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**Reading Description:**

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Dillon, K. (2001). Maintaining collection viability. In K. Dillon, J. Henri & J. McGregor (Eds.), *Providing more with less : collection management for school libraries* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 241-254). Wagga Wagga, NSW : Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University.

Debowski, S. (2001). Collection program funding management. In K. Dillon, J. Henri & J. McGregor (Eds.), *Providing more with less : collection management for school libraries* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 299-326). Wagga Wagga, NSW : Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University.

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### Collection management policies

A major concern of the collection policy is to delineate the issues that need to be addressed if the actual library collection is to be well maintained and managed in its selection and growth. This collection management policy primarily relates to the areas of selection, acquisition and censorship. It may also detail the functions the library collection should fulfill, and highlights the principles to which the school librarian should adhere.

#### 1.0 The collection function

Not all library users fully understand the breadth of support a library should offer its clients. This can sometimes lead to conflicts in budget discussions, and in reviews of the collection development process. Many users only see the small aspect that directly supports their needs, and often fail to see the overall scope of the library collection. An initial

statement of the library's purpose and support for users can be an important element of the policy. This comprises several sections.

#### 1.1 Users

It is helpful to briefly describe the users who will benefit from the library services. Many users are unaware of the array of groups who are supported, such as staff, students, parents, administrative staff and community members.

The policy can also outline which needs are supported for each of these groups. For example, does the library collection provide recreational reading for staff, or simply curricular support? Are students offered materials to support their full range of needs, that is, curricular, high-interest, emotional, social, extra-curricular and spiritual? Are there special groups in the school that need further support, such as migrant groups, boarders, clubs, academic extension programs, children with special needs?

#### 1.2 The collection goals

Any policy that outlines principles will normally state the key underlying philosophy on which these principles are based. Library collections are based on rational decisions that are determined by a carefully constructed set of principles. These need to be outlined, so that others can also see the basis for the funding and selection decisions that are made. The goals can be drawn from a number of sources. The ALA, CLA, and ATLC statements make a good starting point, helping to identify what it is that makes a good collection work well.

Some aspects that might be stated are:

- collections should provide an in-depth coverage of various topics and areas
- all levels of student ability should be supported in the collection

- bias should not be evident in the collection: a controversial topic should be represented from various viewpoints
- the collection should be up-to-date, attractive and accurate in its coverage of topics
- a range of formats should be incorporated in the collection
- user access to the library collection should be affirmed
- censorship should be avoided
- the statements of the ALA, CLA, and ATLC could be affirmed as fundamental principles reflected in the collection
- if the school is part of a religious system there may be other guidelines that also need to be incorporated.

## 2.0 Selection principles

This second component of the collection management policy explores the process of selecting resources for the school library. This was the area that was traditionally documented as a selection policy, and highlights the need for rational decision-making in the building of a collection.

Consider the value of these sections in the policy:

### 2.1 Responsibility for selection

While most schools accept that the school librarian is responsible for the collection management decisions, a brief statement to this effect can avoid any conflicts with new staff members. It also sets the scene for selection and other areas where the ultimate decision to act has to be taken by an authoritative person. In some schools this section is even more critical, since there may be members in the school who try to take collection management decisions out of the school librarian's control.

### 2.2 Formats incorporated

Collections evolve all the time: filmstrips were once a core item in library collections, but have now been superseded by videos. This small statement describes the

range of formats that will be included in the collection, such as books, journals, videos, DVDs, audio cassettes or CDs, computer software, CD-ROMs, online materials such as Web sites, charts and kits. It helps to establish the scope of the selection activity.

### 2.3 Other selection limitations

Foreign languages may be included in the collection to meet ethnic user needs, or to support particular language areas in the curriculum. This might be briefly highlighted to establish the extent of this support: what languages are supported? What types of language materials are purchased?

### 2.4 Duplicate copies

A policy on class sets may be relevant to the school. If they are housed in the library collection or purchased or processed through the library, this can be briefly outlined for reference.

School libraries need to limit their duplication of purchases. A short policy statement will offer simple guidance on this. Some schools set a limit of three copies for popular fiction, and five copies for curriculum resources. This helps prevent numerous copies of a title taking over a shelf. The designated quantities are determined by the school librarian, and reflect the economic and spatial constraints operating on the library.

### 2.5 Cooperative acquisition

If the library is involved in cooperative acquisition this should also be noted as another principle of collection management, since it will have implications for the selection and lending processes. Shannon's chapter describes the need to work more closely with other local providers. This may change the principles under which the library operates. For example, the collection might need to reflect jointly agreed priorities, or particular

collection responsibilities may be agreed. The library may also find itself contributing some funds to the maintenance of this collaborative arrangement. The policy should describe any agreed principles which are established.

## 2.6 Criteria for selection

This section can be very unwieldy, and may overwhelm a policy. There are two sets of criteria that might be considered: those that outline the general criteria that should be applied to any resource, and those that are more specific in nature. Most policy writers choose to briefly list the general criteria in this section, and to then attach more specific criteria as appendices. They can also be held as a separate document, in which case, a simple reference to that document will suffice. These specific criteria may relate to avoidance of sexism or racism, selecting particular formats of resources such as CD-ROM resources, or evaluating particular types of literature, such as educational resources. The extent of these inclusions, and the choices of which items to incorporate, rests in the hands of the policy writer. At the very least, the general criteria should be described. These normally encompass such aspects as authority; appropriateness of the content for the user; scope; accuracy; treatment; structure and layout; literary merit; technical quality; potential use; cost and long-term value. More specific criteria will highlight more precise components of these criteria. Some people like to include two sets of general criteria: one set dealing with non-fiction resources, while the other covers fictional materials. Style, characterization, theme, plot, and illustrative quality are further elements that need to be addressed when considering fictional resources.

## 2.7 Donations and gifts

The school librarian needs to maintain control over the collection at all times. It is essential to have the

flexibility to discard donations should they prove inappropriate for the collection. The policy, therefore, needs a small statement indicating that donations are most gratefully accepted, on the proviso that they will be treated as any other item in the collection. This includes the right to withdraw the item, or to not include it in the collection should it not meet the needs of users.

## 2.8 Lost items

Lost items can be a contentious issue. The school librarian needs to think seriously about the principles that should be reflected. For example, should teachers pay for lost resources if students must? How many items can a person lose in a year before being charged? How much should be charged for a new resource, compared to an older resource?

Table 6.1 provides one example of a policy on lost items. The critical issue is to ensure equity and to develop a policy that is workable within the school culture.

## 2.9 School coordination of purchasing

In many schools there is an increasing trend to record all school purchases on the library management system. This means that a teacher may purchase a resource using the department's funding account, and this will be recorded as a school holding on the library's catalogue. The location will be listed as the department, but the resource will be on the inventory for the school. The advantages include greater accountability, ease in inventory and stronger possibilities for intra-school resource sharing.

A brief statement in the policy highlights the principle as an official and ratified philosophy, so that new members of the school are assured of its legitimacy.

## 3.0 Acquisition policy

Acquisition policies are very short statements outlining the principles that will be followed in acquiring resources. Some possible statements that could be included in such a policy might be:

- 3.1 Resources will be selected using a range of selection tools and services, or as a result of personal recommendation.
- 3.2 Only resources that reflect the established selection policy priorities will be considered for purchase.
- 3.3 Wherever possible, resources will be physically reviewed prior to purchase.
- 3.4 Funds must be available before a library purchase is initiated.
- 3.5 Only approved suppliers will be used for library purchases.
- 3.6 Print materials will be purchased where no other option exists.
- 3.7 The decision to acquire or subscribe to resources will be made by the school librarian after an assessment of potential use and cost.

#### 4.0 Collection evaluation policy

Another policy that is gaining in importance is that of collection evaluation. This comprises the various aspects that ensure the collection is maintained as a viable and strong source of support to users. The essential principle underlying collection evaluation is that the resources truly reflect the needs of users. Later chapters outline these principles in more detail. A brief summary of these principles is provided here for consideration in the policy.

##### 4.1 Collection appraisal

Part of the collection process is that in which the collection is reviewed to ensure it is relevant and current in meeting user needs. There are many ways the collection can be evaluated, and these are well covered in the chapter on evaluation. The policy does not describe these fully, but may outline the principle of collection appraisal. Here is one way of describing the policy on collection appraisal:

The collection will be regularly appraised to review its relevance to users and coverage of identified priorities. The methods used will include: collection

mapping, user surveys, comparisons with published lists, analysis of usage patterns, and other methods as appropriate.

