in the survey had a written acquisition policy. This means that they did not have written guidelines for the acquisition of their materials, especially when there are budgetary limitations and many different materials to choose from.

Three university libraries in the survey (USJ, UJ and UP) had written manuals of procedure for acquisition. Acquisition manual of USJ had been prepared in early 1970s and it had some additions made in 1983. At present it is not used as a guideline for acquisition. This manual has only a few guidelines for CD and it does not have sufficient information.

UJ indicated that they have a manual of procedure for acquisition. It had been prepared in 1981 and revised in 1994. However, they had not enclosed a copy of it with the questionnaire. Therefore, it was not considered here.

UP library prepared a manual for acquisition in 1988 which was revised in 1998 and it is used as a guide for the acquisition operations. This manual has more information than others. Procedures for selection and acquisition are included in it. It also has some guidelines for maintaining collection and for budgetary allocation. But more information needs to be included to develop it as an acquisition policy. Librarian of the UP stated that this manual aids in making judgment based on evaluation, and to decide on what and what is not to acquire.

Those who did not have a written manual procedure or a written policy were asked whether or not they see any need for such a manual. It was observed that all the university libraries did not have a written policy or procedure, accepted the need for having one. In order to build up a balanced collection, the written policy or procedure manual is of prime importance.

Though they did not have a policy or procedure most of the respondents said that a policy statement would help wise acquisition. One of the respondents stated that "the budget allocation on books and journals for each department, weeding of out-dated items, how to develop the collection and selection etc. could be included in such a policy." One of the respondents in the survey, stated that a formal written procedure or policy would be useful in case of staff change.

The responses showed that most of the librarians had a clear idea about the importance of such a policy. It is a good trend in future CD practice in Sri Lanka.

3.8 Donation and Exchange of Materials

Donation and exchange of materials are important methods of acquiring materials for the libraries. This will result in some financial saving to the library.

To elicit information about the criteria regarding gifts, donations and exchange of library materials the respondents were asked to indicate whether they had criteria laid down in a written document and if so to enclose a copy.

The study revealed that 40% of the total respondent libraries i.e. 6 out of 15 have criteria regarding gifts, donation and exchange of library materials.

The libraries which had criteria regarding gifts, donation and exchange were asked to describe the way of accepting donations and exchange of materials. Most of the

respondents (UP, UK, UJ) stated that material suitable for academic level were accepted as donations. University of Rajarata (UR) said that the subject coverage, price, curricula and the quality of the publications etc. are considered when accepting donations and exchange.

Most of the university libraries in Sri Lanka exchange library material, especially periodicals with the academic libraries only. Except for UP library, other university libraries did not have written criteria to be considered when accepting a donation or exchange of library materials.

3.9 Weeding and Evaluation of the Collection

The respondents were asked whether they have a manual procedure or policy to evaluate and weed out their collections.

According to the responses received, it revealed that 73% of the university libraries i.e. 11 out of 15 neither did evaluate nor weeded their collections. A considerable percentage of the libraries did not use formal procedure for weeding or evaluation.

The respondents who had a manual of procedure or a policy for weeding and evaluation of the collection were asked to indicate the procedure which they used. Table No.6 shows the result of that question.

Table No. 6 : Weeding Methods

Responses	No of Libraries	% of Libraries
Common sense i.e formal procedure	1	7
Discard old editions, duplicates to create space	2	14
Selected by Faculty and librarians	1	7
Damaged copies	2	14
No response	11	78

It is clear that almost all the university libraries did not use any formal procedure for weeding and evaluating their collections. A policy for continuous weeding will be beneficial in the long run as this problem is bound to get complicated if neglected. Therefore, librarians should give more attention to weeding and evaluating procedures in the library.

3.10 Replacement

A question was asked whether they have a procedure for books found missing at a stock verification or books declared lost by users. If the answer was in the affirmative another question was asked to indicate the measures used for replacement.

The results of the responses show that approximately 80% of the university libraries have a procedure for replacement. The majority of the respondents (90%) stated that they charged for the material cost plus administration cost that included the cost of binding and labour charges etc. Some university libraries stated that if the book is available in the market, a new copy would be ordered. Some responses did not give a clear picture.

3.11 Library Co-operation

No library can provide all the materials needed by its patrons. Due to this reason libraries of all types should enter into co-operation arrangement to provide a wider and richer collection of materials to their clientele. Inter-library co-operation is a common phenomena in most of the libraries.

To get the correct picture of the inter-library co-operation among academic libraries the respondents were asked if they were in a formal network or other co-operation arrangement.

