

Collection Policy: REFERENCE

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Note of changes since last update

The collection development policy for Reference was last revised in 1987. Since that time, there have been major changes in the information environment that have impacted the world of publishing, and in turn, the research behavior of both our patrons and librarians.

Since the introduction of the graphical Web browser in 1994, the Internet has had the greatest impact on the provision of networked information to a wide audience. Many reference tools including indexes, directories, encyclopedias, almanacs and statistical tomes have been made available in electronic format. For information like the census and other government information, electronic access has become the primary source of access. In some cases, their print counterparts are no longer being produced.

While we do not see the disappearance of print from the Reference Collection, the challenge for this policy is to provide a guide for the selection of high-quality information in many formats, and to continue to be relevant during a period of rapid change in the electronic world.

Objectives

Mission

Mann Library endeavors to develop and maintain a research level reference collection to support the information needs of

the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the College of Human Ecology, the Division of Biological Sciences, and the Division of Nutritional Sciences. The library also has a mission to support the citizen's of New York State. Reference publications are collected and made available to meet the needs of instruction and research programs, and to provide for the general academic information needs of research staff, faculty, students, and the Cornell Community. The collection is a working one used heavily by reference staff.

Guidelines

The purpose of this statement is to establish guidelines for the development and maintenance of the reference collection. Subject scope and type of materials included and excluded are described.

Procedures

Procedures are provided for the acquisition of new materials and for weeding the collection to ensure its development and maintenance.

Definition of Reference Material

The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science (1983) defines a reference collection as a "collection of reference books and other materials in a library, useful for supplying authoritative information or identifying sources, kept together for convenience in providing information service, and generally not allowed to circulate".

The collection should concentrate on facts, be comprehensive in scope, and facilitate ready and accurate finding of information. It should be consistently useful for answering reference questions.

Subject Scope

Basic and in-depth information sources in agriculture, life sciences, biology, nutrition, communication, education, human ecology, and basic business are collected. Publications that emphasize New York State and the Northeast are given special consideration.

In general, the collection level for reference materials in any given subject area corresponds to the collection level identified in the Research Libraries (RLG) conspectus for the Mann Library collection as a whole. However, some subject areas of interest in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Human Ecology are served by other campus libraries; consequently holdings in the general collection are modest to non-existent. In some of these areas, reference materials are collected at a basic information level corresponding to Level 2 in the RLG conspectus. The intent is to provide materials which will serve to introduce and define a subject and to indicate varieties of information available elsewhere. Such a basic information collection is not sufficiently intensive to fully support coursework or independent study.

Size

Changes in curriculum, programs and prevailing demand may affect the size and composition of the collection. No attempt is made to designate an absolute limit. Weeding (see section on Weeding) is a process that attempts to contain the size and maintain the efficiency of the collection.

Selection

The aim is to acquire the most authoritative works available in those subjects for which the library is responsible. The overall range of the reference collection is somewhat broader in scope than that of the circulating collection. In general, current materials have priority over retrospective materials. If possible, current materials are selected on the basis of favorable reviews or notice in a reputable source. In the absence of reviews, the reputation of the publisher or the credentials of the issuing body are taken into consideration. Retrospective selections are based on annotations in standard or specialized guides.

Criteria

The following principles, not in order of importance, serve as guidelines for deciding which titles will be ordered:

1. Usefulness, considering the existing collection.
2. Strengths and weaknesses of the collection relating to current curriculum.
3. Favorable reviews or inclusion in basic reference guides.
4. Favorable review from a library liaison or expert at Cornell.
5. Reputation of author or publisher.
6. Currency of topic.
7. Date of publication. Generally, works with recent publication dates are favored. Exception is made when the publication is a standard reference work on the subject or if the older work cannot be replaced.
8. Price. Expensive items are screened carefully. The purchase of these items is coordinated with other campus libraries to limit duplication as much as possible. Occasionally, duplication is necessary.
9. Language. For general and subject reference works, priority is given to materials in English. Titles in foreign languages are selected if they are superior to or complement available English works, or if they fill in gaps in subject areas.
10. Format. Print is still considered preferable over Internet and CD-ROM access if the printed resource provides superior indexing, formatting, and browsing capabilities over the networked version.

