Chapter 15
Veterinary Medicine:
All Collections Great and Small

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to present the specifics of veterinary collection development within the context of general health sciences collection development. A basic understanding of the principles of collection development and its processes is assumed. The chapter provides historical background and current information on external forces that impact veterinary collections. It presents important aspects of the veterinary literature and the community of veterinary libraries and explains their impact on veterinary collection development. The chapter provides practical advice and strategies for developing and maintaining veterinary collections. It discusses important trends and future issues in veterinary collection development, including the need for an active advocacy role for veterinary collection librarians.

INTRODUCTION

With only twenty-eight veterinary schools in the United States, veterinary libraries represent an interesting case study in collection development. Veterinary libraries face many of the same challenges as any other academic or special library, such as space and budget challenges, materials inflation, and the consolidation of publishers, but they also face a special set of challenges in dealing with the nature of the veterinary literature and their small number of geographically dispersed colleague libraries. The strong tradition of cooperation and information sharing among veterinary librarians, both nationally and internationally, serves to mitigate these challenges.

In addition to the typical academic veterinary library collection development context, there are numerous other types of libraries that collect in veterinary medicine. These include academic

libraries serving pre-veterinary or biomedical sciences, animal science and equestrian programs, libraries serving veterinary technology training programs in community colleges and universities, zoo and aquarium libraries, and special libraries within drug companies and pet food companies. Professional practice specialty training continues beyond the veterinary school into internship and residency training programs at over 150 veterinary hospitals, most of which are not associated with universities and must also collect in veterinary medicine.

The scope of materials in an academic veterinary medicine collection is strongly influenced by the availability of resources in human medicine, agriculture, and life sciences. The collection must support the professional veterinary curriculum both in the classroom and in the clinical teaching arena. The academic veterinary library collection also often supports veterinary teaching hospitals, state diagnostic laboratories, pathology and parasitology departments, and veterinary and comparative medicine research programs.

This chapter provides an overview of collection development in veterinary medicine in the United States. It builds on standard concepts and operations in collection development to emphasize what is different or special in the context of the veterinary medical literature and the veterinary medical library. It builds on the principles and practices of collection development in health sciences libraries to provide practical advice and strategies relative to collection development for veterinary medicine.

BACKGROUND

Evolution of US Veterinary Medical Education

Formal veterinary medical education in the United States began with privately operated, for-profit institutions located in major cities. Inadequate

curricula and entry requirements that could not meet the developing national accreditation standards, lack of support from the U.S. government, and a drop in enrollment due to the decline in horse-drawn transportation and World War I, led to the closing of proprietary colleges before 1927 (Miller, 1981; Smith, 2010). There is no record of libraries associated with these private institutions, and sadly, much of their history has been lost (Boyd, 2011).

Many current U.S. veterinary schools are based at large universities, aided by land grant funding which began with the Morrill Act of 1862. Located in rural communities, new veterinary colleges founded at land grant institutions placed priority on agricultural animal medical management and associated public health issues (Smith, 2010). These public veterinary colleges began to emerge with Iowa State in 1879 and developed slowly. Only 10 schools were established before World War II so the majority of U.S. veterinary schools and their libraries are relatively young. This has major implications for the preservation of the historical record for United Sates veterinary education and practice.

Traditionally, the four-year veterinary medical curriculum has consisted of three years of pre-clinical courses, taught using primarily didactic, lecture-based forms of instruction, followed by a fourth year of hands-on, clinical rotations. Two learning methods introduced in the human medicine curriculum, problem-based learning, and evidence-based practice are being transplanted into veterinary curricula.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) emphasizes self-directed, group learning and integrates the basic sciences into patient cases (Dodd, 2007) to solve a defined problem. During the 1980s and 1990s, PBL became accepted in medical schools across America and in Europe (Savery, 2006). The inclusion of PBL is increasing in veterinary schools; a small number of schools use it as the predominant method of instruction for their pre-clinical curriculum.

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