##### 4.2 Deselection of resources

A brief statement of the principles that will be used to maintain a viable collection is also needed. Deselection or weeding is an important means of removing unused or unattractive materials. The most common criteria used for weeding are that a resource is worn, out-dated, unattractive, inappropriate in content, or of no further value to users. These criteria may be simply stated, and enable the rational review of the collection to be undertaken whenever it is necessary.

##### 4.3 Review of controversial resources

This is one of the most important policy aspects. Most schools will encounter a resource challenge at some stage. This may not be hard to handle, but in other instances, it can become a nightmare that threatens to become unmanageable. In many instances, the school librarian may not even recognize the title: it might have been selected by another staff member, or a predecessor. Regardless of origin, the school librarian needs to have a policy that establishes a rational and professional process for reviewing the resource. It is possible to find uninformed parties running the proceedings without the support of such a policy. As a newly graduated school librarian, for example, I was asked to remove *Fungus the Bogeyman* (Raymond Briggs) from the shelves, because my principal had been golfing and his colleagues told him it was unsuitable. Fortunately I had copies of reviews to indicate its worth, and this was sufficient. Had he pressed harder, I would have been unable to fight the pressure, since my policy had not addressed this issue sufficiently. Williams and Dillon (1993) provide a very strong case for the need for these policies, and indicate the ways in which censorship can operate indirectly through challenges of controversial materials. This

impinges directly on the professional obligations of the school librarian. The school librarian's major responsibility is to provide free and open access to materials holding all points of view to all users. School librarians need to think about this issue very carefully for two reasons: first, to ensure that the professional stance is well-developed and appropriately prepared, and second, to provide a framework to handle such queries.

There are two situations in which controversial materials may need to be reviewed carefully. The initial selection of a resource may be the first occasion when the possibility of censorship arises. Williams and Dillon (1993) provide many examples of well-meaning censorship, in which school librarians have avoided selecting an item because they realize it could be offensive or may cause them problems at a later date. This is not professional conduct and should be avoided. Selection should be based on considering the good qualities in a resource, rather than the possible controversy that may arise. Even so, it is better to canvass other informed opinions of a potentially controversial resource.

The second reason for reviewing a controversial resource occurs when an item is already held in the collection, and it is queried – often by a parent. Most books will stay open at the most juicy piece in the work. If a parent reads it out of context, it can sound very questionable! When a school librarian is faced with an irate parent, it is a relief to know there is an established policy that outlines the process to follow. Before commencing the whole routine, however, the school librarian needs to affirm the title is worth the whole review process. It should be read first, to check that it does meet the criteria. If it does, then it should be subject to the policy, and should be reviewed. If it does not, the title may simply be withdrawn and the complainant advised of this action. It is essential that the

removal of this item be based on selection criteria considerations, not because it is seen as potential trouble. This is censorship.

So this policy is designed to offer the guidelines for reviewing controversial materials: whether they are in the collection already, or are in the process of being considered for purchasing. The policy statement needs to cover three aspects: the initial lodging of complaints about a resource; the review process; and the actions to be taken after the review of the work(s).

A standardized process for lodging complaints needs to be established. Most policies include a standard form that is completed by the complainant. This is attached as an appendix in the policy, and is referred to in the policy itself. An example of this is included as Appendix B. This ensures the person is serious, and does wish to have the matter pursued.

Secondly, the policy should affirm the need to select or reject resources based on their reflection of the selection criteria. It should indicate that any resource deemed controversial should be considered by a review panel. The composition of this panel should be outlined. For example, some likely choices might be a language or literature teacher; a member of the school administration who has an educational background; a parent who has a good literature background; the school librarian and a senior student. The committee should not be too large, and it is preferable to keep the principal as an objective appeal option, separate from the actual committee. The chairperson should be someone other than the school librarian, so that s/he can be a full participant in the discussion. This review committee might only convene once per year, but will always be ready to act should it be required. Obviously, it is in the librarian's and users' interests to ensure the people placed on this committee

are conversant with children's literature and are flexible thinkers. Rigid traditionalists are likely to find controversial materials fairly hard to accept.

To ensure the committee is properly focused, the principles that should be reflected in the review of a resource might be emphasized. Published reviews and selection criteria should be considered during the evaluation of the resource, for example. A statement that the resource, if it is already on the shelf, should remain in circulation until its future is determined might also be included. Once the item is approved for retention, a copy of the decision should be retained in the library so that it is not re-challenged at a later date.

Following the review, the complainant should be notified of the outcome. A copy of the results should also be forwarded to the principal. Should an appeal be raised by the complainant, this should be directed to the principal, who will then be the final decider. With a strong policy and a good review committee, it is hoped that the principal will reinforce the decision made.

Of course, if the committee decides the material is unacceptable, the school librarian will have to live with this decision – even if it is not agreed with.

### What is weeding?

Weeding is known by a number of names including deselection, culling, discarding, stock relegation (popular in the UK), retirement and reverse selection. It has also been described as the process of avoiding 'bibliochlothanasia' – death from overcrowding by books! (Duckett, 1990: 433). The crucial elements of the process are summarized by Gorman and Kennedy (1992: 383) who define weeding as:

...the process of removing material from the open shelves and reassessing its value. Once an item has been removed it can be relegated to storage in an area under the control of the library, discarded, sold, or transferred to group storage. Positive reasons for weeding (apart from lack of space) may include a belief that there is an optimum size beyond which the collection should not be allowed to grow and, more importantly, a conviction that with the passage of time some at least of the items on the shelves of any library lose most or all of whatever value they originally had, and become a distraction to users rather than an asset. Fundamental to professional weeding is a realization that not all items on the shelves are of equal value in terms of a library's collection development priorities, and that staff have a responsibility to act on this.

The preceding definition more accurately describes the process of weeding in larger libraries such as academic and research libraries. However, it is also instructive for school librarians as it considers the breadth of weeding activity. Weeding is much more than the identification and subsequent withdrawal of aged and/or tattered items from the collection. Such a view is too narrow and does not take into consideration the critical aspects of obsolescence, use, and fate. An item can be in good condition with a recent copyright date but can be obsolescent. What if the item is never or only rarely used? What options for disposal of weeded items are available? These are the types of questions which need to be considered in weeding the collection.

### Why weed?

In their study of resource adequacy in Australian secondary schools, Tanner and McIntyre (1995: xxi-xxii), compared the data they had collected about schools' collection strengths and weaknesses with standards for weeding set down in the first edition of the Australian standards document, *Learning for the future* (1993), and discovered that:

- most of the schools have a foundation collection that...meets the minimum threshold specified in these standards (which range from 34 items per student in a school of 100 to 12 items per student in a school of 2000)
- there are, however, 17 per cent of schools that fail to satisfy this minimum benchmark. This finding should be cause for serious concern with relevant school authorities, particularly as the threshold used is modest
- fifty-three per cent of reporting school libraries achieve in excess of 150 per cent of the minimum expected collection size threshold.

Initially, the high compliance with the collection size standard appears impressive and supportive of resource based learning. However, when the rate at which material is

added and old and inappropriate material culled is considered, there are causes for concern.

- thirteen per cent of libraries failed to add more than half the recommended quantity of new materials annually (a 10% annual replacement rate)
- fifty-one per cent of libraries failed to meet the minimum benchmark for the rate at which they should add new material
- only 26 per cent of schools could add annually in excess of 150 per cent of the minimum threshold recommended for a school of their size
- only 11 per cent of school libraries could achieve the minimum benchmark for the culling of out-of-date and inappropriate information
- seventy-four per cent of school libraries failed to remove less than half the recommended quantity of superseded materials.

These results suggest that most schools' collections only meet the total collection size requirements because they go largely unweeded. Of great concern are the following trends:

- too few schools were able to annually acquire enough new material to meet industry standards. Of all the resourcing short falls, this is the most crucial because it is the major means of dealing with demand for up-to-date information
- this was happening at a time when most parties agree that students and teachers were placing higher demands on school library resources than ever before...
- these failures in resource adequacy as measured against standards appear to have occurred across the school system. The patterns of adequacy and inadequacy do not really break down into any neat patterns involving government and non-government schools, nor is there a strong association between adequacy levels and metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions.

Tanner and McIntyre (1995: 72-73) go on to conclude that '...few schools had strong weeding programs' and that:

Often, the schools reaching the discard standard has (sic) weeded the collection as part of converting their library systems from manual to automated procedures. Under more normal circumstances they could be expected to cull collections less vigorously.