Additional Criteria for Networked Resources

Access. General I.P. address verification is the preferred verification method for access. Resources that require individuals to register or subscribe are avoided. Access should include the Geneva Experiment Station, NY Extension and satellite offices, and the CIT proxy server.

Interface. The interface should be easy to use, and require little or no training for Reference staff. Generally, it is the aim to keep the number of different interfaces to a minimum. If several vendors offer the same resource, the version that resembles other products used by the library should get precedent, unless the competing interface is superior.

Licensing issues. The license to use any electronic resource should contain a clause that includes walk-in use by the general public.

Perpetual access. Consideration of the full life of a reference resource should be considered in the selection of a leased electronic resource. If the resource is core to the collection scope of the library, one of the following conditions should be met:

A print archive subscription should be maintained along with the electronic subscription. If the resource is core to other libraries on campus, it is sufficient to maintain one printed subscription on campus. The library responsible for perpetual access to the resource is considered the "library of record".

The electronic product should be purchased and loaded or stored locally in the library.

The library should negotiate to own the data instead of merely leasing it. Should the company stop producing the product, the library will assume ownership of the data.

Responsibility

Primary responsibility for the development of the reference collection rests with Collection Development. Public Services librarians are encouraged to recommend items for purchase. Suggestions from faculty, staff and students are also encouraged.

One member of the Collection Development team is designated as the liaison to Public Services. This person is responsible for communicating collection issues to Reference. Recommendations from Reference should be directed to the liaison, which may redirect the request to the appropriate subject selector.

One member of Public Services is designated as the liaison to Collection Development. This person is responsible for responsible for management issues related to the Reference Collection, and serves to communicate related issues to Collection Development.

Library Liaisons

Library Liaisons are faculty members identified in each department, who act as a subject expert to collection decisions. Liaisons are consulted for reference decisions, when the cost of the resource is high, or when an expert opinion on the quality of the resource, the reputability of the author/editor, or usefulness of the resource is questionable.

If the resource description comes as a printed leaflet, it will be sent with an evaluation slip by campus mail. Liaisons are also contacted by email and phone.

Procedure

Collection Development selectors regularly review relevant professional literature, both general and subject specific to indicate potential reference material. Sources include: *Publisher's Weekly*, *Library Journal*, and the *New York Times Booklist*.

Collection Development also receives a steady stream of publisher's catalogs and leaflets. Standard reference guides, and definitive subject lists may be used when the field is new and unfamiliar.

The selector will search the Library Catalog to check the following:

- Is the resource held by other Cornell libraries?
- Are older copies of the resource held at Cornell?

Are there related reference resources in the collection, and if so, how does this resource compare to the others?

If the reference resource is published as an annual series, should it be purchased each year, biannually, or on any other cycle?

Additional verification is done as required, and may include: searching collective library catalogs (i.e. RLIN, WorldCat) and checking with library liaisons.

Format of Material

Print

Paper is the preferred medium for reference publications. When paperback and hardbound editions are both available, the hardbound edition is usually selected, unless it represents a considerable cost increase. Paperback editions are stiffened with cardboard in the preservation department of the library. In areas where Mann Library has the primary collecting responsibilities, print is selected in addition to other media for archival purposes.

Internet

Since the mid 1990s, the Internet as a medium for information research has dramatically changed the way we use print, CD-ROM, microform and other reference materials. Print is still considered preferable over Internet and CD-ROM access if the printed resource provides superior indexing, formatting, and browsing capabilities over the networked version.

Duplication of key reference sources in print and electronic form is encouraged when the resource receives high use, or

when the electronic format is affordable. In general, fully networked electronic indexes are preferable to single-station or library networked CD-ROMs. Cornell-wide Internet Protocol (I.P.) access is preferred over user-name and passwords. If I. P. access is not available, electronic resources must be able to be automatically scripted so that the distribution and management of user-names and passwords is avoided.

CD-ROM

CD-ROMs are selected for over other formats if any of the following conditions are met: 1) the resource is not available as a fully-networked Internet product; 2) the projected use of the resource is expected to be low AND the cost of networked access is considerably higher; 3) the resource requires special software that requires installation on a single reference computer; or 4) the resource provides greater searching power, or ease-of-use over other formats.

The selection of CD-ROM products that require installation each time the resource is used is not encouraged.

