

NASIG Newsletter

Vol. 26, no. 1

March 2011

eISSN 1542-3417

Other Serials & E-Resources News

Is Selection Dead? The Rise of Collection Management and the Twilight of Selection: Report on ALA ALCTS Collection Management and Development Section MidWinter Forum San Diego, California

Reported by Cory Tucker, Head of Collection Management, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The forum provided the opportunity for speakers to address the perceived shift from collection development to collection management. More specifically, is selection by librarians—the traditional method for building library collections—going to be replaced through other methods of collection building, such as patron-driven acquisitions? The four speakers for the forum were:

- Rick Anderson, Associate Director for Scholarly Resources and Collections at the University of Utah
- Stephen Bosch, Budget and Licensing Librarian at the University of Arizona
- Nancy Gibbs, Department Head of Acquisitions at Duke University
- Reeta Sinha, Senior Collection Development Manager at YBP Library Services

Rick Anderson began the forum with the presentation title “Selection is Not Dead, but the Selector Is.”

Anderson initially discussed the changing evolution of the scholarly information environment, where today the emphasis is on whether the document is available or not. Anderson listed three factors that would be changing the landscape of scholarly information: declining budgets, digital collections (for example,

Google Books and HathiTrust), and patron-driven acquisitions. The current environment of scholarly information has certain realities, one of which is libraries are trying to guess what users want and “we’re nearly wrong half the time.” With the economic crisis, waste is not looked upon favorably, so we cannot afford to be guessing. Some solutions offered by Anderson include sharing resources (for example, HathiTrust, which is sharing cost of archiving content and making it accessible), exposing as many books as we can to the patron and letting them decide (preference for e-book format), and purchasing journal articles “by the drink” and getting away from the “big deal.”

The second speaker was Stephen Bosch, who pointed to the fact that selection is affected by several factors. These factors include: decreasing library budgets and economic issues; network level access and discovery, with decreasing patron need of localized collections; and the abundant nature of information. In addition to the above factors, the “big deal” and patron-driven acquisitions are “furthering the deterioration of selection.” Bosch points out that in the future, there will not be selection as we see it currently, but there will be a need for resource management, which requires a wider range of professional skills.

The third speaker, Nancy Gibbs, had a different spin on the traditional model selection. Gibbs stated that selection is not dead, but “morphed.” Gibbs believes that pre-selection is the new selection, and this change has been brought into effect by four things: patron-driven purchasing, approval plans, journal and book

packages, and cooperative purchasing of resources via consortia. These new methods for building collections do shift the selection of materials, and everyone is involved in managing the collection. Librarians' roles have shifted as well; in addition to selection, librarians are working on the reference desk, participating in instruction, writing grants, and so on.

The final speaker of the forum was Reeta Sinha. Sinha was at the other end of the spectrum. Sinha believes selection is still alive, but is in danger. This stems from the fact that if a library collection experiences a lack of use, the view is selectors "got it wrong," "don't know what they are doing," or "don't know what their patrons need." This is not always the case. The role of collection development "begins and ends with understanding the needs of users, the institutional

environment, and trends in assigned disciplines, budgetary constraints, and evaluation quality of content." Collection development and management has always been about the patron. Selectors spend years getting to know the needs of the patrons, and this can coincide with patron-driven acquisition and other new developments. Sinha noted librarians are performing other job duties and may not have adequate time to devote to collections. In the past, libraries have faced economic crises and have gone through many changes, but collection management and development has adapted and will continue to do so.

There are two additional reports on this forum, one from Josh Hadro in [Library Journal](#) and Amy Fry on the [ACRLog](#).