Collection Development Discussion Group

Minutes

April 2, 2001

Art Libraries Society of North America 29th Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA

Tim Shipe welcomed participants to the first of what is hoped will be annual Discussion Group meetings. The idea for this session was broached by Collection Development Committee members, who felt the need for more time during the annual conference to exchange collection development information. The model for such a session is the longstanding Cataloging Problems Discussion Group. He welcomed suggestions about the format for future meetings.

Amanda Bowen gave an overview of the activities of the Collection Development Committee. The Committee has sponsored two well-attended workshops on collection development in the last year; this year’s covered the development of approval plans. In the next year, we plan to revise our web site both to reflect the work of the Committee and to make useful references to web resources outside ARLIS/NA. We also have a longstanding plan to develop a list of out-of-print vendors for art and architecture materials. We are planning to organize a session for next year’s conference on working with a variety of user communities.

Tim introduced the focus topic of the evening: Defending one’s materials budget against competing demands for funds.

Susan Craig, University of Kansas, noted that one of her biggest collection development challenges is preparing, documenting, and defending her budget request. When preparing the annual request at KU, she is asked to define primary and secondary clientele including the number of faculty/students/non-campus affiliates, the changing programs her library supports, and for expected changes in scholarly publishing. Additionally, she supplies information on the number of books published and their average cost and the number of serial subscriptions and their average cost (electronic information is paid from a centrally-funded pool). The challenge is making an effective case for new money or even retention of current allocations in light of the rapidly increasing cost of science journals. It seems that in spite of annual serial cancellations, any newly available money is applied to the serials budget. She sees the humanities portion of the collection development budget steadily decreasing and hopes that others have new strategies to present her case.

Rijn Templeton, University of Iowa, said, in preparing her budgets, she always checks the percentage of the projected budget increase for the entire library; she also takes into consideration the impact of electronic resources. It is also helpful to try to find out about new faculty and programs, including interdisciplinary studies, as these can have a major impact on demands for resources. She also tries to meet with faculty regularly to determine their changing research interests. Rijn noted that the art budget is not always scrutinized in the same way as other fields because it is comparatively small.

Nancy Pistorius noted, as Collection Manager at the University of New Mexico, she has helped divide the materials budget into nine separate allocations. Before this, the sciences absorbed 65% of the entire budget and funds were allocated first to serials, with the remainder for monographs. The campus priorities were to support programs first, then undergraduate projects and finally research needs. One tool for changing this was to show that Fine Arts monographs circulated 3 times as much per title as those in other fields. In the new scenario, the balance of books to serials spending varies; in the Humanities, the balance is 35% serials/65% monographs. Everyone uses use statistics to evaluate this balance; the Sciences found that a great proportion of their budget was devoted to serials used by very few researchers.

Paula Gabbard, Columbia University, said others had covered most of her budget suggestions but reiterated that it is always helpful to compile statistics on acquisitions. However, one should only use those which bolster one’s argument for the budget.

Lynn Woodruff, University of Maryland, said acquisitions are made in a team environment at her institution. Purchases costing over $500 are prioritized within the Humanities. It is important to build allies among other selectors and identify common interests. In the case of the online Index of Christian Art, for example, there was enough demand among History faculty to collaborate on this purchase.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were mentioned:

- Electronic resources: In numerous libraries, electronic purchases come from reserve funds. Increases are often taken “off the top” of the entire materials budget. Usage statistics for electronic resources, supplied by the vendor, can be helpful in evaluating these subscriptions.

- Humanities vs. Sciences: Science literature is described and indexed in a very detailed way. Fulltext access or document delivery is a good option for science researchers. In the Humanities, ILL and document delivery work much less well; this argument might work for budget justification.
Serials cancellations: These projects are driven by serials prices. Art and architecture users have differential needs for monographs vs. serials. Architecture users want journals and so their needs should be addressed differently. Watch expenditures on approval plans to see that these expenditures don’t eat into serials budgets.

Selection assistance from primary clientele: A museum colleague asked for suggestions about obtaining advice from curatorial staff on purchases. Sending catalogues and flyers to them helps; also request lists of suggested titles, however it is always a good idea to ask for prioritized selections. If the budget is divided roughly by curatorial area, it is important to retain some central funds for general purchases. Discretion must be used to balance curatorial research needs with one’s goal for a balance art research collection. A museum’s mission will dictate how this balance is maintained.

Faculty Liaisons: An Art & Design School colleague asked about faculty liaisons for each department. It was suggested that liaisons may be helpful but a librarian’s regular contact with individual faculty members is essential. Visits to faculty during office hours may be one way to catch them; it is also helpful to meet with the department as a group. New faculty should be contacted upon arrival or sooner; determining their research interests will dictate those of their graduate students. Always let faculty know about new electronic resources; one can team up with reference staff to present these to departments.

Approval plans: It was suggested that time be given at future conferences for specific vendors to give instruction in establishing approval plans. While the Collection Development Committee will consider this option, it is also recommended that librarians arrange to meet with vendors in the Exhibits area.

Commercial gallery publications: It was suggested that it is helpful to get on the mailing lists of major commercial galleries in order to be notified of new publications. If there is a museum or gallery at your institution, they will often receive these gallery publications or announcements and be willing to pass them along.

Sources for Japanese architectural books: Idea Books, Books in Japan and Joseph Seubert at Geibundo were suggested as sources.