Microform

Because microform is not an easy medium to use, these materials should only be selected when microform is the only format available, or whenever cost, acquisition difficulties, or hard copy format make microform more desirable.

Materials Included

Abbreviations

Acronyms and Initialisms

The latest editions of standard dictionaries are purchased in order to stay abreast of the proliferation of acronyms and abbreviations.

Periodical Abbreviations

General and subject lists of periodical and serial abbreviations are acquired for the purpose of bibliographic verification. Authors will also use these standard lists in order to help them properly list citations for publication.

Periodical abbreviation guides are making their way online, whether produced by an academic library, or provided as part of a networked periodical index.

The Reference Collection should have at least one general abbreviation list (updated annually), and several subject lists including guides covering: Biosis, Agricola, CAB and Medline which updated periodically.

Almanacs and Yearbooks

The latest edition of general almanacs and more specialized almanacs and yearbooks are selected for the collection. Yearbooks are selectively collected for key countries (i.e. Canada, Mexico, UK). For all other countries, yearbooks are selected that focus on whole continents (i.e. Africa and Asia), or for the world (i.e. *CIA World Factbook*).

Atlases and Gazetteers

The collection includes a representative, up-to-date selection of major, comprehensive world atlases. Regional atlases, other than those for New York State and the Northeastern states, are normally excluded. Important economic and agricultural atlases and standard gazetteers are included.

Bibliographies

The proliferation of electronic indexes in the last two decades has dramatically reduced the need for printed bibliographies, since users can generate their own personalized and current list of citations when needed. Only value-added bibliographies

(like the Core Literature of Agriculture) or bibliographies that cover interdisciplinary subjects are collected.

General bibliographies are still used, however, for verifying newly published books and tracking down publisher information.

The latest issue of *Books in Print* and *Forthcoming Books* are kept in the Reference Collection. Other specialized trade bibliographies may be found in Collection Development.

Biographies

Works of professional, local, national, and international biography – retrospective and current – are included. Backfiles are retained, either in the reference collection, if space permits and demand justifies it, or in the general collection.

General biographies are collected, (i.e. *Who's Who in America*, *American Men and Women of Science*), as are subject biographies that reflect the research scope our collection (i.e. *Who's Who in Medicine & Healthcare*).

No attempt is made to be comprehensive in the selection of biographical works. A larger collection of materials is available in the Olin Reference collection.

Catalogs, Library

Book catalogs of important collections of major libraries should only be purchased if they contain special features such as analytics and their contents are not available online.

Union catalogs, like RLIN and OCLC WorldCat are used to find serial and book holdings in consortial member libraries.

Censuses

The latest census of Population and Housing, Agriculture, Economic and Government Censuses of the United States are selected for Reference.

No attempt is made to be comprehensive for censuses reports except in agriculture. Censuses of foreign countries and specialized reports (with some exceptions) from the U.S. Bureau of the Census are collected by Olin Library.

Contemporary Issues

Selected materials that summarize controversial issues in our subject scope or provide arguments for and against current research or practices should be collected. Examples include: *Opposing Viewpoints*, and *Taking Sides* series.

Dictionaries

A basic collection of reputable English language, foreign language, and subject dictionaries are kept in reference. No effort is made to be comprehensive.

Language Dictionaries

Unilingual, bilingual, and a limited number of subject polyglot dictionaries in major world languages are collected. Emphasis is made on Latin-based languages (French, Spanish, Italian), and on German.

Specialized dictionaries covering slang, idiomatic expressions, etc. are selectively collected. Reference should have a single copy of the Oxford English Dictionary.

Subject Dictionaries

Authoritative dictionaries covering terminology in our fields of concentration are acquired. Polyglot subject dictionaries are

acquired selectively if English is one of the languages.

Quotations and Proverbs

Selected comprehensive English language quotation and proverb dictionaries are included. Subject specific volumes are also included.

Directories

The use of Internet directories and search engines has lessened the importance of printed directories in our collection. The current edition of major directories covering research centers, government agencies (New York and Federal), extension agencies, foundations, organizations and associations are still collected in print. Subject specific directories are still selectively acquired.

The latest editions of telephone directories are kept at Reference for the five largest U.S. cities, major cities of New York State and the Northeastern United States. Selected telephone directories for agriculture and social service related federal government agencies are acquired.