The point is that weeding the collection has at least as much to do with the maintenance of a strong collection as does selection. School librarians would never consider not selecting materials for the collection; why then should they balk at strengthening the collection by removing materials that are no longer of relevance? Part of the answer lies in the philosophy or mission of the school library. Should school libraries stock materials covering a broad range of issues just in case they are needed; or should the curriculum and the information needs of users drive decisions about what is purchased for, and retained in, the collection? The following benefits of weeding are adapted from Van Orden (1989: 14):

- more appealing, more up-to-date collections
- makes the school library easier to use – removal of the 'hindrance' factor!
- helps maintain a reputation for the provision of reliable information
- provides feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the collection so the *actual* viability of the collection can be determined
- facilitates identification of works which need repair or replacement
- provides a basis for lobbying for additional funds
- provides a more accurate basis for quantitative collection evaluation activities
- creates space.

Whilst weeding should be viewed as a positive, essential ongoing part of collection management, Van Orden (1995: 270-271) argues that it is often neglected for one of many real or imagined reasons:

- books are sacred objects; only vandals destroy books
- someone may need this in the future [consider past use as a predictor of future use; consider the impact of cooperative arrangements on collection management]
- I don't have enough time to examine every item in the collection [what is the cost of housing and maintaining obsolete items?]
- there will be a scene if teacher X wants this
- we don't have time to remove the bibliographic and holding records for all these items (what about the users' time and attitudes on finding useless materials?)
- our policy doesn't justify removal of materials bought with public funds
- I cannot decide when a fiction title is out of date
- this recording is scratched but the students like the story
- kits are expensive to replace
- these study prints are no longer available (even when the corners are torn and the explanatory text is missing)
- someone may want to compare these editions
- a class probably could use this 10-year-old set of encyclopedias (although we have the electronic version on our LAN)
- I remember when Abdul made that model (Abdul now holds a master's degree in engineering)
- this software package has gone through several revisions, adding features we could learn to use, but many of us know how to use this version
- I hate to admit I bought this shelf-sitter.

While Van Orden's list appears to have been compiled with considerable 'tongue-in-cheek', these are the types of reasons (or variations thereof) often proffered by school librarians resistant to weeding.

### **Policy and procedures for weeding**

Weeding should be viewed as a positive rather than negative process resulting in a better collection for users. For example, weeding often results in increased circulation and provides a basis for lobbying for additional funds. While a central and therefore

necessary part of collection maintenance activity, the prospect of weeding the collection often presents some difficulties for the school librarian including factors such as time available to weed, level of knowledge of the school community and collection, and the 'political' problems associated with a policy for 'getting rid of books'. It is essential then that the school librarian has policy and procedures set in place to guide weeding decisions. Within the umbrella of the collection management policy, the existence of a weeding policy and accompanying procedures provides the school librarian with the authority to carry out the task. There is an educative function here as well. Principals and other members of the school community may be under the misapprehension that it is possible to measure the library's ability to satisfy users' needs in terms of the number of items on the shelves, regardless of the merit of the items in question. A useful strategy here is to calculate the percentage of the collection which actually circulates before and after weeding. In most instances, particularly where the collection has not been weeded for some time, such comparisons are likely to have considerable impact. The message here is that quantity is not a reliable indicator of quality nor is a large collection necessarily a good collection.

Fundamental to successful policy formation is flexibility and collaboration. Elements for inclusion in policy and procedures include criteria for weeding, when to weed and how to dispose of weeded material. Criteria for weeding need to be flexible enough to accommodate any 'exceptional' items i.e. an element of subjectiveness is necessary! It is not enough to use 'common sense' or 'instinct' solely as the basis for weeding items. Such a philosophy leaves school librarians open to criticisms of personal bias and even claims that rather than weeding the collection, they may in fact be censoring it!

The process of policy formation worries some people but shouldn't. The school librarian (or library committee) can present an advanced draft of the policy so as not to drag all and sundry through the whole process. There is some debate in the literature about whether existing policies should be used as a basis for formulating policy or whether it is preferable to write policy from 'first principles'.

### Criteria for weeding

As far as some commentators are concerned (Gorman and Kennedy 1992: 387; Slote, 1997), the two most important guidelines for any weeding program are:

- that the likelihood of future use be the sole criterion for weeding, and
- that the best method of establishing likely future use is 'shelf-time period', defined as the time the material has remained on the shelf since last issue or, in the case of very recently bought material, since accession.

Whichever criteria are chosen, they should be listed broadly in the weeding section of the collection management policy and in detail in the accompanying procedures. It goes without saying, as Freeman (1991: 55) suggests, that caution should be used in the selection of criteria for weeding:

Weeding needs to be a considered, systematic process. It is easy to begin weeding with little more than enthusiasm and the belief that we will readily recognize items that should be removed from the collection. However, an aware teacher librarian soon realizes that unless criteria are developed to guide the process then it is liable to be a random and less than satisfactory activity. The criteria selected need to be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the school. This does not mean you should not question and re-evaluate your criteria as you weed, for no matter how specific and objective you try to be when weeding there will always be items which do not really fit your criteria and require individual and frequently subjective judgement.

When selecting your weeding criteria you need to carefully consider the implications and practicability of each guideline before you adopt it. What may appear to be a perfectly sensible criterion at first sight may be fraught with problems if adopted without thoughtful consideration. As with selection, conscious or unconscious censorship can creep into the process if we are not vigilant and fail to make the needs of the school our first concern.

Two commonly used mnemonics for weeding criteria are CREW – Continuous, Review, Evaluation and Weeding (Segal, 1980) and MUSTY – Misleading, Ugly, Superseded, Trivial, Your collection has no use for this book (or MUSTIE – Misleading, Ugly, Superseded, Trivial, Irrelevant, Easily obtained elsewhere). Freeman (1991: 55-57) summarizes the broad criteria for weeding collections which encompass some of the MUSTY and CREW principles:

#### a) Physical condition

- items in poor condition (worn out, damaged, soiled, infested, disintegrated, mildewed, missing components)
- unattractive appearance (unappealing cover or binding, yellowing pages, small print, poor quality sound or pictures)
- dating and/or unpopular technologies (Beta format videocassettes, filmstrips, microfiche).

#### b) Content

- material containing outdated facts, values and/or attitudes
- material presenting theories or concepts which have been discredited or altered
- material beyond or beneath the intellectual abilities of the students
- material which is condescending, stereotyped, patronizing or biased
- material which no longer supports the curriculum or does not conform with current teaching methods
- material difficult to use because it is poorly organized (factual books without table of contents or index, back issues of periodicals which are not indexed, computer software without manuals)
- readers and supplementary readers do not belong in a library collection

- materials which have been superseded (almanacs, yearbooks)
- material which is too specialized
- material which is outside the interest areas of the users
- material with potentially harmful information
- discard encyclopedias and atlases after five years, non indexed periodicals after two years and practically everything after 10 years
- the average age of a collection should be no more than 10 years, 20 years is a reasonable average age for an item to retire
- the weeding rule of thumb is for five per cent of print material and 10 to 15 per cent of audio visual materials to be discarded annually
- in an established collection with a 'normal' rate of growth, decay and redundancy, the annual discard rate may be equivalent to as much as 20 per cent of the whole collection.

c) Usage

- material which is no longer in demand – has not circulated in three-five years
- items which have never been used
- even award winning books should be withdrawn if they no longer attract readers
- duplicates of an item no longer in heavy demand
- items identified by an automated library system as not having circulated in a specified period.

d) Other

- shelves which are overflowing; other storage areas which are full
- is there sufficient funding to replace weeded items?
- if material in a subject area is all or mostly unsuitable, should some or all of it be retained until it can be replaced?

Often, a number of criteria for weeding an item are satisfied e.g. the item is old, has a poor circulation history, and is unattractive to users. In addition to broad criteria for weeding, there also exist weeding criteria for particular subjects which provide quite detailed and extensive lists of specific criteria for weeding each area of the collection (Segal, 1980, Slote, 1997 and Spiller, 1991). Two such guides are from the Texas State Library (1995:33-44) and the Western Australian Ministry of Education (1988:79), suggesting guidelines for specific areas:

**Non-fiction**

While all aspects of a library collection should be subject to frequent review and assessment, the following sections require particular attention as information in these fields is changing rapidly. In general, materials in these subject areas should not be any older than five years.

The reference area. The cost of materials should not necessarily be a criterion, e.g. a 10 year old multi-volume encyclopedia set is of doubtful value.

