Collection Development Policy and Selection Criteria for E-Resources: Indian Perspective

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Abstract— This paper highlights the features of collection development policy and selection criteria of E-Resources in the changing paradigm where the electronic media and communication technology are gaining momentum in developing countries. The paper also identifies the changes to integrate the issues of collection development and management of electronic resources in the library. The criteria for selection of electronic resources, vital part of any policy of collection development, are also discussed here.Electronic resources was also be identified and evaluated for selection like traditional materials through the consultation of reviews and other services. A review of conditions in India regarding collection development policy and practices was also discussed in this paper.

Key words: Collection Development, Collection Development Policy, Electronic Resources, Selection Criteria of Electronic Resources

I. INTRODUCTION

A great number of changes in format and form of library materials have come about since the emergence of electronic media and communication technologies. Electronic resources (ER) came into existence in the1960s. The facilities of online networks made these resources available in good numbers in the 1970s. The 1980s experienced various forms of electronic publishing, available and accessible via computer networks included in tapes and in discs. According to Gorman (1997) the cost effectiveness of library collections concerned in the 1970s, the budgetary crunches concerned in the 1980s, and the understanding of electronic library materials began in the 1990s. Telecommunications made these resources as widened as possible in terms of availability and accessibility. While the years 2000s witnessed libraries and publishing busy with problem solving of various issues of procurements, access and preservation. In recent past, Collection Development was a comprehensive phrase that denoted the process of building collection of library materials to serve the needs of specific user populations. While it continues to be used in the literature, there is a growing preference for 'collection management', "which choice reflect a somewhat subtle paradigmatic shift both from discrete institutional collection to a wide library world and from narrower issues specific to collection building to a rather daunting range of issues drawn from wider aspect of professional practice" (Gorman, 1997). In broad terms these issues encompass "… a process of information gathering, communication coordination, policy formulation, evaluation and planning" (Osborn, 1990). More specifically, the collection management generally is thought to involve the activities like budgeting and resource allocation; selection, evaluation, and withdrawal of stock; choice of media and format; storage services and facilities; preservation, conservation, and binding; monitoring of collections; organization and shifting; performance measurement; collection administration; system development and new technology; resource sharing and networking (Gorman,1997).

The term 'collection' in the phrases is seems not sufficient today. 'Collections and connections' are likely to be winning as a better replacement to address today's complex premise of electronic media with online dissemination of information. As Collection Development continues to evolve into collection management, the two areas together become increasingly difficult to define. Rapidly shifting emphases driven in part by information and communication technology and in part by economic factors (Budd and Harloe, 1997). The process initially was started in interconnecting libraries so that information on collection can be shared. "With the advent of full text retrieval by telecommunications, cooperative Collection Development and shared resources may eventually become a reality" (Futas, 1995).

II. MODES OF ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING AND COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Since the application of Information Technology (IT) in publishing, the world seems to have exploded with digital products and its remote distribution. Undoubtedly all of this has had important implications for the way business, publishers, users get access to information essential form them. "In the space of a few years we have collectively witnessed in electronic format the appearance of all the major reference titles and journals for most subject areas, a process that originally took several hundred years to complete in the print world" (Lancaster, 1995). Different modes of electronic publishing (that is simultaneous digital version of print, digitized or born digital, either offline or online) are concurrently operational in the current market place. Attempts have been made to build up ER generated by different modes of electronic publishing. UNESCO, as early as in 1996, stated that "the development of new carriers for the storage of information, traditionally produced on paper, has brought about fundamental change in thinking within national libraries about future collection policies and storage requirements and an awareness that in order to maintain comprehensive collection of national publications for present and future generations of users, it will be necessary to obtain an increasing amount of non-print materials" (UNESCO,1996). Though this was stated in respect of legal deposit of non-print materials but many of the lessons learnt over the years involving the collection building of printed materials should not forgotten as soon as the world moves to the electronic environment. More importantly, with offers from electronic journals, books, database etc, there is an explicit link between print and electronic subscription.

III. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES AND THE COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Changes in library resource management have been numerous, some effect the collection development policy (CDP) too. One of the issues that have begun to appear in policies is the maintenance of the collection. In past years, the works of collection maintenance like binding, replacing, weeding, preserving, and protecting were thought as lateral to the real process of collection building. Presently, all are included in the periphery of collection management in the electronic environment.

