Full Length Review Article

COLLECTION EVALUATION IN LIBRARIES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Purpose: This paper aims to provide an overview of collection assessment techniques useful for libraries. Main advantages, disadvantages and procedures for applying each assessment technique are explained. *Methodology/approach:* The author performs a content analysis to understand how evaluators assess library collection. *Findings:* Detailed descriptions are examined of the methods to develop guidelines necessary to evaluate library collection in support of their mission. *Practical implications:* The paper encourages librarian to think how the collection aremeasured and provides information for libraries to use when developing library collection assessment processes.

INTRODUCTION

Library collection is one of the four basic elements of any library and it can determine the effectiveness of library operations. ODLIS (Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science) defines that Library collection is the total accumulation of books and other materials owned by a library, cataloged and arranged for ease of access, often consisting of several smaller collections. Library collection is built suitable to functions, types, and characteristics of each library. The process of library collection development is based on an ongoing assessment of user needs, analysis of usage statistics of books and other materials as well. Libraries have to organize, store and preserve their collection until outdated or no longer useful by users. From the late nineteenth century, library collection has been included a variety of materials such as books, journals, newspapers, microfilms, maps, archival collections, digital collections, reference materials etc. in many languages to satisfy user needs. However, printed books are the most important in library collection and suitable to reading habit of most users. Due toone of the primary tasks of any library is to collect, maintain, and provide materials related to patron needs soevaluation of library collection is very important to know exactly both qualitative and quantitative levels of publications owned by a library.

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DISCUSSION

Nowadays, we often hear about two related terms, there are library collection and information resources. Although the process of building and developing information resources is almost similar to this process of library collection, however, library collection does not include information retrieval systems and databases, while information resources also consist information retrieval systems and especially databases. Library collection term is often used in traditional library which just focus on the process of collecting materials. Information resources term often mentions in organization which main tasks are not only collecting materials but also providing information products and services to users. Libraries often and often develop their collection, developing library collection is the process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of library collection. Most of libraries create collection development policy based on user needs, development conditions and trends of using collection by conducting selective, ordering, receiving, and withdrawing materials. Evaluating library collection is an important activity that every library has to do in the process of developing library collection. Library will descript, analyzes, and measure library collection in both quantitative and qualitative to determine the extent relevance to objectives of library and information needs of library users. In addition, evaluating library collection aims at different purposes. For library, they can understand clearly

the scope, depth, quality, strengths and weaknesses of library collection. Moreover, it helps library determine the effectiveness of developing collection policy and find ways to improve the ability of library to satisfy user needs. Because of those effects, many libraries around the world have conducted the evaluation to identify the current situation of library collection so that library can know what they should do to develop library collection in the future. Results of evaluation also support for building or adjusting library collection development policy, measure the effectiveness of this policy, determine priorities for the preservation of library collection as well.

Methods of evaluating library collection

There are many different techniques for evaluating and assessing library collection. They can be considered as either Collection – centered method or User – centered method.

Collection – centered method

Collection– centered method considers the content, characteristics of the collection in order to determine the size, age, scope and depth of the collection in comparison to an external standard. The main techniques of collection – centered method as the following:

List checking

This is the technique of qualitatively evaluating library collections. Library staff will compare the library holdings with one or more lists of selected titles. The types of lists can be authoritative sources which have been recognized by experts, catalogs of libraries with strong collections in the area, or standard lists for evaluating library collection. The result of comparing between library collection and those sources will give the percentage of materials found in library collection. If this rate is high meaning the process of library collection developing is successful. Library also get knowledge about qualitative and quantitative of their collection, an adequate collection always contain many titles on the list used for checking. Beside that the result is useful for identifying strengths and weaknesses of library collection and for compiling lists of items for purchase. Some standard lists have been published such as Books for College Libraries, Opening Day's Choice Collection, Public Library Catalog, and The Children's Catalog etc. Librarians will select what they need depending on status of library collection, purpose of evaluating, objectives of the library as well. Advantage when assessing library collection according to list checking technique is library can use a variety of standard lists and limitation of list checking technique is standard lists quickly become out dated or those lists do not include special materials directly related to patron needs.

Self scanning

This is the assessment technique that librarians examine the materials on the shelves in relation to the criteria for assessing a collection directly. Result of evaluating provides overall view of the size, scope and quality of the collection such as titles, copies of each title, titles of each subject, titles of each language, titles in time of publishing, and the number of lost, damaged materials etc.

