Building a School Library Collection Plan

A
Beginning Handbook
with Internet Assist

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with an Internet Assist by
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Hi Willow Research and Publishing
1999

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Distributed by

LMC Source
P.O. Box 720400
San Jose, CA 95172-0400

Toll Free: 800-873-3043
From outside the U.S.: 831-660-0589

Fax: 831-634-1456

URL: www.lmcsource.com
email: sales@lmcsource.com

ISBN: 0-931510-70-7

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many persons have contributed to this volume. Thanks to readers in the LIBR 266 Collection Development class at San Jose State University: Rod Carr, Karen Steadman, Jean Jay, Heidi Scott and to our editors: Marian Colclasure, Mary Alice Hunt, and Sandra Richards. Thanks also to Mark Loertscher who did the cover art.

INTRODUCTION

The immediate stimulus for writing this book with its web assist page was the legislative grant of $158 million to the schools of California to strengthen library collections. This money, approximately $28 per student, comes after a 20-year history of neglect of school libraries caused originally by the passage of the famous Prop 13. The money also comes at a time when paraprofessionals are in charge of hundreds of school libraries in California but also at a time when new positions for professional librarians are opening up. The authors are also aware that there is a new wave of professionals entering the school library field all over the United States and beyond. We have tried to take into consideration the needs of these persons as they face the challenges of new jobs in an oft-confusing world of information and technology.

The purpose of this brief volume is to serve as a beginning guide to school library collection development. It may also serve as a review for the person with some experience because of its unique approach to the development of collections to match school curriculum. By providing an accompanying web page for the book, the authors are able to provide a great deal of information that would usually take up a large amount of print space and also would be outdated the minute it was in print. Thus, when you see in the text the following icon, access the web page for further information.

Web Assist Here!
http://LMCsource.com
click under "Free"

Remember that information on the web site will change and so it should be consulted for updated information as needed.

This book is based on the approach to collection development in the book: *Collection Mapping in the LMC: Building Access in a World of Technology* by David V. Loertscher, Hi Willow Research & Publishing, 1996 and available from LMC Source.

Designed to help everyone who is responsible for selecting school library collections, this book takes the broadest possible definition of library collection. The authors assume that the modern school library collection embraces everything that will improve teaching and learning in the library and classroom and even information to be transmitted to the students' and teachers' homes. Methods to choose the more traditional items, books, expands to include electronic resources.

The selection process described is a simple step-by-step procedure leading from Creating a Collection Plan through Evaluating the Success of the Plan.

Part one centers on creating a collection development plan and includes the process of analyzing the school community and the curriculum. A sample curriculum study provides an example to follow. Studying the strengths and weaknesses of the current collection includes doing a copyright age analysis of the materials to be used by patrons. Suggestions are given for weeding a collection before creating a collection map, a tool to match collection to curriculum. A sample collection map details the current collection. Instructions are given for creating a proposed collection map to draw input from teachers and students into the shaping of the library collection.

Implementing the collection development plan (Part Two) includes selection criteria, how to use good review sources and bibliographies, and creating a consideration file. Instructions are then given to help select vendors and purchase sources for materials. Building a good relationship with the school or district business office is given a high priority. How to create an order, receive materials, and pay bills is outlined followed by processing and installing the materials and equipment once they have been delivered and the invoices have been paid. A discussion of automation systems includes information to help decide if you should try to upgrade your current system or purchase a new system.

Part Three includes how to make the collection work to really support the curriculum. Sharing the best items in the library, on the shelves and online, and working with teachers to get these resources used is a part of collection development. The role of the librarian in information literacy is discussed as well as maintaining and advertising the collection. Intellectual freedom issues complete this section.

The last part includes assistance in evaluating the success of the collection plan. The surest way to see that adequate and consistent funding is given to the library for collection building is to collect the statistics that show the use made of the collection. Instructions on collecting baseline data so that increased use and support can be measured is described. Suggestions are given for the sharing of the collected data with stake holder groups who are or should be interested in a good library.

The authors appreciate feedback and suggestions for this work either directed to them at:

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Prelude

Assemble a Library Advisory Committee

Making the assumption that a single person in the library can build the kind of library collection that will support the curriculum of a school is beyond possibility. Even if it were possible, students and teachers in the school are likely to view such a collection as the librarian's property.

Individual teachers and students have unique teaching and learning styles requiring any successful collection to have a wide variety of information sources. Such a collection will not emerge unless those who have a "stake" in a rich information environment , the stake holders, participate in the creation and constant enrichment of that collection.

Who might serve on an advisory committee? Who would provide the guidance needed?

• **Superintendents** whose vision includes the wise use of technology and information need to provide the leadership to see that materials and the accompanying technology take their place as rich resources leading to an end - excellence in teaching and learning.

• **Principals** as the instructional leaders of the school, participate not only to provide fiscal resources, but in a role to see that the educational initiatives of the school are supported by the library, the collection, and the technology that delivers the information.

• **Teachers and Teacher Leaders** in their classrooms and as heads of grade levels or departments are closest to the instructional process and the implementation of curriculum. They feel the pressure to deliver good education and often dream of having at their fingertips the right type of instructional material and the right technology application. They need to help choose appropriate materials to support their curriculum.

• **Librarians** are educated in the building of collections to match the curriculum, to choose technology to enhance instruction, to be the human interface between technology tools and their educational applications. They often feel lonely and weighed down with the responsibility to spend hundreds or thousands of dollars hoping that what they choose will get used and make a difference

• **Students** don't have to use a library very often before they start to get a sense of whether the collection is helpful or irrelevant for their needs. Most will be quite vocal, if asked, about what a library needs to have if it is really going to serve their needs. They should be consulted.

• **Parents** want a good education for their children and most understand that the quality of the materials their children have access to is a factor in how much their children are learning. Some are afraid that the information contained in libraries may not match their ideals, but when given an opportunity to contribute advice, do.

Sample Advisory Committee
Wilson Elementary School

At the Superintendent's encouragement, the principal at Wilson Elementary School appointed a library advisory committee consisting of the librarian, three department heads, two other teachers, three student representatives, and a representative from the PTA with the principal as an ex-officio member. As a part of the technology plan for the school, the principal invited the committee to prepare and implement a plan for building a collection made up materials, software, and instructional tools needed to create a solid information-rich environment in which students and teachers could flourish.