A CDP is usually written and developed with two audiences in mind- the library staff members and the broader range of user community. In most of the libraries, however, where there is any policy for collection development, what is found is a combination of descriptions of practices, guidelines for decisions, and provision intended to protect against unwarranted pressure to acquire or discard certain types of materials. It helps to ensure consistency in procedures and is also important in achieving appropriate balance in the library's collections. The rapid infusion of ER into the library acquisition often troubled the old rules and guidelines typically contained in traditional CDP. The library's collection simply constitute with those items that are purchased and housed locally or include licensed materials that are housed on a server at the vender site. The collection might include materials that are freely available on the Internet. The basic issues must be resolved before preparation of a successful CDP appropriate for ER. There are three approaches to incorporate the acquisition or retention of electronic resources into the CDP:

(1) Making acquisition of electronic resources in the line of traditional policies.
(2) Creating separate policies dealing only with electronic resources.
(3) Mainstreaming electronic resources into a reworked, integrated CDP.

No doubt the electronic resources, sooner or later, will come to represent a larger portion and more important component of any library's collections. In this circumstance, the integrated policy to include ER will be more successful than adopting a separate plane.

IV. TRADITIONAL CDP AND ISSUES OF CHANGES

The basic purposes of a CDP are to inform and direct the staff regarding acquisition processes and making resources available to its users. To carry out these purposes, a traditionalCDP contains the following provisions intended to:

(1) Define library's mission, user community and requirements.
(2) Provide selection criteria and guidelines.
(3) Identify selection tools and processes.
(4) Define the process of weeding, cancellation and replacement of materials.
(5) Facilitate the consistency and communications among the CD staff and overall management as an authority document.

(6) Responsibility for various aspects of CD processes and collection management activities.
(7) Plan for the future of the collections.
(8) Provide guidelines for dealing with gift materials.
(9) Provide guidelines for dealing with the materials or services thought by the authority as inappropriate.
(10) Provide framework and context for library access, space allocations, budgeting and fund rising priorities.
(11) Support cooperative or collaborative CD activities and inter-library loan.
(12) Identify the strength and the relative weakness of the present collections.
(13) Aid in preparing planning for development initiatives. Every issue of the list remains valid and important with various degrees when dealing with electronic resources. Though, only some additional and unique issues require consideration.However, to incorporate electronic resources in CDP, the following issues must be addressed:

A. Budget:
New and additional cost for resources as well as technology is to be considered with high priority.

B. Technology:
Technological requirements to access new resources like computer platform compatible with the new materials are to be planned.

C. Staff Training and Users Orientation
Consideration of training of staff and users' orientation in handling and use of ER is another issue.

D. Version
Cancellation or retention of print version against availability of e-version should be resolved amicably. Some users' may prefer traditional version. Decision will depend on different consideration.

E. Access:
Provision of or limitation on remote access of resources is an important issue. Access of electronic resources can be extended to members' own desk even to members' home.

F. Duplicate Subscription
Subscription of individual title, say for journals, is not permissible from the publishers and/or aggregators end. Libraries are to purchase various resources as a bundle. There are possibilities of duplication while purchasing 'bundles' from different aggregators.

G. Licensing
Negotiation of the 'terms of licenses' for use of material is another essential consideration for collection of electronic resources.

H. Postponement or Cancellation of Subscription
Access to materials of licensed period after postponement of subscription is very important. In case of print materials there is no problem of holding or use of such materials after postponement or cancellation of subscriptions. Problems arise when library losses all rights to the materials previously licensed once subscription has postponed.

I. Performance
Performance of ER according to its intended services should be compared better at least to its print counterpart.

J. Organization

Considerations of organizational issues and how to catalog ER is another most confusing issue.

K. Resource Sharing

Consideration of issues of cooperative collection development, such as ability to provide copies on interlibrary loan should also be considered.

L. Preservation

The issues of preservation and long-term access of electronic resources are still unresolved throughout the world. Therefore, "While the principles of collection development, which were developed in the world of, print publications, do not change radically with new publishing technologies, method of decision making and specific selection guidelines must be adjusted significantly to incorporate new publishing

formats" (Demas, 1994).

V. SELECTION OF ELECTRONIC MATERIALS

Another issue beginning to appear in CDP is the criteria for selection of electronic resources. The criteria relate the costs of the resources to the technological trends. Constant evaluation is required to acknowledge the responsibility and utility of electronic resources. According to Gregory (2000) the selection criteria should based on the following aspects:

A. Audience

Does the user really require it. Consciously or unconsciously is the matter of a great concern.

