

RBMS Collection Development Discussion Group
Sheraton Boston, Back Bay C, Boston, MA
ALA Midwinter Meeting Saturday, January 16, 2010
10:30 am- 12:00 pm

Report

Attendees: Alla Barabtarlo, University of Missouri; Lois Fischer Black, Lehigh University (co-chair); Melissa Conway, UC-Riverside; Mark H. Danley, University of Memphis; Sarah Fisher, Yale University; Mark Greenberg, University of South Florida; Athena Jackson, Louisiana State University; Laila Miletic-Vejzovic, University of Central Florida; Joleen Westerdale, Keene State College.

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Announcements
3. Discussion summary

Ten Special Collections librarians assembled on the morning of Saturday, January 16, to share news of new acquisitions and grants received. Animated discussion and good conversation about collection development policies followed. More than half of those present acknowledged having such policies that they update on a regular basis. These policies appear to be used more often to decline potential gifts, rather than to build collections. This sparked a side discussion about the dos and don'ts of deaccessioning, including tax implications and restrictions imposed by public institutions.

Criteria other than subject matter were also discussed. Size of collections, as well as format, such as large artifacts, were cited as influential factors in making the decision whether or not to accept a collection.

Interesting discussion about the evolving nature of best practices in Special Collections collection development blossomed next, as attendees unanimously agreed that long term loans and collections being placed on deposit are a thing of the past.

Attention returned to the agenda with a look at metrics and the role that use statistics, number of majors in a particular discipline, and other factors play in making decisions regarding collections. Attendees acknowledged pressure from administration to take metrics into account, but attendees noted that users may come and go, but collections are here to stay. With that in mind, those present affirmed their commitment to building diverse, unique collections. One attendee recommended that we count the things that will benefit us, such as the number of international scholars in the global economy.

In closing, we looked briefly at the impact of the internet upon collection development. While it was acknowledged that there are both benefits and pitfalls to buying online, one attendee summed it up nicely with the observation that "it allowed books otherwise unremarkable to come to light."

As the discussion was so successful, the co-chairs will revisit these topics at the Annual Conference in June, in addition to seeking suggestions for new topics.

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Lois Fischer Black
Special Collections
Lehigh University

Phone: (610)758-5185
Fax: (610)758-6091