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Roles, responsibilities, and decision-making power in Collection Development

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The Claremont Colleges Library



- Single academic library serving seven contiguously located academic institutions, incl. five liberal arts colleges and two graduate universities
- ~8000 combined FTE, the equivalent of a mid-size University
- 53 librarians and staff:
 - 20 librarians and staff (in three separate divisions) have some involvement in Collection Development



We are a single library serving the equivalent of mid-size University with ~8000 FTE. We have 53 Librarians and staff. 20 of those have some role in collection development in a variety of roles.

Some background on TCCL's approach to collection development

- Book funds evolution:
 - From individual subject funds to collective discipline funds
- Various way to discuss and decide on subscriptions and big purchases throughout the years:
 - All librarians in a room with the Director
 - Management team only - with limited input from Subject Librarians (SL)
 - Team of specialized discipline librarians (with unequal input from SLs)
 - Discipline Team Leaders representing SL from their group on an Information Resources Working Group



Our Library's approach to collection development has evolved over time. For books - the main change is that subject librarians used to have dedicated subject book funds, and now they collectively spend from consolidated discipline budgets. For big purchases and subscriptions, we have tried multiple variations of discussion and decision-making groups that involved very different levels of subject librarians' input, most indirect.

The issues we were trying to solve

Job focus and reporting lines:

- People involved in CD are part of various divisions and units with different supervisors and unequal expectations, focus, and priorities
- Ability to contribute to, and influence, collection development (CD) varied between similar roles

Clarity and transparency:

- What purchase decisions are up to each librarian?
- Who can request / propose / approve subscriptions and big purchases? And through what process?
- Who makes final purchasing decisions and based on what criteria?



So, what's the problem?

Throughout all the variations in the org chart and collection development groups, there were issues that remained unresolved. I've organized these in two main groups:

- The people involved in CD have a variety of job titles at different levels in the organization, and expectations have been unequal and not always well defined
- In addition, there was a lack of transparency of policy and procedure, including who has what authority, where does decision-making reside, and what criteria is used to make decisions.

How did we address these issues?

- Revised SL's job descriptions and clarified expectations regarding CD duties
- Created and published an outward-facing [Collection Policy](#) on the Library website
- Created and published a set of Ordering Policies on the Intranet for all types of resources
- Created a form to feed big purchase and subscription proposals into a transparent New Resource Consideration List (NRCL)
- Created a Research Services Librarian role as a peer to the Head of Collection Management to coordinate the CD work of SLs
- Created a detailed step-by-step process for discussion, evaluation, decision-making, and acquisition of items from the NRCL



Here are some ways we addressed these issues:

- Revised SL's job descriptions and defined better the expectations regarding CD duties
- Wrote and published an outward-facing Collection Policy on the Library website
- Created and published a set of Ordering Policies on the Intranet for all types of resources - **these specify dollar amounts that require authorization by someone**
- Created a form to feed big purchase and subscription proposals into a transparent New Resource Consideration List (NRCL).
- Created a Research Services Librarian role as a peer to the Head of Collection Management to coordinate the CD work of SLs. **All SLs still meet with and have direct access to the HCM**
- Created a detailed process for discussion, evaluation, decision-making, and acquisition of items from the NRCL

New Resource Consideration List


- New name for the former “Wish List”.
- Subject or Digital Scholarship Librarians can submit requests for resources in their subject or functional area. (Other librarians and staff can make suggestions to the relevant Subject or Digital Scholarship Librarian). Collections staff can add vendor offers.
- Submissions for **ongoing commitments** (all materials subscriptions, standing orders, digital scholarship tools) and **one-time electronic purchases over \$1000** (e-book collections, primary sources, datasets, etc.) are collected via a form throughout the year.
- Submissions are reviewed at least quarterly and discussed within the relevant discipline group. Urgent requests are considered ASAP.
- Approved acquisitions are ordered throughout the year.
- Year-end leftover money is pooled together for collective final selections.



The NRCL is the former Wish List - renamed to better reflect the items on it since not everything is requested. Coll staff can add **vendor offers** that are relevant. L can submit suggestions via a form throughout the year and **all staff can see the submissions on the intranet**.

Submissions are reviewed at least quarterly and discussed within the discipline or functional groups that the resource supports. Urgent requests are considered right away and could be acquired at any time.

Any left-over funds at the end of the FY are pooled together and discussed collectively.

 <small>THE CLAREMONT COLLEGES</small> LIBRARY	Information Resources (e.g., journals, databases, e-book collections, etc.)	Digital Scholarship Tools, Platforms, Memberships
Who can add new requests?	Subject Librarians, Digital Scholarship Librarians, Collections Librarians	
Next step before starting the process	Loop in the librarian who works with the subject/functional area	
Who communicates with the vendor? (request prices and additional information about the resource)	Head of Collection Management (HCM), with copy to librarian(s) whose area the resource supports. Librarian(s) can get involved in follow-up and deeper discussion about the resource.	
Who can request that a trial is set-up?	Librarian(s) whose area the resource supports request to Collection Management	
Who initiates a trial with the vendor, does set-up, and supplies authentication information to the vendor as needed?	HCM/E-Resources and Metadata Librarian (ERML)	
Who supports users and answers questions during the trial?	Librarian(s) whose area the resource supports	
Who collects and compiles trial feedback?	ERML compiles feedback from the form and/or the librarians who received it	
After trial, who will recommend (or not) a subscription?	Librarian(s) whose area the resource supports, collections staff. Discussions within the relevant discipline or functional area.	
Who makes a final decision?	Senior Director of CMRS, with input and support from the Senior Director of RTUS	Senior Director of CMRS, with input and support from the Director of DCDS
Who finalizes acquisition (sign order, pay invoice, send IPs, activate proxy as needed)	Collections / Acquisitions / E-resources	

There's a lot here, but this spreadsheet lists in detail who does what at any point in the process.

Some important points: we ask that whoever submits, the relevant subject librarian ends up taking over to shepherd this request through the process.

The SL role is to:

- vet the resource,
- ask for a trial if they wish,
- support any end user needs during the trial,
- evaluate feedback,
- decide whether to recommend the resource for acquisition,
- and make the case to their colleagues within their discipline group.

All vendor communications go through Collection Management and E-Resources including pricing and terms, setting up trials, and finalizing acquisition and activation.

In terms of decision making - RSL and HCM can approve lower cost items.

More expensive stuff and everything ongoing comes to me as the SD of CMRS.

I am the final approver, but I actively seek input and support from my fellow directors, depending on which area the resource supports

Criteria used for approval

- Due diligence:
 - Have the request gone through the regular process?
 - Have all relevant people been consulted?
 - Is the resource supported by relevant staff and end users?
- Pricing and purchasing options:
 - Are we getting a fair price (in comparison with other similar resources)?
 - Are we selecting the best acquisition option (if applicable)?
 - Are we getting discounts that could be available to us (if applicable)?
- Budget:
 - Do we have the money to afford the purchase from this budget - and in the long term, if it is an ongoing commitment?



And here's my process:

First, I do my due diligence - have all steps been followed and have all the relevant people done their part?

Then I look at pricing and pricing options:

- is the price fair,
- if we can choose to either purchase or subscribe, which one is more beneficial,
- multi-year terms,
- discounts for multiple purchases from the same vendor, etc.

Budget - can we afford it? Right now, and in the long term.

