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# Collection Development in Canadian Studies: A Practical Model

Therrin C. Dahlin

**ABSTRACT.** It is often a difficult task to develop a Canadian studies library collection. As with any area studies collection, where the focus is on a geographic region rather than a particular discipline, a broad range of subjects typically must be covered. To add to the difficulty, Canadian materials are published in both English and French. And if the library is located in the United States, the librarian or bibliographer is faced with the inconvenience of coping with two different national currencies. The complexities inherent in Canadian studies cloud the collection development picture and obscure the appropriate direction to take. With the variety of paths that present themselves and much ground to cover, forming a conceptual road map to follow with confidence is a challenge.

This article will attempt to assist librarians and bibliographers in developing Canadian studies collections. A practical model (a conceptual road map) will be suggested along with specific steps that serve as useful guides in applying the collection development process to Canadian studies. Although the model could apply to a Canadian studies collection in any type of library, academic libraries will be highlighted because the author's experience lies in that sector. Because of limitations in length and scope, breadth will be emphasized rather than depth of subject treatment. Major themes will be treated briefly, and the reader referred to other sources for

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97

more in-depth coverage of particular topics. Emphasis will be placed on humanistic and social science disciplines, owing to their usual predominance in Canadian studies academic programs, and on collection development of print materials. The topic of non-print media materials for Canadian studies programs, although important, cannot be handled adequately within the scope of this piece.

### ***ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL***

Within the model, collection development is viewed as a more encompassing process than selection and acquisition of materials. The theoretical foundation for such an approach is a structural one based on the work of James Baughman. He outlines three major constructs that are essential to collection development:

(1) use — cluster of demands; (2) knowledge — cluster of disciplines, subjects, topics, and areas of study; and (3) librarianship — cluster of subject literature relationships. Collection development . . . is the intertwining of the concepts of planning, implementation, and evaluation. *Collection planning* is a design for accumulating documents that belong together as determined by the needs, goals, objectives, and priorities of the library. *Collection implementation* refers to the process of making documents accessible for use. *Collection evaluation* involves examining and judging with respect to goals and objectives.<sup>1</sup>

As pointed out by Herson and Purcell, although Baughman's model is a helpful theoretical construct, librarians need more specific guidelines in a collection development approach that will be useful in day-to-day operations.<sup>2</sup> Evans suggests such guidelines in a model that outlines six practical activities which form part of a dynamic, iterative cycle of collection development: community analysis, policies, selection, acquisition, weeding, and evaluation.<sup>3</sup> Evans' six elements fit nicely with Baughman's theory. Community analysis and policy-setting are planning activities, selection and acquisition lead to collection implementation, and weeding and evaluation involve collection evaluation.

Evans' six activities will be adapted to the practice of developing a Canadian studies collection. Using Evans' approach provides the Canadian studies bibliographer with a straightforward set of steps that can be followed with some confidence. These steps provide a place to start and, when the first cycle is completed, they point the way to enhanced professional skill and improved collections in the future. Of course, this rudimentary model of collection development is not meant to be used in a rigid fashion, and the steps are not entirely sequential. In a dynamic process, individual activities tend to overlap and boundaries begin to blur.

### **COMMUNITY ANALYSIS**

The approach suggested in this article is a planning approach to collection development. Before starting a community analysis, a librarian must consider national, regional, and library goals and goals specific to the Canadian studies collection, if any. It is obvious but true that collection development goals should be realistic and consistent with goals from higher organizational echelons. The cycle recommended by Evans is similar to a planning cycle; at the beginning of a new cycle, goals should be identified or reviewed and changed as need be to respond to local informational needs.<sup>4</sup>

Proper planning for collection development must be based on knowledge of the bibliographic structure of Canadian studies and of the actual and potential users of the collection. Community analysis is the technique used to gather data about the information needs of the users of the Canadian studies collection. The community of users for an academic library is frequently composed of faculty and students and perhaps some local non-university patrons.

Evans proposes a rather elaborate and formal method for community analysis that focuses on community needs for the library as a whole.<sup>5</sup> For the librarian recently introduced to the rigors of collection assessments, an elaborate community analysis would likely be overwhelming. A more modest analysis focusing on needs for Canadian studies information can be very helpful in establishing directions for future collection development decisions. Preliminary attempts to gather data from key informants such as deans, department chairs, and faculty with curricular or research interests

in Canadian topics should be enlightening. More ambitious and systematic analyses might be carried out by experienced librarians or by the less initiated after experiencing one or more collection development cycles. The Evans volume provides a useful, if somewhat dated, bibliography of sources on community analysis that can serve as a beginning point for more study on the subject.<sup>6</sup>

### **COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

The collection development policy statement is important for the development of any library collection, and it is particularly crucial for a Canadian studies collection. Without such a policy statement, the Canadiana collection may grow in arbitrary directions or directions not suited to the needs of patrons. A policy statement serves as an important guide for making selection decisions for monographs and serials from among the great variety of materials offered in an interdisciplinary field like Canadian studies. A well-crafted policy can provide direction and confidence for the Canadian studies bibliographer.