- 004 Computers
- 310 Statistics
- 320 Political Science
- 330 Economics
- 350 Public Administration
- 360 Social Services
- 500 Pure Science – all aspects
- 600 Technology – all aspects, especially Medicine and Manufacturing
- 670 Manufacturing
- 900 Geography and History – all aspects, particularly Asian and African nations

Check where the wording in the title dates materials:

- e.g. South East Asia Today
- Life in Russia

and where names of countries have changed:

- e.g. Rhodesia – Zimbabwe
- Ceylon – Sri Lanka

**Fiction**

Stereotyped fiction, poorly written fiction and unused 'old' fiction, popular many years ago, should be seriously considered for weeding. Young adult fiction especially should be kept current unless it is still circulating.

**Other**

Vertical files, charts, maps, study prints and periodicals need to be regularly assessed.

**How should weeding be done?**

Once the policy and procedures for weeding (including establishment of criteria) are in place, there are a number of techniques available to the school librarian embarking on a weeding exercise. For example:

- include members of staff in weeding decisions, particularly where they have subject expertise and/or responsibility
- prioritize areas of the collection which need immediate attention
- create a map of the collection which profiles the age of the resources in each Dewey area, graph the results and compare them to a subject-based list such as one of those listed above (Doll and Barron, 1991; Eisenberg, 1988)
- 'build' regular weeding into the library's resource management program as a continuous process (examine items on return, ask the user if the item was relevant, and so on)
- ensure that each area of the collection is evaluated in a logical and systematic fashion over a pre-determined period of time
- weed *all* areas of the collection including reference, vertical file, posters, multimedia, software and hardware.

**When should weeding be done?**

- when it can no longer be avoided e.g. when space becomes a problem, in preparation for automation, or when meaningful collection evaluation is desired
- on a regular basis e.g. a shelf of books each week. Such a routine ensures that progress is made through the collection otherwise the task becomes too cumbersome
- at inventory although not only at that time. Some school librarians never weed during a full inventory because it prolongs that process for far too long
- at a time of least inconvenience to the school community
- not within the first year of appointment to a school. The argument here is that it is better to wait until you have some knowledge of the users and the curriculum before commencing weeding. A counter-argument might be that if the new school librarian is qualified and/or experienced and his/her predecessor left a policy and procedures manual documenting, among other things, the basis upon which weeding decisions were made, then there should be no reason why weeding couldn't start immediately.

**Special cases**

There are times when certain items may need special consideration; they may be retained, or effectively given a 'second chance'. For example:

- incorrectly catalogued and/or labelled items including items with poor and/or insufficient access points for retrieval via the library catalogue (OPAC)
- rare books
- items which may have been poorly promoted and/or stored away from the open collection
- publications of the school including archival material

- books by local authors and/or ex-students, especially if ‘autographed’
- local or regional history titles, unless held by local public library
- items which may satisfy one or more weeding criteria but have a specific purpose e.g. an old, out-of-print, and even damaged title which is useful for introducing a particular concept or for stimulating discussion.

### What should be done with weeded items?

It is quite amazing how often weeded library materials find their way ‘home’. Decisions about what should be done with weeded materials need to be made. The school librarian needs to consider whether or not anything useful can be done with the item e.g. illustrated plates removed from books and laminated, relevant portions placed in the vertical file or scanned, and so on. If there are no possible uses for the item then it must be disposed of in a manner whereby it will not cause any problems in the future. For some schools, there is also the need to ensure that the methods selected for withdrawal of materials conform to any school or system guidelines for the disposal of school property. The following options for disposal of the item have been adapted from Freeman (1991: 59):

- relegated to ‘stacks’ (or boxed up and stored if space is a problem)
- placed in school archives if relevant to school history
- replaced – particularly if item has been worn out through regular use
- recycled, e.g. particular frames from a filmstrip transferred to slides, an article from a periodical placed in the vertical file, video and audio tapes and computer disks wiped and reused where possible
- discarded – the process chosen should ensure items do not ‘boomerang’, nor should you be the subject of attack from distressed and annoyed donors or their relatives! Items should be properly written out of the

collection. Preferred methods include shredding, burning and burying. Whichever forms of disposal are selected, the items must not be identifiable as a library resource

- other methods – selling or giving away to teachers, students, special collections, e.g. historical, (need to be clearly stamped across all school stamps as a discarded item).

There is some debate about this final point. If an item is not worthy of retention in the library, of what value is it for anyone else? Alternatively, some organizations request certain kinds of discards for use e.g. Book Aid International accepts used books that are in excellent condition, are no older than ten years, and that have universal appeal. The Ranfurly Library Service of New York is a branch of Ranfurly (London), a charitable organization that collects second hand books for delivery to applicant schools, libraries and welfare agencies in developing countries in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. The World Library Partnership, Inc. provides details about book donation programs at their Web site. Their Library Resource Database lists organizations that provide donated books to libraries in developing countries, with information about the kinds of books provided. Their Web page entitled ‘Some Facts about Book Donation Programs’ <http://RTPnet.org/~wlp/lfa/8bookdonation.htm> describes the potential and problems of book donation programs. The Sabre Foundation, Inc. sponsors a project which provides new books donated by publishers to elementary, secondary, and college level institutions worldwide, but their Web site provides information about many other book donation programs that accept donated used books.

## 12 Collection Program Funding Management

**Shelda Debowski**

Collection management is closely allied to budget management. Each resource decision is based on an assessment of what is needed to complement existing items in the collection, and an evaluation of whether the budget can accommodate the acquisition. This chapter reviews the budgetary issues that need to be considered when managing the resource collection, and provides some strategies for achieving better financial support from the funding sources.

As a professional resource manager, it is the school librarian's duty to demonstrate and provide accountability. This means that what is spent on the resource collection must be relevant, viable and cost-effective. In addition, the way in which the financial requirements are assessed, and the way in which these are represented to financial bodies, is strongly related to the perception of accountability. The financial management of the collection and related electronic services underpins every other role that is undertaken in a school library. A limited financial base cannot provide sufficient support to meet the diverse needs of the users. The ability to lobby for, and justify, funds is therefore a critical aspect of the entire funding process.

Despite its importance in establishing a viable and functional collection, most school librarians, and indeed, librarians in general, appear to have shown little interest in the budgeting process. They often accept a traditional funding allocation pattern that is insufficient to meet the needs of users. In preparation for this chapter, several literature reviews were conducted to identify current thinking on financial management in libraries. It is of some consternation to note the limited number of recent publications that address funding issues in school libraries, or, for that matter, libraries of any type. Budgeting is often regarded as simply the process of spending money wisely. In fact, it can become a powerful tool for providing accountability and structure to the process of building the collection. Budgets can be strengthened by their alliance with collection management activities. This chapter will demonstrate how the information gained from the evaluation and user analysis processes can be used to develop a budget plan that closely reflects the real needs of the users and the real characteristics of the collection. In addition, the suggested strategies ensure the school library's profile is well established. This is important: libraries vary greatly in their funding base - as evidenced by the wide range of expenditures on school library collections by US schools reported in 'How Do You Measure Up?' (Miller and Shontz 1999).

The goal of any good library is to build the funding base so that a solid core of financial support is achieved. This means that the library needs to be accountable. Without this, the library will suffer major drops in financial allocations. This chapter is therefore important on two counts: first, it reviews the way a library has to identify the scope of user needs and subsequently reflect these in the budgeting priorities, and second, it provides some practical strategies for establishing some realistic and professional budgeting methods.

### **Budgeting within the school library context**

As schools move toward different forms of financial management, the range of funding strategies may change. School libraries may face, for example, the responsibility of funding and costing staff

time - much like other libraries. It may be necessary to establish a tender process, so that various suppliers tender for the resource business, and are contracted. As the user pays principle escalates, and as more online services are integrated, there is a need to review how users are billed for the use of these services. Another option is to lease components of the resource service. Currently, this usually links to the technological components of services, but already, some examples of libraries actually hiring their book collection can be seen, so that it can be turned over by a supplier, rather than remaining as a static force for ever more. Electronic journals, maintenance contracts, and online services will also contribute to this evolving process. Ultimately, the budget will comprise a number of different elements. One aspect will be the book collection, a second the electronic information collection, a third the CD-ROM/DVD instructional materials a fourth, service agreements and leases and so on. These will all need to be costed in different ways, and to be planned for change and growth.

For the present, the budgeting process in schools is still very much focused on maintaining an in-house, effectively managed collection. This chapter explores the issues that arise in managing such a collection. In addition, it explores some of the other issues that are arising as collections evolve. The most important issue to consider when managing a collection is to ensure that it reflects user needs. This may mean that the collection evolves to suit the users, and also changes in its orientation, depending on the demands it is trying to support.

