COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT

REFERENCE COLLECTION

Date: March 2005
Reference Collection Development Group

I. Purpose/Program Support

The Reference Collection supports the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, the Graduate School of Education and Human Development, the School of Engineering and Applied Science, the Elliott School of International Affairs, and the College of Professional Studies. The Reference Department collects minimally in law, medicine, and health sciences.

The mission of the Gelman Library System is to enable GW faculty and students, regardless of location, to meet their curricular and research needs. Print, microform, and electronic materials are acquired for the reference collection in support of these needs.

II. WRLC and Other Area Resources

Consult Gelman subject collection development policy statements to determine the strengths of area resources.

III. General Collection Guidelines

A. Language

Though primarily collecting in English, Reference and Collection Development librarians may recommend and/or acquire items in other languages based on the curricular and research needs of GW students and faculty. Foreign-language dictionaries are collected in major languages worldwide and those related to research and teaching at GW. Foreign-language encyclopedias are acquired and updated based on a combination of the following: curricula in foreign-language departments; needs of patrons who speak languages other than English; and content unavailable in English-language encyclopedias.
B. Period of Coverage

Materials supporting all subjects cover periods relevant to the curricular and research needs of students and faculty. For specifics on those periods, the Reference Collection Development Group refers to the collection development policy statements for each subject.

C. Dates of Publication

Current purchases are used primarily to acquire recently published materials. Retrospective buying is done selectively at the request of Reference or Collection Development librarians or to fill gaps in monographic series, subscriptions, or standing orders.

D. Geographical

All geographical areas are within the scope of the reference collection. Resources about the District of Columbia metropolitan area are given special consideration.

E. Treatment of Subject

Materials obtained for the reference collection are of academic quality and are anticipated to be relatively heavily used. The materials are largely factual in nature, provide an overview, or refer to other resources. Materials obtained include:

Anthologies: Only major comprehensive literary anthologies, and these only very selectively.

Atlases: Those devoted to a single country (aside from the U.S.) or sub-country areas (aside from those of the U.S.) are excluded.

Bibliographies: These are acquired very selectively. Excluded are narrowly focused bibliographies without a wide audience and national bibliographies.

Compilations of scientific data and formulae.

Concordances: Only for sacred texts and the works of William Shakespeare.

Dictionaries: Both language and subject.

Directories.
Encyclopedias: General, biographical, and those dealing with specific but broad subjects. Generally those addressing narrow subjects are excluded. Those dealing with individual persons (aside from William Shakespeare) are excluded.

Guides to the literature of a subject or discipline.

Handbooks.

Indexes to periodical and other literature: As a rule, electronic is the preferred format. Print indexes are maintained and/or collected if: the index is unavailable electronically, the print index includes content unavailable electronically, patrons regularly use the print index and/or the print index has demonstrable value above and beyond the electronic index.

Library catalogs: Generally these are excluded.


Sacred texts and commentaries upon them: Generally not more than one copy in the original language, one copy each of standard editions of English translations, and not more than one or two commentaries for each text.

Statistical sources: Those with unique statistics. Also those that bring related data together or provide ease of use or other enhancements.

Style manuals.

Telephone books: For the District of Columbia metropolitan area.

Union lists of periodicals: Generally these are excluded.

Yearbooks.

IV. Description of Materials and Format

The collection consists of monographs, serials, monographic series, and maps in paper, online, CD, DVD, and microform formats. For materials in formats not currently supported within the reference collection, the cost and ease of creating appropriate support are considered.

V. Special Considerations
The reference collection exists within the context of other collections in Gelman Library, including Media Resources, Special Collections, and the Slavic, East European, and Asian Reading Room. Collection and weeding decisions are coordinated with these collections to avoid most duplication. While such decisions are not formally coordinated with the Jacob Burns Law Library or the Paul Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library, the tendency is to avoid duplication of specialized reference works in those libraries. To support the College of Professional Studies, funding provided by the College may be used to purchase reference resources that would not otherwise be added to the reference collection.

When multiple formats are available for a title online is the preferred format. When selecting amongst formats, content, ease of use, remote access, cost, and ease of support are considered.

VI. Duplication/Referral Policy

In general, duplicate copies of a title are not purchased, so as to purchase more titles rather than extra copies of individual titles. However, if demand warrants, duplicate copies are bought on a case-by-case basis. Duplicate copies of style manuals are kept on reserve. Print copies of resources available online may be purchased if the print copy adds value. If there is high demand, a reference source available at Himmelfarb, Burns, the Virginia Campus, or Eckles may be duplicated in Gelman because Himmelfarb and Burns have more restrictive access policies, and because the Virginia Campus and Eckles require travel.

VII. Selection Methods

A. Selection of new materials generally occurs through 5 sources:

1) The approval plan through Blackwell’s Book Services is monitored on a regular basis to ensure the profile meets our needs. Any changes in the curriculum, as indicated through library impact statements, are examined against possible changes in the approval profile.

2) Firm orders are initiated by the Reference Collection Development Group. Journals in the field are scanned for relevant reviews. Firm order requests from faculty and students are reviewed and approved by the Reference Collection Development Group.

3) Standing orders, memberships, and serial requests are initiated by the Reference Collection Development Group.

4) Gifts are accepted under the same guidelines as other acquisitions. They must fit the criteria spelled out in this collection development policy.

5) The Library participates in the Federal Depository Library Program; the Reference Collection Development Group reviews documents
B. Deselection

The reference collection is weeded to ensure the relevancy and strength of the collection and to accommodate space limitations.

There are two types of weeding that take place within the reference collection: ongoing weeding and systematic weeding. The reference collection maintenance manager, collection development librarians, and reference librarians may engage in ongoing weeding throughout the year as needed or as problems arise. Systematic weeding is an inclusive and formal attempt to weed the reference collection organized by the Reference Collection Development Group. Collection development and reference librarians are asked to review a designated area on a regular basis and make appropriate recommendations. The specific procedures are outlined in the Reference Manual.

Reference material weeded from the collection can be withdrawn from the collection or transferred to the stacks, another Gelman department, the WRLC storage facility, Eckles Library, or the Virginia Campus Library.

Although each subject area may differ, the following guidelines may be used in weeding the collection:

1) Relevancy of the information to support reference information needs
2) Currency of the information
3) Amount of use
4) Availability of later editions
5) Duplication of content in a more recent work or other formats
6) Available shelf space

Some items in the reference collection are automatically weeded based on the following predetermined retention decisions:

1) Library keeps latest edition only
2) Latest in reference, earlier editions in the stacks. Generally editions sent to the stacks circulate except for times series of data and parts of larger sets

VIII. Library of Congress Classification
The reference collection includes all the Library of Congress classifications.