

Chapter 12

Balancing the Creative and Professional: Collecting For Interior and Fashion Design

Gwen Vredevoogd
Marymount University, USA

ABSTRACT

While a solid fine art and art history library collection will certainly support design programs to some extent, there will be other needs as well that are specific to these disciplines. The work of faculty and students in the applied arts programs of interior and fashion design is both creative and practical, thus it can be difficult to identify how research occurs within the creative process and what resources designers will require. Librarians need to be resourceful to support design students and faculty because qualitative reviews are rare and very little has been written on collection development in support of design and applied arts programs.

INTRODUCTION

Call it on-the-job training, or being “thrown to the wolves,” taking on library collection development in a new subject, whether or not one has the relevant educational background, is a daunting task, and it seems to be a necessity in most libraries. A good librarian can pick up a new subject area, learn by doing, ask a lot of questions, and find resources to help to fill in what he or she does not know yet. But what if there really are very few resources to turn to? In the case of design and applied arts, reviews are few and far between, and

the usual tools librarians count on often overlook design as a subject.

Design and applied arts collections are developed and maintained to support the research, teaching, and learning of professional programs such as interior design and fashion design. While there are decorative arts like pottery, jewelry, and fiber arts for example that many colleges and universities have as individual courses, this chapter will focus on interior design and fashion design because these are disciplines that are likely to be found as degree granting, academic programs. Primarily, these programs are offered

at the undergraduate level, but programs can also be found at the graduate level. The work of these professional programs is both creative and quite practical, rather than scientific or clinical, so it can be difficult to identify how research occurs in the creative process and what resources are needed. As a result, such programs can sometimes be ignored when it comes to collection development. An art history and fine art library will support the work of designers up to a point, but design students and faculty also need information specific to their discipline.

BACKGROUND

Guidance from the Literature

A search through the library literature for materials about collection development for design and applied arts subjects reveals almost nothing. While there is a wealth of information on collection development for related subjects such as fine art and art history, there is relatively little about selecting and managing a collection specifically in support of design and applied arts programs. Regarding interior design, there have been a few articles about home decoration and how-to collections and many articles about the interior design of specific libraries, but nothing written on collections to support academic programs. Like interior design, fashion design articles tend to run more toward public library collecting rather than materials that a design student would find helpful. Frederiksen's (2006) article on fashion collecting is the only one that provides substantive information, with current collection suggestions on fashion theory, haute couture, street fashion, and historic costume. One strategy for addressing this lack of specific information is to use a trusted general source on collection development such as the second edition of Peggy Johnson's *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management* (2009), and apply it to design and

applied arts. The additional readings at the end of this chapter include other broad sources on collection development and related readings that may also be helpful. In the remaining sections of this chapter, the author will seek to augment these sources by providing guidance on collecting practices specific to the support of interior and fashion design programs.

Collection Planning and Policies

It is of utmost importance for a librarian to know what is being taught in the programs his or her library supports, what the assignments require, what software faculty members are using in the classroom, and which artists/designers/architects they consider to be important. Developing a relationship with faculty in the design programs will be invaluable in selecting materials to support their programs. Getting to know faculty, attending their openings, checking their syllabi for suggested readings, encouraging suggestions about specific titles, and asking them often what the library can do to support their work in the classroom can help to further this relationship. They will most likely appreciate being asked and are often more than willing to provide input and suggest materials.

Faculty can also provide input on the appropriate level at which materials should be collected for various subjects. As curriculum changes are made over the years, it is important to review these levels from time to time to make sure purchasing continues to meet program needs. Allow what is happening in the classroom as well as observed patterns of use within the library to inform the selection of materials. Most library systems can provide circulation statistics by call number. These can be used to determine whether materials with publication dates in a particular range (for example, in the last five years) are being checked out and, if necessary, allocations and purchasing can be adjusted accordingly.

It is important to avoid geographic limitations when selecting design materials. Design ideas and

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