Chapter 14
Asking the Right Questions, Finding the Right Answers:
Evaluating, Selecting, and Maintaining Academic Nursing Collections

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents an overview of collection development in support of academic nursing populations, programs, curriculums, and research, focusing in particular on evaluation, selection, and maintenance. Crucial factors to consider and tools and resources to facilitate nursing collection development decisions will be discussed. Evaluation criteria to assist with the selection of potential materials will also be outlined. Finally, an overview of collection maintenance issues, including withdrawals, gifts and free materials, and digitization will be provided. Future directions are also briefly considered. Topics covered in this chapter should provide academic institutions interested in building or maintaining nursing collections with applicable guidelines and best practices.

INTRODUCTION

Approaches to nursing collection development vary greatly from institution to intuition. Just as academic nursing programs and curriculums have their own distinct characteristics, the academic libraries and nursing collections that support these programs also have unique differences. Although libraries approach it with different perspectives and practices, the purpose of nursing collection development in academic settings should be the same. It should support the needs of the institution's nursing population, programs, curriculum, and research.

Nursing is a complex subject that encompasses many sub-topics. It would be impossible to cover collection development for all of these topics in one book chapter. Using information from collection development texts and articles, and the experiences of a nursing librarian at a large, public university in the Midwestern United States, the aim of this chapter is to provide readers with an overview of academic nursing collection development. Specifically, the evaluation, selection, and maintenance of academic nursing collections will be discussed. It should be noted that although this chapter is written from the perspective of one academic nursing librarian and focuses on academic nursing collections, some of the topics covered may be relevant to other academic collections and/or nursing collections outside of the academic setting.

BACKGROUND

Collection Development Definitions and Resources

There are many different definitions for collection development, also known as collection management. Evans and Saponaro (2005) define collection development as "the process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a library's materials collection in terms of patron needs and community resources, and attempting to correct existing weaknesses, if any" (p. 7). Johnson (2004) describes collection development as "the thoughtful process of developing a library collection in response to institutional priorities and community or user needs or interests" (p. 1). Finally, Disher (2007) defines collection development as "the act of building a coherently connected selection of appropriate items intended to serve an easily identifiable body of users" (p.2). Although these definitions are different, all three focus on selecting items for a collection in order to meet the needs of library users or patrons.

As an integral part of libraries, the subject of collection development is covered quite comprehensively in library and information science resources. There are many texts that provide thorough overviews of collection development in libraries (Disher, 2007; Evans & Saponaro, 2005; Johnson, 2004). Collection development texts like these explore many aspects of collection development and explain how policies and practices vary in different library and information settings. As the number of electronic resources selected by libraries increases, so do issues and questions related to collection development for these resources. Books dedicated solely to discussing electronic collection development have been published to help address the many issues and questions that accompany the selection of electronic resources for a library's collection (Kovacs & Robinson, 2004; Lee, 2002). Articles focusing on collection development are very prevalent in the library and information science literature. A keyword search in the Library, Information Science, and Technology Abstracts (LISTA) database for *collection development* retrieves 7,861 citations while a subject heading search for *collection development (libraries)* retrieves 4,562 citations.

Although some information from general collection development resources can be applied to nursing, there are several health sciences and nursing collection development resources that provide more subject-specific guidance. Perhaps the most recent is *The Medical Library Association's Master Guide to Authoritative Information Resources in the Health Sciences* (Thompson, Higa, Carrigan, & Tobia, 2011). This book contains two chapters dedicated to listing core nursing resources for many nursing specialties. A similar, but older text listing nursing resources by subject or specialty is *Core Collection in Nursing and the Allied Health Sciences* (Peretz, Stephan, & Terry, 1990). An extensive bibliography for the area of nursing research is provided in a text by Clamp, Gough, and Land (2004). Two other texts describe various aspects of collection

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