

Electronic Books Collection Development in Delhi University Library System (DULS): A Case Study

Ashish Sen Srivastava

Librarian, Sunder Deep Engineering College, Ghaziabad

Rupesh Gupta

Assistant Librarian, Aditya College, Gwalior

Rakesh Singh Tomar

Librarian, ABES IT Group of Institutions, Ghaziabad.

Abstract

The Processes of Collection Development and Collection Management are undergoing a transformation as well. This is due to the effect of great many and diverse e- resources and tools that can be used in collection development and that are generally and easily available through the Internet. The paper reports the results of a research project that aimed to investigate how academic librarians are managing the integration of electronic book collections in their library holdings and focuses on the selection criteria and collection development issues. The background is represented by the Delhi University Library System, have been lately involved in electronic book collection development projects, and by the digital publishing e-books offer.

Introduction

Libraries are about many things but, collections have always been at the heart of libraries, be they digital, traditional brick and mortar, or hybrid between the two. Moreover, collections will retain that role in the future as well. However, the concept of what constitutes a collection in the networked environment of digital libraries is undergoing a transformation from the age-old concept of library collection signified by ownership. A new concept of a digital collection is evolving incorporating adaptations of many old features and standards, and creation of many brand new ones. This conceptual and pragmatic evolution is far from over. New processes and tools for collection development have emerged, used for development and management of both, traditional and digital collections. In addition, the process of collection

management became more closely connected than ever with means, ways, and policies for access, adding an additional dimension.

Definition

- According to Mosher, collection development is “the effective and timely selection of library materials forming carefully constructed area or subject collection, shaped overtime by bibliography experts. It is the synopsis linking thousands of decision to sensitive provision of needed research materials, the capacity to make the parts fit the needed whole.”
- ALA Glossary define collection development as “ The process of planning a stock acquisition programmed not simply to cater for immediate needs, but a coherent and reliable collection over a number of years, to meet the objectives of the service. The term demands depth and quality of stock, and includes associated activity towards exploitation of the collection through publicity and staff training etc.

Principle of Collection development

General principles related to quality are defined and discussed, and supporting resources providing further information are identified. These resources may be standards, guidelines, best practices, explanations, discussions, clearinghouses, case studies, or examples. Every effort has been made to select resources that are useful, current, and widely accepted as authoritative. However, the list is not exhaustive and, given the dynamic nature of digital information, can be expected to change over time. The resources listed will in some cases serve as a starting point to lead the reader to additional resources. This framework is intended to be flexible enough to accommodate new principles, considerations, and resources, and to absorb the contributions of others. At the same time, it is intended to be a concise introduction to core considerations for the building of good digital collections and to serve as a springboard to encourage further research and innovation by its readers.

E-book Collection Development in Delhi University Library System: Projects and Policies

The issue related to the diffusion of electronic books in Delhi University Library System and to the electronic book collection development policies is still in its early stages. Even though the management and the negotiation of electronic journals have commonly been accepted and consolidated, some reservations still remain. The review of the literature reveals that only a few Universities have lately carried out projects about the integration of electronic book collections into their holdings.

Electronic book collections in Delhi University Library System

The implementation of electronic book collections in the Delhi University Library

System holdings has been growing in the last few years and many universities show electronic books in their library collections (Ashcroft and Watts, 2004, p.285). Different studies have been carried out so as to investigate how libraries have incorporated electronic book collections in their holdings and how electronic book collections have been proposed to users, while Armstrong and Lonsdale (2005) analyzed focus groups' opinion about the integration of e-books in high education libraries in the United Kingdom in 2005. Bennet and Landoni (2005) as well as Qari (2005) analysed the use of electronic books among students in UK Universities and focused on the importance of the organization of training courses and specific seminars.

Electronic books and collection development issues

Collection development policies are like constitutions that are constantly being challenged, revised, and updated according to the changing environment. In a digital and knowledge-based environment, users' expectations are very different from the past. Therefore, it is inevitable that collection development policies and selection guidelines should keep abreast of publishing trends, user expectations and lifestyle changes, and socio-economic developments. Even though different issues have been analyzed and discussed in literature such as access and business models, quality of contents and users' needs (i.e. Anuradha and Usha, 2005; Su, 2005; Safley, 2006; Rice, 2006), and different projects have been carried out (i.e. Langston, 2003; Park, 2007), electronic book collections are neither included in liaison with academic department programmes nor related to course reading lists, and they seem not to be a part of a conscious collection development strategy (Ashcroft and Watts, 2004, p.285). It is difficult to point out the data librarians mostly take into consideration and how these data influence their collection development decisions. Usage statistics from vendors, feedback from academic staff as well as from students (Blake and Schleper, 2004), cost, licensing and digital rights management issues, the influence of library consortia (Miller, 2002, p.98), can all be considered influencing factors during the evaluation. These issues lead to new collection development approach and management. Librarians no longer acquire and keep products physically but subscribe to services characterized by licenses limited to a given period of time. They no longer keep the property rights of the products purchased but subscribe to license that offer archival rights which can change when publishers purchase, sell, or transfer products (San Jose and Pacios, 2005, p. 193). In this regard, new professional and management skills are required for librarians (Ashcroft and Watts, 2004, p. 290). They have now to analyse products taking into consideration the quality of the contents proposed not only in relation to the users' needs but also in relation to their price and to the level of control there is over the products they are subscribing to (Guijarro, 2000, in San Jose and Pacios, 2005).

