

Collection Development Exercise: San Jose Public Library

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Abstract

This paper involves an exercise in collection development involving a scenario in which the author is hired by the San Jose Public Library and tasked with expanding the collection on a USD \$500.00 budget against the constraints and demands of the greater San Jose community. An exploration of methodology, philosophy and rationale precedes a proposed, itemized record list.

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The reasoning to follow is based upon several assumptions provided by the instructor for purposes of this exercise, provided in a set of instructions. Such instructions inform the author on the nature of the San Jose community, including trends, constraints, development policy and expectations. These factors will not be summarized here but nevertheless inform the rationales and methodology to follow.

Philosophy

A collection is capable of furnishing knowledge on various subject areas appropriate to the institutional design of the library. A complete or well developed collection involves one which covers all subject areas and is capable of servicing the needs of the patron. Where possible a collection's weak spots should be isolated and improved. Weak spots involve an insufficient capacity for meeting the demands of the community of patrons. Funds are wisely allocated to areas with the most use, although certain core works should always be present in a library, regardless of frequency of use. Core works are defined as those which are considered indispensable to subject study. In this regard a good collection should have the flexibility to sustain more focused subject study, but also more general and popular access; the collection must have a dynamic range, and not cater simply to the demand of the moment. For a library is more than simply a warehouse of popular books: it should also be capable of covering greater domains of knowledge and study in a systematic and exhaustive fashion. This is especially true to academic libraries, which inform and support curricula of coursework.

That being said the ultimate goal of a library is to serve the trending demands of the patrons. While a collection should strive to have a “core” collection in respective subject areas, it should also dedicate the vast majority of periodic development funds to the most pressing of patron needs. For instance, a community with a new and large influx of Hispanics might profit from the acquisition of records appropriate to and covering such a demographic. A community which recently has embraced “green” technologies would similarly profit from the purchase of records dealing with that subject area, assuming it was necessarily within the purview of the library at hand. The nature and demands of the community are central in informing development for public libraries, and without a close inspection and understanding of the region, development is filled with folly. Unlike an academic, corporate or other specialized library where a collection is task-oriented to cover specific intellectual areas of study, the public library is a more elusive creature and requires empathy and good public awareness on the part of developers.

The sort of record medium to be purchased is a vital consideration. Mass market paperbacks rarely outlive a decade, especially in humid or poorly maintained environmental conditions. Even trade paper quality books have a lackluster lifespan. As in centuries past, cloth and skin have the best prospects for avoiding the “slow fires.” Where possible these records must be selected over mass market manufactures, especially if the record will seemingly have enduring value in a collection and could be used by the upcoming generations to come. The complexities of digital preservation are also critical to consider, although far outside the scope of this paper. Ultimately digital records must enter a system which considers format vs access, obsolescence, neglect, bit rot, metadata

and findability to list a few factors. Ad-hoc digital collections, formed without a deliberate digital preservation plan lead to disaster. The medium must be considered against the preservation scheme and means of a library. Of course, economics has the most glaring impact on such considerations: cloth books are often an order of magnitude more expensive than their paperback alternatives. The durability of a medium must be considered against the greater lapses in subject area coverage.

The content of a record should also be considered before purchase. Where possible records should be qualified as “core” works by academic or trusted review sources to ensure their quality. While non-core works have a place within a public library, they should not be prioritized over core works in the domain of general circulation development. Ultimately the content of the records in a library’s collection will be specific to the institutional design, as well as the collection development policy. Regardless: content should be considered, and a good developer always ensures the viability of a record within a collection intellectually.

Rationale

Developing for San Jose Public Library, given the constraints of the scenario was difficult. The obvious course of action would have been to purchase ESL books given the increasing ESL demographic; however purchase of language titles is prohibited. Another clear area which should be developed is audio-visual materials, as the current demand is high and the collection is meager, yet here again purchase is prohibited. These two areas are clear failings of the collection and should logically be improved upon. Given that these areas are off limits the author has focused on developing the collection along the lines of general usage, demand and interest, i.e. bullet paragraph four of the assignment

instructions. In sum the various patron categories were considered within the context of user age, as only 9% of the community is reported to be geriatric.

