Chapter 22
Collection Development in Nursing:
Weeding for Collection Strength

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ABSTRACT

Identifying nursing items to purchase for a library collection can be a daunting task, especially since the materials become dated very quickly, and because, with limited budgets, librarians need to prioritize purchases. The Systematic Weeding to Identify Purchases (SWIPE) method employs a model of systematic weeding and identification of purchases that combines faculty subject expertise and librarian searching skills. With faculty input and circulation data, a librarian using SWIPE can identify items to withdraw from the collection, while also identifying new editions and titles to purchase in a content area, such as nursing. The SWIPE method allows librarians with little subject background to purchase appropriate and necessary new titles in a highly efficient manner.

INTRODUCTION

St. John Fisher College is a small liberal arts college in upstate New York that offers 32 academic majors, 12 graduate and three doctoral programs serving roughly 4,000 full time equivalent students. The college has a robust nursing program that offers courses of study for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students, for a total of nearly 460 students (St. John Fisher College, 2009). Lavery Library is the sole library on campus; therefore, all nursing and health-related materials are centralized in one building. The library works on a liaison system. Each department or school is assigned to a single librarian. That librarian conducts library instruction and manages collection development for assigned areas. The librarian assigned to the Wegman's School of Nursing (hereafter referred to as the nursing librarian) helps to coordinate the purchasing of all nursing materials with the advice of a nursing school faculty member. The nursing librarian, who is also the liaison to the School of Pharmacy and the departments of biology, chemistry, and

physics, does not have a formal background in any of these subjects. Therefore, any collection development strategy employed by the nursing librarian must not only take into consideration this lack of content knowledge, but also must be scalable, flexible, and have a built-in mechanism for prioritizing in order for it to be successfully and continually implemented by the nursing librarian.

This chapter focuses on a collection development strategy for weeding and purchasing monographic materials in the field of nursing. While originally created to assist a librarian with little background in the subject, the strategy will work for a seasoned nursing librarian as well. This collection development approach capitalizes on the subject expertise of the nursing school faculty members and the searching skills of the librarian. Since nursing literature becomes outdated as health-related research advances, it is necessary to review the materials regularly. In a discussion with nursing faculty, instead of a large comprehensive weeding to be completed at regular intervals, such as every five years, it was decided to split the collection into smaller sections to be reviewed each semester, completing all of the sections within three years. These smaller sections would then be more manageable and personal to the faculty members, as they would match their specialties. For example, a weeding cycle that included pediatric resources would naturally involve the faculty members who teach pediatrics.

This chapter will identify the steps to create a continuous, systematic weeding schedule for nursing, show how to use the schedule to capitalize on weeding to identify items for purchase, and, finally how to efficiently translate the work into purchases with built-in prioritization.

BACKGROUND

In order to best place the SWIPE method in context, a review of collection development policies and weeding policies and practices is necessary. The SWIPE method combines the processes of weeding and collecting. It also addresses implementation questions not answered by many collection development policies and weeding policies.

Collection Development Policies

A common method for producing collection development policies is the Conspectus Model. "Conspectus means an overview or summary of collection strength and collecting intensities – arranged by subject, classification scheme, or combination of either, and containing standardized codes for collection or collecting levels and languages of materials collected" (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2001, p. 3). They may also include degrees and programs supported, geographic coverage, and formats collected. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2001) provides a booklet online describing how to create a collection development policy using the Conspectus Methodology Guidelines. There are several policies available online that outline the programs and priorities of a given library for collection development in nursing (Kent State University Libraries, 2011; Central Texas College, 2011).

These types of policies create a great framework for collection development. If we were to compare building a house and building a collection, the classic collection development policy built on a conspectus model would tell us the materials we want to use to make our house, for example bricks, and the particular attributes of the brick: rectangular, uniform size, red. In addition, a fully developed conspectus model collection development policy would dictate collection depth that would represent a library's collecting activities or goal. For instance, nursing could be coded as a Level 3, instructional or study level, indicating the goal of collecting for general use as well as the undergraduate and beginning graduate. Following our example above concerning bricks, we would

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