Encyclopedias

Two general academic-level print English language encyclopedias are acquired for the reference collection, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Academic American Encyclopedia*. Because of the cost and relative stability of content, one new encyclopedia is purchased every other year. Authoritative encyclopedias in specialized subject areas are also collected.

While many encyclopedias are going online, the utility of a print encyclopedia necessitates an effort to continue collecting print volumes for Reference. Online access to print encyclopedia titles is encouraged if pricing and licensing make it feasible.

Handbooks, Manuals, and Guides

Most authoritative works covering an entire discipline or a substantial part of a discipline are shelved in the circulating collection. The Reference Collection includes those useful for quick lookup, containing information such as diagrams, charts, tables, glossaries, and taxonomies.

Field guides to plants, animals and mycology of North America are collected, with emphasis on describing local, NY state, and Northeastern species.

Selected texts are included if they are considered to contain a core body of information and whose use and utility would justify their inclusion in the Reference Collection.

Laboratory Protocols

Also known as Methods, protocols normally circulate along with the rest of the collection. Exceptions are made when the volume(s) are meant to be general and comprehensive, and/or the volume(s) circulate so heavily that they would better serve multiple users by being in Reference.

Periodical Indexes

Indexes should serve the needs of teaching and research in our constituent colleges. Periodical indexes that cover a broad scope of general magazines and newspapers should be selected. More detailed indexes that give comprehensive coverage of a subject should be purchased. Indexes that are subsets of more comprehensive titles, which the library owns, should be avoided.

Electronic Indexes

With few exceptions, electronic indexes – with their searching capability – have become the preferred format for research. Many have the ability to link directly to full-text journals or to the Library Catalog. When new indexes are available from multiple vendors, interface, functionality and other ergonomic factors are decision factors in addition to cost.

Print

Print indexes still function as an archive for electronic indexes, and are useful for older bibliographic research and citation verification. Indexes, for which the library is considered to be “the library of record” at Cornell, should continue to be purchased in print, in addition to electronic, unless a guaranteed electronic archive exists.

Legislative and Legal Materials

Essential federal and state legislative materials are collected and include the *Federal Register*, the *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*, and *McKinney’s Consolidated Laws of New York*. A few subject specific legislative materials are collected, such as Environmental Statutes. In general, legal publications are not collected.

Maps

Print

Maps relating to agriculture and other subject fields represented in the Mann Library collection are selectively acquired. The Olin Library map collection is relied upon for most maps. Topographic maps for New York State as well as soil survey maps for New York State counties are maintained. Other topographic and soil maps are found in Olin Library. Reference should have one current national road atlas, plus regional and local road and city maps.

Geographical Information System

GIS (Geographic Information Systems) is a computerized system that allows for the storage, manipulation, analysis and/or graphical representation of data that is spatially referenced to the Earth. All GIS data have two elements: (1) Geographic data that represent the physical entity such as a town, road or lake; and (2) Attribute data that describe the entity such as the population of the town, the type of asphalt used on a road or the number of docks on the lake.

Mann Library collects GIS data relating to agriculture, life sciences, US Census, and Natural Resources.

Numeric Files

See Statistics

Professional Development and Educational Opportunities

An attempt is made to selectively acquire materials that provide students, staff and the general public with resources that assist in: choosing educational programs in other institutions, finding internships or volunteer positions in related disciplines, and assist in basic business and scientific writing. Standard US test preparation guides (i.e. GRE) are also selected. No attempt is made to be comprehensive, as other libraries (i.e. Uris) and departments and Career Centers collect these materials.

Safety

Reference has an agreement with the University’s Life Safety Services to acquire major works dealing with laboratory safety. They are shelved together for easy access in a designated location in the collection. (See Appendix 1.)

Serial Lists

See Catalogs, Library

Statistics

See also: Census

Whether in print or electronic (Diskette, CD ROM, or Networked) statistical resources make up a significant portion of the Reference Collection. Because of the ease and speed of lookup, print volumes are still selected for the collection and are used along with networked resources.

General statistical resources that cover United States and New York State are collected for Reference. Subject specific resources that include U.S. Agriculture and International Agriculture are also collected along with topical statistical materials that reflect the subject scope of Mann Library.

Statistical summaries are included for countries of relative importance to the United States are collected (i.e. Canada and Mexico). For other countries, multi-country census summaries are collected.