The collection development policy provides a plan that the library will follow to ensure that it achieves collection objectives derived from the community analysis. The plan should include several basic elements, although varying opinions exist concerning which elements are absolutely essential. As with any plan, the policy statement should be a dynamic document that will be examined periodically and will change as needs and conditions change.

Evans provides an outline for a collection development policy statement that is useful as a starting point and yet is general enough to allow tailoring to local needs. He suggests three elements in a formalized policy statement: an overview, a description of the details of subject areas and formats collected, and a summary of miscellaneous issues.<sup>7</sup> The overview should include a statement of institutional goals as these relate to the library, an identification of the groups to be served, the subject parameters of the collection, and a statement of the types of informational needs to be met by the collection. Next comes a detailed statement concerning the subjects and formats to be collected. This portion should specifically identify topical areas and sub-collections for collection development

and the priority of selection in each area. Many librarians use a four- or five-level ranking system of priorities for collecting in specific topics, ranging from minimal collecting to exhaustive effort. In addition, particular formats should be specified. Will more monographs or serials be selected? Will textbooks or media materials be actively sought? The last section of the policy statement should discuss intentions concerning the issues of gifts, weeding, replacements and duplicates, complaints and censorship, and evaluation.

Dowd is of some help in giving practical advice on how to draft a collection development policy statement.<sup>8</sup> Hernon and Purcell's book has examples of policy statements that focus on government documents.<sup>9</sup> And it is an excellent idea to look at the policy statements of more experienced colleagues for ideas.

### SELECTION

The debate over whether librarians should select books and periodicals based on quality of the materials or on user demand has raged on for years. Evans provides a fine historical summary of the debate in his book.<sup>10</sup> In this article the assumption is that selection decisions will be based primarily on user demand as identified in community analyses; however, experience and common sense also dictate adequate attention to scholarly and literary quality.

Once the collection development policy statement is complete, the day-to-day task of selecting the proper materials for the collection begins. For a Canadian studies librarian attempting to select appropriate materials for numerous subject areas, selection can be a perplexing task. A few selection tools will be suggested. Coverage of every selection tool in every potential collecting area is of course impossible in a brief treatment of the subject.

Selection activities are frequently divided into selection of current in-print publications and retrospective selection or collection building. For the benefit of the librarian striving to begin with a basic or core collection of Canadiana, retrospective selection will be examined first. *Canadian Studies Bibliographies*, produced by the Canadian Department of External Affairs, are some of the best sources to be used as a starting point for building a core collection of Canadian studies.<sup>11</sup> Now in their second edition, these bibliogra-

phies were created with the express purpose of aiding in the development of Canadian studies programs and library collections in other countries. These bibliographies are somewhat dated, but they provide excellent suggestions for selection in English and French, cover the most popular humanities and social science disciplines, and have specific information on microforms and important series.

The various editions of *Canadian Selection* form another group of selection aids that are invaluable. The first edition was produced in 1978 by Edith Jarvi, Isabel McLean, and Catharine MacKenzie.<sup>12</sup> It is directed toward public libraries, and yet it remains an excellent selection tool for any Canadian studies collection. In the front matter of the first edition there is a brief section on selection aids that should be read by any Canadian studies librarian. It distills substantial wisdom into a few pages. The next version is a 1977-1979 *Supplement*,<sup>13</sup> and this is followed by a second edition published in 1985.<sup>14</sup> The later editions have dropped the section on selection aids, but they continue to be helpful.

Of interest to the bibliographer is the production of large microform sets of important retrospective Canadiana collections. University Microfilms International, Micromedia, and the Canadian Library Association have many such items available. The sets tend to be somewhat expensive for the small library budget, but if one compares these sets with the extensive subject and title coverage available, they may be attractive to some institutions.

Of course, regional and national cooperative acquisition programs should not be neglected. It is important to become aware of what is available at other related libraries. Resources are wasted when there is undue duplication of materials readily available from nearby libraries.

*Canadiana*,<sup>15</sup> the national bibliography, and *Canadian Books in Print*<sup>16</sup> are useful selection tools, although *Canadian Books in Print* gives limited coverage of small presses and government publications. *Canadiana on Microfiche*<sup>17</sup> appears eleven times per year with an annual cumulation, and is useful in selecting current publications.

Interestingly, some Canadian books can be found in such familiar sources as *Choice*<sup>18</sup> and *Library Journal*.<sup>19</sup> Also, the major American standing order vendors typically pick up a fraction of Canadian

materials in their general programs. However, other more focused sources are much more productive for current selection. *Canadian Studies*,<sup>20</sup> published annually by the Association of Canadian Publishers and the Canadian Book Publishers Council, and *Current Canadian Books*<sup>21</sup> by John Coutts are very good sources for current imprints. *Canadian Book Review Annual*<sup>22</sup> is excellent for current book reviews. And Ryder's *Canadian Reference Sources*<sup>23</sup> is a helpful starting point for selecting reference works.