There are many ways in which a library budget is determined. Many of these are based on formulas or tradition, rather than a rational consideration of need. In some schools, a formula, such as that recommended by *Information power* (1988) is employed. This means that a budget figure is calculated as a percentage of the collection value (perhaps 5%), with the intention of replacing and supplementing materials which are aged or worn. However, this prevents expansion of the collection, and may also create a collection of decreased value each year. Another common method is to allocate a budget based on a per capita calculation. For every student, a certain figure is received by the library. This practice does not accommodate the recognition of new priorities.

There may be large needs that require special consideration, and a flat rate may not cope with massive rates of development. A further problem with this type of strategy is that inflation is rarely built into this figure. Many schools find the fund remains static for a considerable time, leading to a decreasing budget in real terms. A further strategy used by some schools is to provide a certain percentage of the school's operating budget. This ensures the funds are always indexed and assured. However, this also creates erratic budgets, depending on the state of the school's fiscal program, and the competition from other sources. Some libraries rely on the subject-based departments to determine budget expenditure. This can lead to deficient collections, since the users become the primary determinants of need. If a group directs its funds to other activities, the collection will suffer. In other schools, budgeting is not controlled by the school librarian. Collecting is seen as a whole school responsibility: whenever a useful resource is identified, it is purchased by whoever sees it. This leads to great discrepancies in the collection coverage, since it is an erratic and undisciplined process. Resources tend to be duplicated, and less prominent, but important, areas of need are ignored.

Budgeting can take two thrusts. One can either budget using a mathematical formula, or examine the context in which the budgeting must be placed, and develop a strategy to support these conditions. *Information Power* (1988) provides a variety of suggested formulae in Appendix B (p. 124-130). Another example of a formula is found in *Learning for the future* (2001), which suggests that a base allocation of resources be considered when developing funding estimates. This is useful in places where the standards document provides an indication as to how large the collection should be to serve schools of particular sizes. The suggestion is made that school librarians work out their necessary budget based on a simple calculation of:

(The number of items for that collection size x the average cost of items) /10.

This calculation is based on several assumptions:

- that the collection is already developed to a suitable standard and size
- that the demands on the collection will remain constant, and will be predominantly resource, rather than service, based
- that the needs of users are adequately supported already, and
- that only 10 per cent of the collection needs to be replaced in any single year. This, of course, assumes that a weeding program has been maintained, and that the collection itself is strong and viable. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

If the school librarian is attempting to develop a collection where these four assumptions are not met, a budget based on this mathematical formula will lead to further decrements in the collection. The funding base will be insufficient to support the growth needs that need to be reflected. User needs may be vastly underestimated by simply allowing for inflationary growth and attrition in the collection. Collections are often found to be at less than optimal standards, and so, need funding to achieve four purposes:

- to replace materials which are worn, outdated or unsuitable
- to build areas of the collection which cannot sufficiently support user demand
- to develop new collection areas and services to meet anticipated user demand, and
- to build the collection generally, so that it reflects state or provincial standards.

This requires a much more careful consideration of the real conditions operating in that library. It also requires a stronger reflection of the user and collection bases on which the library rests. This second method of budgeting is based on a collection evaluation foundation, and a real understanding of the specific user needs.

Like any other activity in the school, the financial process operating through the school library should emphasize the

educational goals of the school. The priorities reflected in the budget should be those which are important to the school community, and which further the educational gains of that community. This means that the whole financial management of the library must closely tie into the library programs and policies, and that these, in turn, should parallel the entire school's educational directions. Analysis and evaluation processes should be used to identify the student and collection needs. While this is a sound principle, some guidance is necessary on how one might develop this assessment. This chapter will offer an evaluative method that can be used to effectively link the budgeting and evaluative processes.

### The budgetary cycle

Put simply, a budget is a plan of expenditure. It outlines how one intends to allocate resources, and reflects the priorities identified for the coming fiscal period. The identification of budgetary items and the expenditure of these is an annual process. Budgeting can be said to consist of four phases: budgetary needs analysis and planning; development of the budget submission; allocation of the budget funds; and finally, expenditure of the budget.

Budgets should be based on careful appraisal of the collection, and reflect the needs that have been identified. After assessing the areas of greatest priority, the school librarian should make an estimate of how much money is needed to support this growth. This is stated in the form of a budget submission, and is submitted to the relevant funding body. When the funds are received, the budget is then allocated. If the budget amount is less than that requested, it may be necessary to review the areas to be supported for that year. Then the spending of the money needs to be undertaken efficiently. The school librarian needs to ensure funds last through the year, but must also show that all the funds are fully committed by the end of the fiscal period. Most schools run short of funds toward the end of the year. It is important that library funds are not re-absorbed to fund another area. This will imply that there was too much money: an impossible state for any

library! Following the budgetary expenditure over the year, the collection needs to be re-analyzed. Hopefully, some areas will have been substantially strengthened, and the school librarian will be able to demonstrate growth in the collection through the process followed during the year. The new analysis will then reveal new areas of need, or more specific targets for development, and the whole process begins again.

### **Budgeting according to organizational requirements**

Budgetary analysis and allocation ally closely to the context in which the budget operates. Schools with very ample budgets tend to be more flexible in their allocation process, while those with fewer resources watch each penny more closely. The methods may also be influenced by the particular organizational practices. A school that requires cross-checking of each order by a business manager, for example, tends to manage a budgetary style already. This may influence the practices followed by the library. On the other hand, someone with an automated acquisition module may prefer to link expenditure more closely to the collection management process.

Budgeting is influenced by the organization in other ways. The type of budget submission process is often dictated by the environment. Some schools require a single page submission, while others allow more flexibility. This would obviously influence the amount of justification one offers for the requests.

The funding process may be governed by a funding committee, so that the library needs to compete in an open market with other educational groups in the school. In this situation, it is critical that the resource center be seen as an active, substantial contributor to the educational process. The users become the judges of worth, and may make some major judgments of library value based on their own usage of the library services. The profile of the library is critical in this situation.

On the other hand, the library's needs must also be well represented if the principal is the sole allocator of funds. In this

case, there needs to be a clear assurance that the school librarian knows where the money will go, and that the money will be strategically spent. Accountability plays a large role in deciding how much money a person may provide the library. If the library is seen to be professionally managed and directed, more money will be allocated. People like to be reassured that the collection is more than just a bottomless pit. Accountability is predicted by careful assessment of the collection, and the development of expenditure practices that clearly relate to the collection priorities. This means that the budget needs to link very strongly to the evaluation of the collection, and should maintain close links with the actual priorities of the library service.

### **Accountability and collection management**

The size of a library budget can be a source of great dissatisfaction for a school librarian. A quandary faced by many school librarians is that they cannot spend as much money as they wish. Instead, the budget allocation is finite and reduces the range of services and resources that can be incorporated. This results in an important role for the school librarian: that of balancing expenditure to maximize the benefits, despite the fact that the funding base is smaller than it ideally should be. Unfortunately, a small budget can create an increasingly dysfunctional library. As fewer resources are purchased, the library functions more poorly. This reinforces the funding decision, and leads to fewer resources being allocated as the years progress. This downward cycle of minimal support needs to be arrested if the school librarian is going to turn the collection and its user services into a powerful force within the school. Visible accountability is the key to creating a more positive financial climate.

School librarians often tend to be passive in their management process: waiting for the allocation of a budget, based on the perceived value of the collection to the users. They assume users are aware, understand and value the library service, and assign suitable budgets to support the continuation of these processes. This passive reliance on the judgement of others to

determine need is dangerous, since the real needs of the library may be overlooked. The concept of accountability is not simply related to the responsible spending of the budget. It is intrinsically tied to visibility and rational application of sound managerial principles. The budget has to be seen to be well-developed; it needs to be followed in a responsible and logical manner, and the entire process needs to be visible to external observers. In other words, accountability incorporates three key principles: forward planning; rational application; and publicizing of outcomes. These are critical if the library is to be established as a well-managed collection that is growing towards the fulfillment of the school's educational goals.

In many instances, school library budgeting is conducted as an *ad hoc* process. There is little evidence of rational planning. Instead, money is spent as and where it seems appropriate, until such time as the funds disappear. Many people do not appreciate the dangers that are present when this style of budget management is followed. *Ad hoc* budgeting can easily lead to many inappropriate collection expenditures and major collection deficiencies.

Budget management reduces this uncertainty, and results in more positive outcomes. First, careful budgeting should ensure that the most important user needs are reflected in the expenditure patterns that are followed. Second, all aspects of these user priorities should be reflected. (People who adopt a low-key budgetary style often find they have concentrated on one area, rather than a range. This may have occurred because it is easier to find materials in that area, or because the users are more active, but this leads to an inequitable collection. Balance must be reflected.) A third issue is the need to plan for future growth. The budget should offer a plan of development, ensuring that there is a progressive development of the collection. Fourth, it is increasingly important that the expenditure process is seen by users to be rational, justifiable, and focused. This means that some form of planning is needed.

