

## Periodicals and Space Constraints

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In the fall of 1987 the Good Library on the Goshen College campus turned 20 years old. In those 20 years many changes have taken place—both in the library world and in the college curriculum. The phenomenal rate of publication of both books and periodicals is just one of those changes which have concerned the librarians in the Good Library as in other libraries throughout the country. Seven years ago the librarians embarked on a drastic weeding program for books. (Over those seven years 21,080 volumes were added to the collection, and 21,132 were withdrawn, for a net growth of 52 volumes.) This, along with careful monitoring of the present collection and the acquisition of some new shelving, has given space for 5-10 years of growth for books.

The space allotted for periodicals has been another concern and is now being addressed. As librarians know, the periodical collection expands at an overwhelming rate. When a new issue arrives, it is added to the collection; whereas, when a new edition of a book is added, the previous edition can frequently be discarded. Back

issues of periodicals are often as important as the current issue. Since no new space seemed to be available to the Good Library in the next 5-10 years, the librarians initiated an extensive periodical review program in the winter of 1989.

To understand the philosophy and process of the weeding program, some background concerning the library is needed. Goshen College is a small private liberal arts institution committed to undergraduate education and with approximately 1,000 full-time students. During the last eight years a close working relationship between the librarians and most subject departments has developed through the library's instruction program and librarian-teaching faculty liaison activities. During the book weeding program, close cooperation developed between librarians and faculty, and it was only natural that this continue when reviewing periodicals.

A brief explanation of the library materials budget is helpful. The budget is first divided 65%-35%, with the 65% going directly to departments. This money to departments is allocated using a formula

based on current departments' instructional use of the library, student credit hours, faculty FTE, average cost of books and periodicals for that subject, etc. Each department, in consultation with its liaison librarian, uses its portion of the library budget for periodicals and books as it feels necessary. Periodical subscriptions are considered to be long-term, not to be changed capriciously. Faculty need to be aware that microform issues of periodical backfiles are often easier to obtain than older books, which are often out-of-print. Therefore, although journals are vital for information on current research, book funds that are cut too far can have a harmful effect on library holdings that is more permanent than a drop in current periodical subscriptions.

At the beginning of the review program one arbitrary decision was made. The library had some remote storage available. It was decided that any backfiles of titles kept before 1960 would be relegated to this storage area. By setting this arbitrary cut-off date, the task of student assistants who do much of the retrieval of requested back issues was made easier.

Many articles currently appear about evaluation of periodicals based on subscription cost. The process in the Good Library included cost evaluation, but the underlying issue was the scarcity of storage space. In light of that, it was felt that a request for extra money for microforms had a better chance of success than a request for money for construction. Also, in the past year money had been received for a new copier to make high quality paper copies from microforms. Students and faculty still were often reluctant to use microforms, but better paper copies did

help in their acceptance of this format. Good Library currently holds dual subscriptions— paper and microform— to 530 of the 780 periodicals received. These paper copies are held 2 to 5 years and then discarded.

The review program concerned space. The goal of the process was to utilize the resources available to the best advantage, developing a periodical collection that was relevant to the needs of students in the current curriculum. It was felt that the periodical budget would be maintained at the present level which requires a continual evaluation of titles but not necessarily drastic cuts. Deselection was not necessarily required; however, for some departments this was a result. It was realized that often it is cheaper to use interlibrary loan in an undergraduate institution than to maintain the space for storage.

The periodical review developed along two lines— current subscriptions with their backfiles, and backfiles of titles no longer being received. At this point two librarians were involved, each working at one of the phases. Various options were available. Current subscriptions were analyzed in light of the following questions. Were these titles still relevant for the department being charged? Was a long backrun actually needed by students in an undergraduate institution? If so, could microform replace the paper copies? (It is noted that most published use and citation studies refer to needs of researchers and graduate students. Determining the length of backruns for those patrons will over-satisfy undergraduates.) The same type of questions were asked about titles no longer being received.

The librarian working with

current subscriptions worked with one subject department at a time. A list was compiled of all titles currently received for that subject department's budget. The department was asked to evaluate its list of titles using the following information:

- the present holdings indexing (years covered by which indexes in the Good Library)
- cost and availability of microform
- circulation, frequency, and cost of subscription
- evaluative remarks (e.g. Katz, *Magazines for Libraries* or subject guides to the literature)
- library circulation of back issues for the past three years\*

The process had several advantages. Sometimes a department did not realize that the library received a certain title. A few titles were questioned because they were no longer useful to the present curriculum, and new titles were sought to replace low-use titles. Faculty often saw the correlation between indexing and circulation statistics. During the process some journals were "discovered" by the faculty. These were kept on a trial basis to see if they would be used more after faculty were aware of them.

Along with a general evaluation of the current list of journals, faculty also were asked to comment on the holdings of backruns. It was reasoned that some titles were of little use to undergraduates after 5-

10 years. Some titles cover basically current topics. In many areas undergraduates do not do extensive research. The library's indexes did not cover all the back issues. For these reasons some backrun titles were shown to be needed, then a microformat was considered. In most areas this was chosen, though in obvious areas such as art, the paper copy was retained. For some titles bound volumes were involved. Here, the librarian had to decide whether the cost of the microform versus storage costs merited the format transformation.

The librarian working with titles no longer being received used a somewhat different approach. The periodical checklist was evaluated title by title. For each title no longer being received the following information was gathered and analyzed:

- shelf space used
- condition and format (bound, unbound, microform)
- cost and availability of microform
- indexing

Assessment from Katz or subject guides to the literature was also considered. A list was drawn up of all titles that were candidates for discarding. The list was sent to all faculty and librarians for comments. A decision was then made regarding the final destination of a title. In many cases faculty members were satisfied to receive for their personal files the issues being discarded.

The above process worked well for the Good Library. Difficult decisions were made concerning backruns. Dialogue with faculty had many advantages in making them aware of accessible material. The librarian was able to make use of the facts available concerning each title; teaching faculty made use of their subject expertise and knowl-

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\* The Good Library has closed access for its back issues of periodicals. Therefore, this last information was easy to obtain from request slips.

edge of the department's curriculum. However, the process was long and time-consuming. Time spent on developing a strategy for periodicals meant time taken from some other library activity. The net result is a continuous re-evaluation process. Academic programs continually alter focus and new periodicals constantly appear.

The process just described illustrates the need for a written policy for both acquisition and deselection of periodicals in the Good Library. With the procedures

that were used, the elements are now available. With a written policy, conflict between faculty and librarians may not be averted but there would exist a frame of reference to be consulted when actions are questioned. A written policy would give us a plan that could be used if cuts need to be made in the future. These cuts may still cause hard feelings but cannot be viewed as arbitrary and unexpected. The elements of such a plan have been developed through dialogue between teaching faculty and librarians.