The Canadian federal government produces publications of general interest, but depository library status for Canadian documents is difficult to obtain. Happily, there are many items that are free or inexpensive to acquire. The Canadian Government Publishing Centre publishes a brief pamphlet, *Where and How to Obtain Canadian Government Publications*,<sup>24</sup> that is a real aid in purchasing Canadian documents. A more comprehensive source for identifying Canadian government documents, however, is the *Government of Canada Publications, Quarterly Catalogue*.<sup>25</sup> For libraries with less ambitious Canadian studies requirements, there is *Selected Titles*,<sup>26</sup> also produced by the Canadian Government Publishing Centre.

There are many other bibliographic sources of value to the Canadian studies librarian. Only a smattering of popular selection aids is listed here.

### ACQUISITION

Selection and acquisition activities are closely related. For purposes of this article, the work of acquisition is defined as the process of obtaining the items selected by bibliographers. Many Canadian studies bibliographers in larger libraries will have their selections acquired through fully or partially centralized acquisition programs. Thus, this article will not treat the process of acquisition in detail. Suffice it to say, the acquisition of Canadian studies materials is an important step in the collection development process.

A comment is relevant at this point. One of the complexities of collecting Canadian materials is that most of these materials must be acquired from a different country with a separate monetary system. A Canadian studies librarian can simplify communication and financial difficulties by utilizing the services of a U.S. dealer who



services Canadian publications, such as John Coutts Library Services of Lewiston, New York. The use of dealers is not a panacea for the difficulties encountered by Canadian studies librarians, but they can be very helpful in acquiring Canadian publications. U.S. dealers of course function within the U.S. postal and communication systems. They can be paid in U.S. dollars, a condition that simplifies the library's planning and accounting. Of course, dealers cannot control the vagaries of fluctuating currencies on the world money market.

### **COLLECTION EVALUATION AND WEEDING**

A valuable definition of collection evaluation is provided by Mosher:

Collection evaluation—the assessment of the utility of a library's collections to its users—is one of the essential functions of collection development. . . . Collection evaluations are . . . undertaken to identify unwanted duplicates and obsolete or very little used titles in order to control book stock growth and maximize the useful life of relatively high-cost active collection space.<sup>27</sup>

This definition implies a close relationship between collection evaluation and weeding. Because of this relationship, the two elements will be treated together, and weeding will be touched upon only lightly.

Collection evaluation can be carried out properly only if adequate planning and goal-setting have taken place. The purpose of evaluation is to diagnose problems and to insure that collection development goals are being met. However, goals need not be perfectly conceptualized to be of value; tentative goals are better than none. Collection development is a cyclical process, and goals may be re-examined and refined at a later date.

Collection evaluation can range from brief and simple studies to the elaborate and complex. Mosher outlines nine methods of evaluating collections: surveys and impressions, questioning users, numeric counts, formulas and standards, interlibrary loan analysis,

bibliographic checking, checking against catalogs of other libraries, use studies, and analysis of machine-readable cataloging data.<sup>28</sup> There is an extensive literature on the subject of performance measures for libraries. A current book by Blaine H. Hall, *Collection Assessment Manual for College and University Libraries*, is a good starting point.<sup>29</sup> Another important source for information on evaluation is F.W. Lancaster's classic work, *The Measurement and Evaluation of Library Services*.<sup>30</sup>

Weeding may be the farthest thing from the mind of a bibliographer concerned about having too few Canadian studies books. However, if the ultimate purpose of collection development is to create library collections that meet the information needs of a specified group of users, librarians cannot continue to build collections without being concerned about those items that no longer meet user needs. Criteria for weeding as well as for selection of materials should be included in the collection development policy statement. The practical pressures of limited funds and space must also be addressed in well-managed Canadian studies collections.

Howard F. McGaw notes that "weeding has been defined as the practice of discarding or transferring to storage superfluous copies, rarely used books, and materials no longer of use."<sup>31</sup> Stanley J. Slote's book, *Weeding Library Collections—II*, provides a useful manual for librarians conducting weeding projects.<sup>32</sup> The book is divided into two parts, one that gives background information on weeding practices, and another that gives step-by-step explanations of the major weeding methods. The book suggests three preferred methods of weeding: the book card method, the spine-marking method, and the historical reconstruction method. Sample forms for weeding projects are included in appendices.

### CONCLUSION

This article has presented information that will help Canadian studies bibliographers in carrying out their duties. The model presented provides a sound theoretical foundation, based on the work of Baughman,<sup>33</sup> for clear thinking about collection development. Evans'<sup>34</sup> six components of the collection development process build on Baughman's theory by furnishing specific steps that can be

followed by a Canadian studies bibliographer. Discussion of these six components has combined a planning perspective with advice about practical problems encountered in collection development for a multidisciplinary area studies field. The listing and description of key selection tools for Canadian studies should prove to be especially valuable. The approach outlined in this paper provides a starting point for thinking about Canadian studies collection development and lends some logic and structure to a process that often seems nebulous and difficult.

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