The increasing use of computerized library management systems, it has become easier to be fully accountable for the financial expenditure in the library. A school librarian can now

maintain records of how funds have been spent for a department, on a topic, or within a subject area - or all three. Records of requests by users can be tallied up, to see which teachers are requesting the most support. Graphs of expenditure can be prepared to demonstrate where funds have been directed. Patterns of resource growth can be documented and promulgated to the library community.

The school library is now in a position to fully manage the financial side of the collection management process. This is becoming increasingly necessary, as the erstwhile practice of centralized control of school libraries has moved to decentralization. School librarians are now forced to fight for every cent they receive, and must be shown to be accountable and managerially competent in the use of precious school funds. A phenomenon some people may have experienced is the reduction of library funds to accommodate other school needs. This may be accompanied by an explanation that the school has many areas of need and the library has 'had its share'. Statements like this indicate that the financial group in the school has little understanding of the ongoing nature of the school library's financial base. What is more interesting, is that the libraries which experience this funding reduction, normally operate their funding furtively and covertly. Users cannot see how the money is spent, and simply perceive the library as a bottomless pit. Where the school librarian can demonstrate value to the community by linking expenditure to a comprehensive collection building program, funding will increase.

The first part of this accountability process is the development of collection plans to document the areas of funding need. This provides a vision of the collection purpose, the strengths and weaknesses, and the way in which these will be further developed in the next financial year. This planning process provides data for use in estimating the budgetary needs of the library. This plan then needs to be translated into a budget submission that is placed before those parties responsible for judging worth and need. The second phase occurs when the funds are allocated. Hopefully, these will match the requested amount. In many cases they will not. Whatever the budget, the school

librarian as collection manager is responsible for putting the library funds to the best possible use. This entails the management of each small aspect of the budget, such as the careful assessment of each new expense to ensure it contributes value to the collection. While the funds are being spent, the school librarian needs to recommence the collection evaluation cycle. Each area needs to be monitored, so that new areas of need are identified, ready for the next review of the collection plan. The final budgetary phase becomes the review and publication of the outcomes. This requires an assessment of how well the library has evolved over that financial year, and also provides a springboard for outlining the new needs. This third phase is often handled poorly by school librarians. They assume people can understand what has happened. The reality is that most users are less perceptive about how libraries operate. They need to be told the outcomes, and need to be shown how these link to their own particular needs. This helps educate the library community, and also provides a justification for the budgetary requirements the library then levies against the community.

The major issues every school librarian needs to address, then, are: first, how to obtain an adequate budget, second, how to ensure those funds are appropriately spent, and third, how to publicize the good work that has been accomplished. A fourth issue is the increasing need to lobby for additional funds. We will explore these concerns in this chapter. Let us first explore the process of analyzing budgetary needs.

### **Linking budgeting to the evaluative process**

Budgeting supports a number of funding areas. The most substantial element in the budget is the development of the physical collection, that is, the resources that are housed in the library. In addition, the school librarian must estimate how much should be held for the purchase of information services, online resources and related expenditures. These will be explored a little later in this chapter. Let us first look at the physical collection and the budgeting that can ensure it is best optimized.

Budgeting is concerned with making the funding work to its optimum capability. To do this, the school librarian needs to have a strong awareness of the collection status and of the needs of users that are not being met. This means that any judgment of where the money should be allocated must be based on careful analysis of the collection and the user needs. This collection evaluation provides a basis for the decisions about which areas need to be built up, and which need to be maintained. It ensures that budget expenditures are not developed in an *ad hoc* fashion, but are, instead, focused on building up the collection in as many areas as possible.

The evaluation of the collection through collection mapping can become a very powerful basis for identifying the needs of the collection, and for identifying the areas that need stronger funding support. If particular subject areas are found to be lacking, and provide much fewer resources per student than desired, this information can be factored into the budget considerations. Similarly, an area that is comparatively strong may be identified as a low spending priority. Some funds still should be allocated, so that good new titles are purchased, and that strength is maintained, but large amounts of money should not be expended. If there are areas that are identified as weaker, they should be given priority, as long as they are also of high educational priority. The goal of any budget allocation process is to ensure the majority of user needs are met. This means that areas of weakness which experience strong levels of user demand must be strengthened.

Collection evaluation plays a further role in the budgetary cycle. At the end of the financial year, the school librarian should check that the priorities have been met. This requires additional evaluation of the collection, so that the areas of development can be identified. This information provides new data to use in the next budget review process, but can also be used to document the collection growth.

### Developing a collection plan

To use the information contained in the collection evaluation, it is useful to develop a collection plan of areas which the library supports and in which it should have collection materials. The style and nature of the collection plan is dependent on the way in which the funding is allocated. For example, if the collection mapping and review process is based on teaching topics in curriculum areas, the collection plan might be presented as a list of the topics that require resource support. For school collections, this is quite logical, since it emphasizes the uses to which the collection is put. Another type of library might categorize by subject area or classification scheme. For the purposes of this discussion, we will use some teaching topics to illustrate the points made.

The collection plan can offer useful guidance on the strengths and weaknesses of particular areas in the collection. Table 12.1 provides an illustration of the way it might be set up. The first column lists some topics covered in Science in a school. The table records the number of resources that are held in the collection. As with collection mapping, these incorporate any viable resource, be it print, non-print or ephemera. The number of students requiring access to resources on this topic can then be listed. This exercise takes the number of students as being those who are within a particular class, since this is the natural usage pattern for topics of study. The ratio of the two is calculated by dividing the number of resources by the number of students in the class. Hopefully, the ratio will be greater than one. This means that there is at least one resource per student available for use in the library. This is not wonderful, but at least it means that each student visiting the library can find something on the topic. If the ratio is less than one, this tells the school librarian how many need to be purchased to build up this topic. The reality, however, is that the funds may not be sufficient to do this. Imagine a library of few resources. Almost every topic might be lacking in resources. There is no way the library could supplement all of these in one year. The school librarian therefore needs to discuss the various priorities with the teachers and interested parties in that area.

Which topics are most resource-reliant? Are there highly recommended resources that could be purchased if the money were available? From this feedback, the priority for selection is determined. This might be a simple code, or a scale of 1 to 5. From this, the school librarian needs to decide how many resources might possibly be targeted, and places this in the last column. This figure becomes the information needed to estimate how the resource budget needs to be allocated.

**Table 12.1:** A sample collection plan.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF RESOURCES	STUDENTS PER CLASS	PROVISION RATIO	NUMBER REQUIRED	NUMBER TO BE PURCHASED	SELECTION PRIORITY
INSECTS	12	26	0.46	14	8	1
POLLUTION	45	26	1.73	3	2	5
MAGNETISM	25	32	0.78	7	4	3
ECOSYSTEMS	17	23	0.74	6	3	3

This plan can be developed easily over the academic year. As students commence a study topic, the school librarian can map the collection and record the result of this analysis. This figure then provides an easy measure of the resource provision. By the end of the year, the collection that is actually supporting the curriculum would be fully mapped and appraised. This provides detailed information for discussing and determining budgetary needs, and enables an accurate assessment of funding needs. The first time this analysis is conducted, the school librarian may be extremely shocked at the number of areas that are under-served by the collection. This is quite understandable. If an *ad hoc* approach has been used in the past, the differential between real and assumed resource needs tends to widen without it being noticeable. Documenting real needs gives tangible evidence of the collection requirements. It can also be a rude awakening the first time this type of analysis is conducted. The advantage of this approach is

that real data are collected, and the funding request can be supported by figures of real needs. This is likely to receive considerably more support from funding bodies, since it indicates that the school librarian has a sound grasp of the user needs, and has developed a powerful plan for developing the collection.

This review of the collection is a valuable preliminary process prior to preparing budget plans and submissions, since it provides a very real picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the collection.

The information gathered from this analysis can be used to develop collection management objectives, which help to highlight the collection priorities for the coming year. In addition, the full listing of collection requirements provides a strong basis to then outline the library's needs to the funding provider. With the information gathered from the collection evaluation process, and the documented plan, it becomes a simple task to develop a budget submission for consideration by the funding body.