The selection criteria were overwhelmingly contextual. The author selected various records across appropriate categories of patron interest (i.e. car repair, home improvement, parenting, investments etc) and used his discretion in selecting recreational records for exploratory reading. There were no clear subject coverage gaps (other than the aforementioned ones, which are off limits) thus selection of records for purchase was done in a more discretionary rather than procedural manner. Year of publication was prioritized where possible, as subject areas of interest were explored for consideration.

Methodology

The list to follow was constructed using Bowker's Book Analysis tool, an online software which compiles all well-reviewed "core" records into an interactive, subject separated database. Bowker's Book Analysis record lists are compiled from various sources: booklists, New York Time's reviews, academic reviews and sources such as Wilson Catalog. If this tool was not availed to the author a prudent alternative would be to consider the Wilson Public Library Catalog in print, an expansive tome published every four years (last edition: 2008) which lists various core records for public libraries.

Using Bowker's Book Analysis records were isolated for general audiences and books in print, then prioritized by year and filtered by subject under Dewey Decimal Classification. Searches were further defined by prohibiting undergraduate, graduate and faculty (academic) selections from the record list, with a preference indicated for general works. This search enabled the application of the aforementioned rationale and philosophy to be quickly and efficiently applied in the work of collection development.

The List

Dewey 0XX:

Documentary Filmmaking: A Contemporary Field Guide Hewitt, John OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS, INCORPORATED 070.1/8 USD 29.95 Trade Paper 2009

The Art of the Interview: A Guide to Insightful Interviewing Perlich, Martin SILMAN-
JAMES PRESS 070.4/ USD 12.95 Trade Paper 2007

Dewey 1XX:

The Continental Aesthetics Reader Cazeaux, Clive TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP
111/.85/094 USD 50.00 Trade Paper 2011

Grimoires: A History of Magic Books Davies, Owen OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS,
INCORPORATED 133.4409 USD 29.95 Trade Cloth 2009

The Possessed: Adventures with Russian Books and the People Who Read Them

Batuman, Elif FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX 891.7/09 USD 15.00 Trade Paper

The Secret Life of Emily Dickinson Charyn, Jerome NORTON, W. W. & COMPANY,
INCORPORATED 813/.54 USD 24.95 Trade Cloth 2010

Dewey 6XX:

Energy: Management, Supply and Conservation Beggs, Clive ELSEVIER SCIENCE &
TECHNOLOGY BOOKS USD 54.95 Trade Paper 2009

What Color Is Your Parachute? 2010: A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-
Changers Bolles, Richard N. TEN SPEED PRESS 650.1405 USD 18.99 Trade
Paper 2009

How to Read a Financial Report: Wringing Vital Signs Out of the Numbers Tracy, John
A. WILEY, JOHN & SONS, INCORPORATED 657/.3 USD 19.95 Trade Paper 2009

Lead by Example: 50 Ways Great Leaders Inspire Results Baldoni, John AMACOM
658.4/092 USD 21.95 Trade Cloth 2008

The Encyclopedia of Herbs: A Comprehensive Reference to Herbs of Flavor and
Fragrance DeBaggio, Thomas TIMBER PRESS, INCORPORATED 635/.7 USD
39.95 Trade Cloth 2009

Dogs: A Natural History Page, Jake HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS 636.7 USD
24.95 Trade Cloth 2007

In Our Control: The Complete Guide to Contraceptive Choices for Women Eldridge,
Laura SEVEN STORIES PRESS 613.9/43 USD 21.95 Trade Paper 2010

Addiction: A Disorder of Choice Heyman, Gene M. HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
616.86001 USD 26.95 Trade Cloth 2009

Suicidal Behavior in Children and Adolescents Wagner, Barry M. YALE UNIVERSITY
PRESS 618.92/858445 USD 55.00 Trade Paper 2009

Dewey 7XX:

Photographs: A Guide to Technical Terms Baldwin, Gordon GETTY PUBLICATIONS
770.1/4 USD 18.95 Trade Paper 2009 Book

The Artist's Guide: How to Make a Living Doing What You Love Battenfield,
Jackie PERSEUS BOOKS GROUP 702.3 USD 17.95 Trade Paper 2009

Cash: The Autobiography Cash, Johnny HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS
782.4/2/1642/092 USD 7.99 Mass Market 2005

Jackie Robinson: A Biography Rampersad, Arnold KNOPF DOUBLEDAY
PUBLISHING GROUP 796.357/092 USD 5.99 Trade Cloth 1997

Grand Total: \$492.33