Scope of the study

Delhi University Library System (DULS) having more than 34 libraries in its fold, the DULS is accomplishing its task of reaching to wider academic community. DULS have advanced web activity with the subscription of as good as 63 high quality

electronic databases being made available through campus network to teachers, students and research scholars. In addition to this 21 more databases are also accessible through UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium. DULS also promotes Open Access e-resources. The success lies on its use by the academic community of Delhi University. DULS is regularly conducting innovative Information Literacy Programs (ILP) for the benefit of students, researchers and faculty members and also making efforts in developing tutorials to make the community proficient in the use of WWW and OPAC is also being strengthened.

Delhi University Library System Electronic Book Collection Development

The project about the electronic book collection development started in few years ago and was carried out by the Delhi University library staff. The project aimed to increase the library services providing a new tool to support teaching and research activities. The evaluation of the contents was only made by the library staff.

Librarians considered the following criteria during the selection:

- Title per title selection for the subject required
- Agreement for an annual fee based on the number of titles subscribed;
- MARC record for each electronic book;
- Multiple concurrent access;
- Full text searching and title browsing;
- Making notes and highlighting text tools;
- Usage statistics reports.

Those selection criteria helped librarians to identify two electronic book collections that were subscribed to, at the end of a 30 day trial period. Different “strategies” were undertaken by the library to promote the new collections to the users. A specific link on the library website was set up; leaflets describing the new contents were distributed among students; interviews and questionnaires were carried out in order to gather patrons’ impression and feedback. The latter, along with the analysis of the usage statistics represented the data on which the University decided to continue or discontinue the subscription to those collections. At the end of the project, the data gathered showed high number of accesses, especially to the electronic books of all discipline. These results led librarians to a more accurate title per title selection focusing on the higher consulted subject area titles and laid the basis for the Delhi University Library System electronic book collection development.

Methods

The methodological approach and the unit of analysis

A case study was set up and the methodological approach was selected according to a combination of multiple techniques, drawing on data obtained from two interviews and a questionnaire (Pickard and Dixon, 2004). In order to focus on the Italian scenario in depth a small-scale survey was created to collect data from librarians that had been involved in the acquisition of electronic book collections.

The research questions

The research project aimed to answer the following research questions:

- Which criteria do librarians consider during the evaluation and selection of electronic books in library?
- What do the Italian academic librarians expect from electronic books?

Methods of data collection

Data were gathered through interviews and through a structured questionnaire. The use of different research techniques allowed the researcher a complementary view of the phenomenon studied (Lambert and Loiseau, 2008, p. 230). The table below (Table 1) shows the research techniques used in correlation with the study objectives.

Table.1. Research objectives, research techniques, data sources

Research Objectives	Research Techniques	Data Sources
Identify the major issues concerning the diffusion of electronic book collections among Delhi University Library System	Interviews	Key Informants
Understand which criteria librarians take into consideration during the evaluation and selection of electronic book collections	Questionnaire	Librarians
Identify librarians' expectations concerning e-book in terms of contents, usability as well as interface	Questionnaire	Librarians

Interviews and Questionnaire Design

The interviews were set up according to the following steps: preliminary explanation of the research project to the interviewee and definition of the key issues to be covered according the guidelines of the semi structured interviews (Pickard, 2007). Since descriptive information was collected through the interviews, close-ended questions and questions with answers in the format of Likert-scale were included in the questionnaire. Participants could choose among a set of alternative answers or could rank the options proposed (Pickard, 2007). Particularly, librarians were asked to indicate the influencing issues related to the electronic book collection development as well as the electronic book collection evaluation and selection criteria. The scale adopted was made of six points (1 being the lowest, 6 being the highest).

The main variables considered were:

- The elements affecting the acquisition of the electronic resources particularly focusing on the electronic book collection;
- Librarians' expectations about electronic book collections (in terms of contents, acquisition models, usability, etc)

Data analysis

The data were analyzed following the guidelines described in literature. On the one hand, the pertinent statements reflecting the answers to the interview questions were transcribed (Pickard, 2007, p.245). According to the constant comparative analysis (Boeije, 2002) findings were categorized in order to identify the main themes and issues that would describe and explain the phenomenon under study (Melia, 1997, p. 31 in Pickard, 2007, p.241). On the other hand, data gathered through the questionnaire were reported using a variable – base method with a focus on the different types of interval variable (Pickard, 2007, p.252). As a specific software for quantitative analysis was not available, all responses to questions were entered in a database and were included in specific categories.