Advantages of self scanning technique include

- Strengths and weaknesses of library collection can be measure easily;
- The results can be used to accomplish goals other than assessment, for example: understanding about the quality and quantity of library collection, inventory or preservation of materials in stock.

However, this technique requires a lot of time and effort because librarians have to check and statistics each item on the shelves. On the other hand, there are some materials may not be on the shelves when librarians conduct checking because they are on loan or other reason. That's why self scanning technique can be have limitations.

Statistical comparisons

Statistical comparisonstechnique that librarians collect the data about other collections which have been statistics by other libraries. After that they conduct statistical comparisons of their collection with otherlibrary collectionsin the same library system or libraries have the same size, functions, and tasks.Library will know about the strengths and weaknesses of library collection compared to other libraries in the number of titles, items, rate of collection developing, percentage of funding for acquisition compared to the total of funds allocated for library etc. However, the requirements for using statistical comparison technique are library have to do well the statistics on the number of materials and built good relationships with other libraries to receive their supporting, especially for getting their statistics.

Expert opinion

To conduct expert opinion technique, subject experts will come and assess the age, language of materials, and subject coverage of library collection. After evaluating, specialists will determine how well the collection is meeting library stated goals. Although each evaluator's view is valid only for his or her own areas of interest, in combination, individual's views provide an overall sense of the value of library collection so that library staff can get a deep understanding ofthe collection, especially through expert opinions about strengths and weaknesses. This technique is needed good collaborations between experts and library. In recently years, academic libraries often require professor and lecturer examine publications in libraries.

User - centered method

User – centered method describes how the collection is used and indicate the effectiveness of the collection relative to use. Some main techniques of User – centered method include:

Circulation studies

This is a technique of analyzing circulation data.Circulation data is useful in evaluations, because they reveal which materials users select to satisfy their needs. In a traditional

library, documents are used for the statistics often include patron cards, borrowing cards, the annual report etc. In libraries, which have been using library management software, they can have circulation statistics data very easy by using Reports feature.

Those reports help library track checkout materials, examine the statistics of checkout materials for the current day, month, and year etc. very quickly and conveniently. Advantage of circulation studies technique is easy to conduct and provide reliable quantitative data for a fuller understanding of collection use. In traditional library, librarians require to build and manage enough documents or tracking papers to get circulation statistical data if they use this technique for evaluating. Besides, library staff need to spend lot of time to statistics as well. Circulation statistics data can be used to support collection decisions such as weeding, storing, preserving, buying multiple copies, converting records, and reclassifying collections. Most circulation studies reveal the use patterns of books and identify highly used books. Moreover, age and language are two other factors that are useful in determining which items will be used and which will not be used.

User surveys

One of the basic requirements of building and developing library collection is to ensure this collection matches with information needs of library's users. Satisfy user needs is the main purpose of the library activities, so that the compositions of library collection have to relevance to the needs of users.
User surveys technique is used to measure library collection has met user needs or not. Libraries can conduct the survey through questionnaires or interview directly to identify user needs. Benefit of this technique is library can collect feedback from users. Through questions are given during the process of survey, library can get qualitative results about quality of library collection from evaluating by users and their expectations for the development of library collection. However, this technique has some limitations as bellow:

With the method of investigation by questionnaire, librarian have to design questionnaire with a variety of questions, deliver them to users, then librarian will receive and analyze data. This process take time, especially printed questionnaires. On the other hand, design a questionnaire is complicated because a questionnaire as a research tool, it will help library achieve their research goals and solving research problems. However, the number of questionnaires are often lost because users do not return them to library or missing information because users do not answer opened questions. In the investigation of user needs, library should pay attention to the needs which have not been satisfied because it reveal irrelevance between user needs and library collection. Those data will help determine the right direction for the process of collection development to satisfy the growing of user needs.

Interlibrary loan data

Interlibrary loan service allows users to borrow materials from other libraries if it is not available in library collection. Therefore, libraries can analyze interlibrary loandata to indicate types of materials that are of interest to users and identify specific items requested frequently so that libraries consider to add them to the collection. However, this technique can be used in libraries offer interlibrary loan services only.

Conclusion

To have reliable data about library collection, librarian should conduct both quantitative and qualitative techniques to avoid skewing the results in favor of one or more methods. Those techniques will supplement traditional collection-evaluation methods and allow librarians to fully evaluate their collections. Evaluation should be an on-going process, which can help uncover the character of current collection. Several factors need to be considered when selecting evaluation techniques, including the reasons for the assessment, the documented reliability, and validity of selected techniques. In addition, it depends on other factors such as cost, available time, staff etc.

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