B. Content

Electronic materials should not be acquired simply because it is available and increase the glamour of the collection. It should be included if it could fill up the current gaps in the print collection. It may duplicate the information already owned by the library. Although, sometimes there is the force to procure duplicate resources.

C. Costs

It should be a better replacement of current print version and must result a cost benefit. Additional cost might require purchasing additional hardware and software to access the new resources. Selector must press on the resources which is compatible with the existing infrastructure.

D. Access

Appropriate technology to be had to make the content of such resources accessible effortlessly. The accessibility question is required to be examined in details

because some electronic resources are more difficult to use.

E. Licensing

Terms of license is another important matter that leads to the selection criteria of the electronic resources.

F. Ease of Use and Appropriateness

The authority and the accuracy of the electronic resources especially resources available through the World Wide Web (www) is very

critical to determine during the process of selection and evaluation. Generally a print version can be accessed by a single user at a time. To get the full advantage of the use of electronic resources by multiple users simultaneously a library needs sufficient computer terminals to handle additional user traffic. The benefit of the ER in respect to the multi-user approach will be in vain due to insufficient infrastructure.

VI. REVIEW CRITERIA OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES TO BE SELECTED

In order to make a good selection decisions regarding electronic materials, there is the need to list a group of materials with review information in terms of both local and global perspectives. Therefore, it is important to determine a set of resources to be used to gather information and to answer the following basic queries of what, how and where:

(1) What is available?
(2) How much does it cost?
(3) Where can it be obtainable?

Further queries are about the quality, which must be judged both from a subject matter and also in a technological perspective:

(1) The selection tools might help to determine the authority of the resource.
(2) Review in the selection tools will help to determine where it delivers according to its promise or not.
(3) The query about where it is being cited in bibliographies or reliable webliographies would be resolve by the selection tools.
(4) The assessment of the vender can be based on experience gethered through pa s t pur chasesorupon recommendations of colleagues or reliable reviewers To this end, the mentioned aspects might be satisfied through consultation of reviews available in various sources.

VII. SITUATION IN THE LIBRARIES

The libraries of universities and research institutes etc have their defined users who proactively require exploded information in electronic media and online communication.

The user requirements and the infrastructure of most of the medium and small libraries, barring some exceptions, are not ready to develop a wide range of collection and connections of electronic information resources. One reason is that the teaching-learning is still based on the 'text book learning' in the country. The quantity of equivalent electronic materials produces very remote from the satisfactory level. A great amount of library users require materials in their regional languages at least in the area of arts, humanities and literature. The number of such users in the country is significantly high. Electronic resources in indigenous languages of the country are rare to be available.

Collection building can not occur unless there are published item to collect. On the other hand the infrastructure in relation to the procurement of ER in the small and medium libraries is in a tangent condition. So, as far as the users and the viabilities are

concern the prospect of Collection Development of ER is far from the reality in the Indian libraries as a whole. The introduction of CDP for ER, separately or in an integrated way, establishment of selection criteria and exploration of selection tools are not practiced in most of the libraries in the state of West Bengal and in the country in general. Moreover, as a result of knowledge and understanding in this regard it revealed that most of the university libraries in the state have no written document as a guideline for

Collection Development in regards to print or electronic environment.

But definitely the process of collection building in the libraries is guided by certain policies in any form. The Collection Development and its management in these libraries are guided by certain conventions, experiences and sense of right and wrong. Crucial issues or problems regarding this are resolve in different committees in different levels in the institutions. Certain other issues like collection strength, loss and weeding out procedures, staff pattern for management of collection in the libraries and bargaining of cost of books are generally guided by the government circulars and sponsor agencies' desires. Most of the university libraries are started their ER procurement at the initiatives and policies of their affiliating body like University Grants Commission (UGC) with the resource 'package' as they are drawn together. So is the case for different other higher education institutes and research centers. Most of them are joined with their relevant consortia. Their policies, criteria and selection of resources are directly controlled by the agency on the high behind the consortia. Local issues are hardly been considered in this regards. In some cases they are only a part of the central initiation of procurement electronic resources.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The electronic information resources offer a tremendous potentiality in the new paradigm of collection development. However, this should not guided by adventure and unreality but the viability of introduction of these resources. This is the time to trace on to adopt a concrete collection development policy considering the new paradigm as well as the current realities in the libraries. Appropriate selection criteria should be practiced before taking any decision regarding this. Selection tools must be consulted in an appropriate manner so that the right materials in contents and in technology for the right audience in appropriate cost could be procured and managed.

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