Style Manuals

Current editions of all major style manuals are selected, as well as a guide to citing electronic documents.

Theses

A list of recently published Masters theses and PhD dissertations at Cornell University is collected. Dissertation Abstracts, a networked index of dissertations back to the late 1800s is also collected.

Thesauri

Thesauri for various electronic indexes in relevant subject areas are collected.

Materials Excluded

- Annual Reviews. Annual reviews of developments and research in individual disciplines are shelved in the Periodicals Collection.
- City Directories. Ithaca, selected New York and Washington DC directories are kept in reference. All others are available at Olin Library.
- College Catalogs. Current Cornell catalogs only—all others are available in Uris Library.
- Texts. With exceptions, textbooks are not selected (see Handbooks)

Weeding

The reference collection is a working collection of important frequently consulted publications. It is necessary to review it regularly for conditions of material, usefulness, and currency. Decisions are regularly made to retain, update, replace, or discard Reference materials. Careful, regular and systematic weeding removes less desirable publications and improves the usefulness of the entire collection. The collection is weeded in two important ways: automatic weeding of superseded editions and periodic weeding by the Public Services librarians.

Automatic Weeding

Older volumes of many publications, primarily continuations such as directories and yearbooks, are automatically weeded from reference and transferred to the circulating collection or discarded when the latest edition or year arrives. The Collection Development Liaison makes the decision as to the disposition of this material.

Periodic Weeding

Periodic weeding should be done to maintain the usefulness of the reference collection. Procedures for weeding should be

drafted by the Reference/Collection Development Liaison with input from Reference and Collection Development staff. Procedures are subject to change based the needs of the reference department, but should be based on the current Reference Collection Development Policy.

Appendix 1: Safety Shelf

Current Information and Procedures

Mann Contact: Angi Faiks, Reference Librarian

CALS Contact: Mary-Lynn Cummings, Asst. Dir. for Occupational and Environmental Health

Last updated: 10-15-98

Description:

The Safety Shelf is designated section in the Mann reference collection housing occupational and environmental safety materials. Sources are marked with a red piece of tape and sit under the "Publications on Safety" sign. The shelf contains materials that labs are required by law to have available plus any other items chosen by the CALS Assistant Director for OEH. Mann is not required by law to have certain items but it is a good back up for the labs.

Safety Shelf Procedures:

CALS contact

The CALS contact is responsible for reviewing the Safety Shelf approximately 2-3 times per year. This person will work off the *Mann Safety Shelf - Current List of Sources* (see attached) and see if anything needs to be added or updated. If so, this person can make recommendations for purchase to the Mann contact who will then forward the request to Mann collection development for purchase. The CALS contact is also responsible for suggesting removal of items from the shelf.

Mann contact

The Mann contact will keep the *Mann Safety Shelf - Current List of Sources* up to date and provide a copy to the CALS contact. They will also forward all requests for purchase from the CALS contact to Mann Collection Development making sure to indicate that the items are for the Safety Shelf. Mann is not responsible for building this collection or recommending titles for the Safety Shelf.

A few items on the shelf (currently the Radiation Safety Manual and Chemical Hygiene Plan) have updates sent periodically to be inserted into the source. Often, a form comes with the inserts that needs to be signed by the Mann contact and returned to the publisher. Ensuring the update of these books and signing any forms is crucial. If possible, the Mann contact should get in touch with the providers of these works so a contact name can be placed on any correspondence. This way they are less likely to get lost in the shuffle. In addition, a note has been added to the computer records for these books (and can be added to others) stating that all letters/documentation accompanying these updates is to go to the Mann Safety Shelf contact. It is also important to run this information past the Mann Information Assistants who actually place the updated inserts into the books. If they come across any documentation or letters, they should give them to the Mann contact.

All records for items on the Safety Shelf should indicate a location of Mann Library Reference, Safety Shelf. If a book is added to or removed by the CALS contact from the Safety Shelf - the Info Assistants need to ask Technical Services to add or remove this special location from the record. In addition, a piece of red tape needs to go on the spine of each book and a dummy block should go in the reference collection pointing patrons to the Safety Shelf. Try to get call number, and title on the block as well as the location.

Date: March, 2001
Completed by: Philip Davis, Mary Ochs, Kathy Chiang, Angi Faiks

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