### **Developing a budget submission**

Budget submissions are often regarded by school librarians as unnecessary. In many schools, a budget submission is not required by the funding group or decision-maker. This means the allocation process may be based on personal judgements, rather than verified need. If the school librarian fails to provide a request for funds, some figure is allocated, and it is expected that the library will cope with this amount. In these circumstances, the allocation of a budget may be based on past practice, or a subjective review of school-based priorities. The difficulty in this practice is that the library will rarely receive the funding it should. People who are not closely affiliated with a school library have little comprehension of the breadth of user needs which are supported, and which constantly cry out for development. Additionally, the provision of new services, such as electronic resources or services, is not factored into these calculations. The school librarian cannot afford to passively wait for an external source to determine how much the library should have. The whole collection program is

very reliant on good funding. Without money, the collection suffers. The need to represent the library's financial requirements is an essential element of the school librarian's role. This means that the school librarian should present a budget submission each year, so that the anticipated collection activities are fully funded, and enable better development of the collection. There is an old saying: 'The squeaky door gets the most oil'. School librarians need to be very loud, to ensure they are not overlooked. Naude (1989) makes this point quite strongly.

From the collection plan, it is an easy step to translate this information into a request for funds through the use of a budget submission. The format of this request will vary greatly between schools. Some school systems require detailed documentation of where the money will go, while others ask for a single page summary. The choice of budget submission style will therefore be partly determined by the school funding procedures. However, the school librarian should also consider the context within which the library operates.

Funding does not necessarily relate to need. In many schools, despite the paucity of library resources, there is little understanding of the need to increase the financial support to the library. This leads to a downward spiral where the school librarian cannot justify the need for the library, because of the poor support it currently offers users, and cannot provide better support because of the poor funding. The need to stop this pattern is critical. This is one instance where the budget request must be well documented and should create a powerful statement about its potential support to user needs.

Another situation that requires good budget documentation occurs when the library has been poorly managed in the past. This leads to distrust on the part of the financial allocators, who feel they cannot put precious financial support into the hands of those who will not use it to best advantage. In this situation, the school librarian needs to re-establish trust by demonstrating that there is a well-thought out plan which clearly links to user needs. This will commence the process of developing faith in the judgement of the school librarian. To achieve this, a well-documented budget is a very strong first step.

After considering the collection needs, the school librarian must develop some form of plan to help establish the future financial base of the library. Many schools request a summary of these budgetary needs from all relevant parties, so that a comparison of need can be conducted across these different groups. These budget submissions can become a powerful lobbying mechanism for the school librarian. The purpose of budget submissions is threefold:

- to provide a comprehensive outline of the needs of the library collection and allied services
- to present a cohesive summary to enable better understanding by the financial body of the library needs, and
- to demonstrate the outcomes which will be achieved through allocation of the requested budget.

To achieve these goals, the budget submission needs to be easily interpreted by others, and should clearly document the various collection management issues that are being embraced in the budget.

Budget submissions come in many forms. There are two main types employed by school librarians: the line-item budget submission and the program budget submission. There are many other styles of budgeting, however, these link most closely to school budgeting practices, and to the justification methods employed in educational settings. Most school libraries are not required to fund their staffing component, so the budget is primarily linked to the materials and services elements that support users. This simplifies the budgeting issue quite substantially. While the line-item and program budgeting methods are both suitable in listing the funding needs, their actual benefits differ markedly, as the following overview will show.

A Line-Item Budget is a simple listing of key areas, outlining how much funding each area will be allocated. There is no justification of the expenditure, and the funds are general in their categories. These budgets provide broad guidelines, but offer limited accountability. It is hard to see how they relate to the collection, although the school librarian may have thought quite extensively about what must be purchased. For many schools this

may provide sufficient guidance, and may prove more than adequate in documenting need. For other libraries, there is a need to be more specific in documenting the needs and identifying how the funding will be allocated. There are two types of line-item budgets that can be developed: a materials and services line-item budget, and a user support line-item budget. These are both similar in that they are very brief, but they emphasize different aspects of the financial management process.

### The materials and services line-item budget submission

This format offers a simple summary of the areas of expenditure that will be developed when the budget is allocated. Traditionally, the line-item budget lists the types of materials that will be purchased (see Figure 12.2). This has one advantage, and that is that it is short! If the school has a single page summary requirement, it will fulfill this request. However, it will not demonstrate need, it does not link to the curriculum, and it certainly does not provide reassurance that the collection is going to be well developed as a result of these funds. The other problem is that the implementation of this budget is poorly defined. Expenditure on curriculum topics is not broken down, and provides little idea of the way in which the funds will be spent.

### Johnson Library proposed budget

#### 1. Resources

RESOURCES	NUMBER REQUIRED	COST PER ITEM \$	TOTAL COST \$
BOOKS	300	16.00	4,800
AUDIO-VISUAL	40	45.00	1,800
COMPUTER SOFTWARE	30	80.00	2,400

## 2. Subscriptions and other costs

COST AREA	TOTAL COST \$
JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS	2,100
PROFESSIONAL TOOLS	300
ELECTRONIC SERVICES	1,000
CONSUMABLES	500
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST:</b>	<b>\$12,900</b>

**Figure 12.2:** A traditional materials and services line-item budget.

This style of submission is often used by people who have not considered the extent to which their collection needs to develop. It often underestimates the funds needed to consolidate the collection. Some school librarians add 10 per cent each year to the previous budget request, and consider this should cover the additional costs and needs which are emerging. The problem is that nothing is really analyzed. The school librarian needs to have a strong vision of where the collection should be heading, and needs to document this clearly. The materials and services line-item budget cannot show this.

### The user support line-item budget

An alternative is to use the collection plan as the basis for the line-item budget. Instead of dissecting the budget needs in terms of formats, the school librarian provides a summary of the areas of need and support which will be focused on in the coming year. This can include indications of how many resources will be purchased, and how much will be spent on each curriculum area. It is also possible to show the types of materials that will be purchased (see Figure 12.3). This leads to a much stronger justification of the request, since it clearly links to user needs, and provides a detailed indication of the areas and materials to be developed. The funding allocators feel much more confident of the

validity of the estimates, and will also be able to see how the collection will grow as a result of the budget expenditure for that year.

For schools where funding reluctance has been encountered, this is a much better submission than the simple statement of materials to be purchased. People begin to see that there is a strong collection plan, and it is focused on developing the collection toward clear outcomes. For those with reasonable support, this should prove more than adequate in increasing the faith in the library collection management processes.

## 1. User support

RESOURCES	APPROXIMATE NUMBER REQUIRED	AVERAGE COST PER ITEM \$	ESTIMATED TOTAL COST \$
CURRICULUM SUPPORT			
- BOOK RESOURCES			
- AUDIO-VISUAL	180	16	2,880
- JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS	30	45	1,350
- COMPUTER SOFTWARE/ CD- ROMs/DVDs	40	50	2,000
- RECREATIONAL READING BOOKS	30	80	2,400
- VIDEOS	40	45	1,800
TEACHER SUPPORT			
- BOOKS	10	45	450
- JOURNALS	20	16	320
- INFORMATION SERVICE	2	50	100
- BOOKS	30	16	480
- ELECTRONIC SERVICES			1,000

## 2. Other costs

COST AREA	TOTAL COST \$
PROFESSIONAL TOOLS	300
CONSUMABLES	500
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST:</b>	<b>\$13,580</b>

Figure 12.3: A line-item budget emphasizing user support.

### The program budget

What of those schools where total faith in the library management has virtually disappeared? A situation where many other groups in the school are vying for funds, and succeeding in displacing the school library from funding consideration? The library needs to be placed high on the list of priorities, but it can lose its position quite easily, if the funders are unaware of the role and activities the library fulfils. If funds are redirected toward other areas in the school, the school librarian needs to consider a stronger documentation of the budgetary requirements. To do this, there is a need to develop a more detailed document that clearly links funding to the needs of users. This is the purpose of the program budget. In effect, it is a more specific version of the user support line item-budget. The program budget provides a detailed justification of each collection area that should be funded in the budget. It links the budget requests to outcomes, and justifies the claims in terms of the needs of users. These budgets provide several pieces of additional information which cannot be incorporated in the user-support line item budget, namely:

- a clear description of how the library links to user needs in supporting the described area
- an outline of the current status of the collection in supporting users in these areas
- a detailed breakdown of the costs into specific areas.

Program budgets normally comprise a number of sections that describe the main areas of service or collection emphasis covered by the library. Broadly, these might include:

- curriculum support
- recreational resources
- information services
- management costs
- special projects.

Each of these sections provides a summary of the particular areas that need to be supported in the collection. Recreational resources, for example, might be divided into the discreet themes or sub-genres which are promoted or supported through the library, while curriculum support might be broadly described in subject areas, or by curricular strands.