The results showed that there are a good number of activities that the university libraries can share with one and another. In order to elicit information a number of these were listed in the questionnaire to indicate whether their libraries were involved in any type of cooperative activities.

Table No.7 : Type of co-operative activities

Activity	No of Libraries	% of Libraries
Maintain a core collection agreed upon	0	0
Maintain a Union list of holdings	04	27
Inter-Library loan	11	73

Table No.7 reveals that most of the university libraries (73%) in Sri Lanka had participated in inter-library loan service. Libraries in developing countries like Sri Lanka, should engage in more resource sharing activities because of insufficient funding.

Four university libraries (UP, UC, USJ and UJ) were involved in union catalog and union list of holdings. It was observed that none of the libraries were involved in cooperative acquisition. Maintaining a union list of holdings or core collection of materials agreed upon by co-operating libraries, are basic requirements for the inter-library co-operation schemes, and university libraries in Sri Lanka have not given much attention to that activity.

Library networks provide easy communication among the co-operative libraries. But most of the university libraries in Sri Lanka still rely on manual systems such as Union list of

holding etc. It is necessary to introduce modern technologies to the libraries to co-operation them to university library system in Sri Lanka.

3.12 Budget Allocation

The study investigated the current practice of CD in academic libraries. Budget allocation is one of the important and considerable component in the CD.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they have an accepted formula for budget allocation. If they have an accepted formula, they were asked to indicate the criteria used.

All the university libraries indicated that they have an accepted formula for the budget allocation. However the criteria they used for allocation of funds differed from library to library.

Table No.8 : Budget allocation criteria

Criteria	No of Libraries	% of Libraries
Student population	10	66
Curricula	08	53
Strength of existing collection	09	60
Price of publications	07	47
Circulation	05	33

Table No. 8 reveals that most of the university libraries used student population, strength of existing collection and curricula as criteria for budget allocation.

3.13 Current situation of the allocation

Academic libraries in Sri Lanka suffer from lack of adequate funds. Users are increasing every year due to increased number of admissions. But the library budget is either decreased or increased minimally. Due to the budget cuts several university libraries are not in a position to maintain consistency in their CD activities.

To get correct picture of the problem of shrinking material budget of libraries, the respondents were asked whether their material budget have decreased during last five years.

Considerable percentage of the university libraries (40%) in Sri Lanka mentioned that their material budget have decreased during last five years. The reasons for that may be unbalance economic situation in the country.

3.14 Satisfaction level of existing CD practices

To get views of the librarians regarding existing CD practices in their libraries, the respondents were asked whether they were satisfied with the way the CD activities are organized in their libraries. Table No. 9 shows results of that.

Table No. 9: Satisfaction of organization of CD activities

Responses	No of Libraries	% of Libraries
Yes	10	66
NO	04	27
No Response	01	07
Total	100	15

It was clear from table no.9 that 66% of the university librarians were satisfied with way of CD activities are organized in their libraries.

The respondents who indicated that they are not satisfied with the organization of CD activities were asked to indicate whether they anticipated any change in the structure or organization in near the future. Three university libraries anticipated changes in the structure or organization of CD activities in the future. But none of them did describe the way they hope to do this.

4. Conclusion

The results of the survey were revealed that almost all the university libraries do not conduct formal user studies to find out user needs and their reading interest. Surprisingly none of the libraries in the survey have a written acquisition policy or accepted guidelines for acquisition. All the university libraries do not have a written accepted criterion which would be considered in accepting donation or evaluation/ Weed out collection and for replacement. The study also have revealed that all the university librarians did not have an adequate knowledge and experience in compiling a collection development policy. However their expressions indicate that the librarians have some sort of interest in this regard .Hence It is suggested to have a written collection development policy which consist formal procedures for acquisition, selection ,weeding and

evaluation for every university library in order to buildup a quality collection rich enough to support to teaching ,learning and research activities in the university.

References

- 1 AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, Guide for written Collection Development Policy Statement, Chicago:- ALA, 1989, 21.
- 2 MANGALA P.B. Book acquisition pattern of university libraries. International Library Review, 12,1980, 218-222
- 3 RYLAND, J. Collection Development and Selection -: Who should do it. Library Acquisition-. Practice and Theory, 6 (1),1982,13-17
- 4 ONADIRAN., G.T. and ONADIRAN, O.W. Acquisition Procedures in University Libraries in Nigeria. Journal of Library and Information Science, 6, 1981, 60-69