Findings

1. Electronic book collections into the Delhi University Library System collection development policies:

The results reported that although the management and the negotiation of electronic journal have been accepted and consolidated, some reservations still remain about electronic book collection development. The analysis of the results revealed that the diffusion of the electronic book collections does not keep pace with the one of the electronic journals. Considering the above issues, how do librarians manage and plan the subscription to electronic book collections? In this regard, the key informants reaffirmed the importance of the consideration of a new collection development approach that leads librarians to deal with new issues, involving:

- The problem of finding a good balance between the collection available both in print and in electronic format;
- The evaluation of users' needs in spite of the increasing budget limitations;
- The lack of customized electronic resources management systems (ERMS) that support librarians for the integration and management of a new e resource in the library workflow (selection, orders, cataloguing, etc.).

2. The selection criteria used by librarians during the evaluation of an e-book collection

The analysis of the librarians' responses revealed that the selection process is mainly influenced by two issues. On the one hand, a deep analysis of the contents offered by publishers is still being carried out in order to give the subject area represented by the library adequate coverage. On the other hand, as the lack of competitive acquisition models (packages vs pick and choose) is considered a limiting issue to the subscription to electronic book collections, great attention is paid to publishers' proposals offering cost-effective business models that do not tie up the budget management of the library. The selection process is turning out to be challenging not only in terms of budget but also in terms of "choice of contents". Some studies confirm that receiving titles that would not be chosen for the collections, but which come as part of the package, librarians have ceded some of their selection control to publishers

and vendors (Soules, 2009, p.17). Titles that are part of a package are chosen by specific committees on the basis of different criteria, as copyright; availability of a specific title; publishers and vendor shifts and other changes (Soules, 2009, p.18) and they are not necessarily selected on content based criteria. The librarians' responses confirmed how all these issues represent a threat to the development of customized electronic book collections and influence the guidelines that should be followed during the selection and evaluation processes:

- The importance of the evaluation of users' needs;
- The real and potential use of the collection;
- Quality, in terms of contents and update.

Conclusion

Collection development (also known as collection or materials management) involves the identification, selection, acquisition and evaluation of a collection of library resources (e.g. print material, audio visual material, electronic resources) for a community of user. While it is the goal of collection development to meet the information needs of every one in a user community, this is not usually realized due to financial constraints, the diversity of users information needs, and the waste amount of available information. Collection management and organization research is the area where traditional library missions and practices are reinterpreted for the digital library environment. Progress in this area is essential if digital library collections are to meet successfully the needs of their user communities. Policies and methods for incorporating information resources on the network into managed collections, rights management, payment, and control issues were all identified as central problems in the management of digital collections. The authority and quality of content in Delhi University Library System is of central concern to the user community; ensuring and identifying these attributes of content calls for research that spans both technical and organizational issues. Research is also needed to clarify the roles of librarians.

References

- [1] Armstrong, C., Lonsdale, R. Challenges in managing e-books in UK academic libraries. *Library Collection, Acquisition and Technical Services*, 29(1) (2005), 33-50.
- [2] Anuradha, K.T.& Usha, H.S.. E-books access models: an analytical comparative study. *The Electronic Library*, 24(5) (2006), 662-679.
- [3] Bennett, L., Landoni, M, E-books in academic libraries. *The Electronic Library*, 23(1) (2005), 9-16.
- [4] Crowe, W. J. & Sanders, N. P. Collection development in the cooperative environment. *Journal of Library Administration*, 15 (3-4) (1992), 37-48
- [5] Dillon, D.. E-books: the University of Texas experience, part 1. *Library Hi Tech*, 19 (2) (2001), 113-124.

- [6] Demas, S. "Collection development for the electronic library: A conceptual and organizational model". *Library Hi-Tech*, 12 (3) (1994), 71-80
- [7] Evans, Janet Bevan, Simon J. and Harrington, John, "BIODOC: access versus holdings in a university library" 24 (4) (1996), 5-11
- [8] Gould, Sara, "Interlending and document supply: a review of recent literature – XXVII", *Interlending & Document Supply*, 23(1) (1995), 28-36
- [9] Kaufman, P. & Watstain, S.B. Library value (return on investment, ROI) and the challenge of placing a value on public services. *Reference Services Review*, 36(3) (2008), 226-231.
- [10] Langston, M. The California State University E-book Pilot Project: implications for cooperative collection development. *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services*, 27(1) (2003), 19–32.
- [11] Miller, R. G. Shaping digital library content. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 28(3) (2002), 97-103.
- [12] Mittal, R.L, "Library administration: theory and practice", Metropolitan book co., New Delhi, (1964) p. 147
- [13] Park, Y.H, A study of consortium models for e-books in university libraries in Korea. *Collection Building*, 26(3) (2007), 77-83
- [14] Safley, E. Demand for e-books in an academic library. *Journal of Library Administration*, 45(3/4) (2006), 445-457.
- [15] San Jose, B. & Pacios, A.R. The impact of consortia purchasing of periodical publications on the document supply service. *Interlending and Document Supply*, 33(4) (2005), 189-195