The collection plan may be used as the basis for the program budget. It provides the detailed information that is needed to justify the relevance of the stated funding requests. Each section of the program budget comprises a short outline of why the area needs to be funded; in what condition this section is currently; how the money will be spent and how important it is to users. This provides the reader with a short and succinct rationale as to why the money should be spent on this area. While it can be satisfying to describe every small need, this is not really necessary. The school librarian can develop a very effective program budget by simply summarizing the key areas of the estimated costs.

Too much detail should be avoided as few people will take the trouble to read the submission if it looks too awesome. The program budget should be as short as possible, with each program described as a one-page summary. This will give more than enough information, and will provide the reader with strong justification of funding needs, but without going into too much detail. Figure 12.4 provides an example of one program budget section. The budget would comprise five or six such sections, which broadly describe the main areas of library provision and activity.

**Budget area:** Curriculum support**Collection status:**

The library is used extensively by classes undertaking topics of study - at all levels of academic programs. The information skills program is integrated through the school curriculum. To fully support students in these curriculum activities, the library should be able to provide at least one resource per student for each topic. At present, the ratio of resource to student is 0.5. That is, on average, there is only one resource for every two students. This is not adequate to support the students' needs.

CURRICULUM AREA	NUMBER OF RESOURCES REQUIRED	ESTIMATED COST PER RESOURCE	ESTIMATED TOTAL COST
LANGUAGE	40	15	600
SCIENCE	35	20	700
MATHEMATICS	10	20	200
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	35	15	420
PERSONAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	40	15	600
SOCIAL STUDIES	45	15	660
ART	20	30	600
OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS	50	20	1,000
AUDIO-VISUAL SUPPORT	10	45	450
CURRICULUM JOURNALS	6	45	270
TEACHER RESOURCES	15	25	375
<b>Total Estimated Cost:</b>			<b>\$5875</b>

Figure 12.4: A segment from a program budget.

Notice the sparseness of the descriptions, and the way the statements link to user needs. The school librarian needs to show that the collection is there for users, so that the funding group or individual realizes the implications of refusing to support this. The review of the current collection also links to this concern: by outlining the current average resource provision, the reader gains a much better understanding of the issues involved. The costs could be broken down into further detail, if one wished, although this is probably overkill. A reader will gain sufficient information from this succinct description. The goal is to give a picture, without obscuring it with too much detail.

A strategy some school librarians use is to combine the program budget submission with a summarizing line-item budget. The latter summary budget becomes the front summary, while the program budget offers the more specific detail. This can be an effective means of providing a succinct format, and further justification in one package. While this overview provides a general description of program budgeting, other examples and discussions such as those by Debowski (1989) and Healey (1990) can offer some additional perspectives.

### Predicting future usage of electronic services

An area that has gained increasing importance is the estimation of electronic service costs. The collection plan can offer a good vision of where the physical collection should head, but is less effective in determining the escalating costs of electronic services and subscriptions.

It is important that the school librarian maintains a record of costs associated with providing electronic services. As more users become increasingly reliant on the Internet and external search services, the budget will reflect a substantial increase in payments to information providers for information sources and access to information services. The school librarian needs to be able to predict the incremental growth rate, so that costs can be accurately estimated. Accurate records of past costs and usage should be maintained, so that the rate of growth in access by the library

population can be identified. This rate of change, and evolving costs of these services can assist in predicting the demand which will be experienced in the coming year. Initially, a simple calculation can be used to estimate the likely costs, based on past patterns: percentage increase in usage in last year x estimated cost of services.

With increasing online experience, and the likelihood of a plateauing in user demand, these predictions will become less likely to be crystal ball gazing, and more akin to good financial estimation.

While some costs are predictable and fixed, many more services are developing “pay as you use” options, which are difficult to estimate initially (Tenopir, 1998). An alternative funding strategy can be the use of group licensing with other school libraries in the region (Sanville, 1999). This enables long-term budgeting for information services, and provides stronger predictability of key electronic service costs. However, it requires careful planning and negotiation to achieve these gains.

License fees, service contracts and maintenance fees must all be predicted and managed in the budget. Careful monitoring of patterns is necessary as the library finances move to these more flexible forms of service delivery.

Despite good or innovative planning, it may be found that the costs outstrip the funds available in a given year. In this situation, users may need to help fund the service, or a base provision might be established. Once users exceed their allowance, they might be asked to contribute to the costs. Obviously, this is not the preferred option. Users in schools have a right to expect a basic level of information service - including resources from external sources. On the other hand, the prediction of future demand is difficult to extrapolate until sufficient data is available. The school librarian needs to use the data available, and to estimate increasing demand as accurately as possible.

### **Determining budget allocations**

When the funds are finally allocated, the school librarian needs to make some final judgments. If the funds are exactly those

requested, the allocations are a simple process of splitting them into the funding areas that were documented.

Receiving much lower funding than requested requires more intensive decision-making: the school librarian needs to decide how the reductions will be determined. One option is to reduce the amount of support to each area - by 10 per cent for example. This spreads the misfortune evenly.

Another option is to identify those programs that are of lower priority, and to remove these from the budget. This doesn't mean they are lost. Special funding may be requested from other bodies. The parent body in the school may be very keen to provide special funding for a particular project. Commercial organizations in the community may be keen to contribute - if their name is prominently displayed, and school members are asked to use their services.

External grants can be another source of funding. There are often advertisements for applications for grants. The school librarian can monitor these, and may see opportunities that can be linked to the school learning activities. By submitting a grant application, money for a particular project may be obtained. Grant writing is partly a matter of restating needs to reflect the grant parameters, and can often be used to help the school develop particular services which they otherwise could not afford. Technology is a very obvious area for lobbying and grant support. It is easy to develop proposals that justify funds to try out new services in the school, and these funding bodies will then supply the resources to achieve this. This is an increasingly viable option for the school librarian.

There is increasing recognition of the need for library fundraising and lobbying. Gerhardt (1995) raises some important ethical issues concerning the use of business sponsoring. Other guidelines on identifying funding sources, have been published, and may prove useful (e.g. Epler, 1993). Public libraries have battled funding crises for some years, and have developed a number of innovative strategies for increasing their profiles and raising (Craft, 1999). School libraries which are using these strategies are discovering many financial and profiling benefits from these strategies (e.g. Politzer, 1999).

If these alternative funding options are not available, the school librarian needs to identify the main collection priorities. Lessened funding may lead to a reduction in collection scope. The 'luxury' services may be limited or omitted for the year. If this option is chosen, make sure that the users are advised as to why they cannot be supported in this area. The goal is to have a strong lobby group in the school the next financial year, so that there is stronger recognition of the need to support the school librarian's request for funds. Users need to relate services to funding, and to see that there is a direct link. The other possible outcome of this course of action is that the users may elect to contribute funds to maintain their areas of need. This is obviously beneficial, in that it provides more financial resources to the library, and engenders greater ownership by the users, thereby creating stronger links between user and library.

### **Maintaining budget allocation accountability**

Once the collection budget is broken down into its component elements, it needs to be managed appropriately. It is not acceptable to submit a budget and to gain the funding, only to spend the money on unrelated areas. The money needs to be spent according to the stated plan.

One method of ensuring this occurs is to use an automated acquisition system. These are offered with most library automation systems, but are often ignored by school librarians because they are an additional cost. Their benefits are quite substantial once accountable budgeting is introduced. Most offer the option of recording how much money is allocated to a funding area. This may be left as a broad category, such as a subject area, or may be more specifically broken down into sub-categories, such as curriculum topics or strands. The school librarian determines the funding allocations based on the budget, and incorporates these into the acquisition listing. Each item ordered for the library is then checked against the budget category and related allocation. Funds must be present for the order to be placed. The system records the cost against the stipulated cost center, and the budget

management process is easily controlled. When the money is gone, the system will note the fact, and decisions can then be made about re-routing funding, or stopping expenditure in that area.

Another big advantage of these acquisition systems is that reports of expenditure are easily obtained. The school librarian can prepare an annual report documenting where and how the funds were expended. Cost center areas can be advised of the funds used to service their needs, and the whole accountability issue is much more highly evident. This emphasizes the professional and competent funding management practices followed by the school librarian.

### **Conclusion**

Budgeting is an integral component of collection management. Without careful identification of need and planning for collection growth, the library will flounder, and become an unmanageable conglomeration. The accountability of the school librarian needs to be evident to all members of the school community, and should ensure that the core user needs are well-supported. In addition, the school librarian needs to start investigating more creative ways of generating funds. Selling the library's importance to its users by demonstrating how library funds are spent is a most appropriate way to start.