

Current Trends in Periodical Collections

In the spring of 1975 a survey of moderate-sized United States academic libraries was conducted to determine current trends in the development and control of periodical collections. Topics covered by the survey include selection of new subscriptions, claim procedures, obtaining replacement copies, use of microforms, open vs. closed stacks, shelf arrangement, circulation policy, and theft prevention. Results of the survey are presented and analyzed.

WHEN PREPARING TO MOVE to a new library building, it is not unusual for librarians to reevaluate present procedures and policies.

Such was the case at Youngstown State University Library prior to a recent move to new quarters. Whether or not to maintain the shelf arrangement presently used for bound periodicals and whether or not to "sensitize" all periodicals for use in the new electronic detection system were among the questions which came up for consideration. In order to determine how similar libraries deal with such questions, the serials librarian surveyed United States academic libraries of moderate size (those indicating holdings of 120,000 to 500,000 volumes in the 1972-73 *American Library Directory*). For the purposes of this survey, a periodical was defined as

a serial publication appearing or intended to appear indefinitely at regular intervals, generally more frequently than annually, each issue of which contains separate articles. (Annuals and numbered monographic series are excluded; newspapers are included.)

Two hundred questionnaires were sent, and 147 responses (74 percent) were received. Libraries were asked to indicate the number of bound volumes of periodicals in their collections as well as the number of periodical subscriptions received. The results showed medians of 37,000 bound volumes and 2,181 periodical subscriptions.

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DEVELOPMENT OF PERIODICAL COLLECTIONS

The Selection of New Subscriptions

Libraries were asked to identify the status of the individuals responsible for the selection and/or approval of new periodical subscriptions. The resulting data indicate that faculty participate in

the selection process in 95 percent of the libraries; students, on the other hand, play an active role in only 9 percent of the libraries; serials librarians select new titles in 58 percent of the libraries; finally, other librarians (such as collection development librarians) make selections in 48 percent of the institutions.

The library administrator is responsible for final approval of selections in 49 percent of the libraries. In only 29 percent of the libraries does the serials librarian have this responsibility. In those seventeen cases (12 percent) where the "faculty" are responsible for final approval, the department chairperson, dean, or department's library committee member is generally the person with this responsibility.

It should be noted that in some libraries several groups of persons (e.g., faculty, students) are involved in the selection and/or approval process.

Claim Procedures

Libraries were asked to describe their methods for claiming issues of titles ordered through a subscription agency. Seventy-seven libraries (52 percent) noted that the first claim and all subsequent claims are sent to the agency; twenty libraries (14 percent) stated that the first claim and all subsequent claims are sent to the publisher; eighteen libraries (12 percent) noted that the first claim is sent to the publisher and all subsequent claims to the agency; twelve libraries (8 percent) answered that the first claim is sent to the subscription agency with all subsequent claims to the publisher; sixteen libraries (11 percent) noted some "other" procedure was employed.

These data indicate that, when claiming issues, some libraries (34 percent) do not rely solely on their subscription agencies. In fact, 14 percent are not relying on their agencies for any help at

all in claiming issues. Since subscription agencies generally offer some type of assistance with claims, these data may imply some libraries' dissatisfaction with the claiming services of their subscription agencies. Frank Clasquin has provided a recent discussion of the library, agency, and publisher positions concerning claims.¹

Obtaining Replacement Copies

Serials librarians often face the problem of missing issues or volumes and the question arises: How soon should a replacement copy be ordered? How often has the serials librarian reordered an item only to find the missing original!

In view of this problem, the questionnaire asked: If a current issue of a title which you bind has been received but is now missing, how long do you wait before ordering a replacement? The same question was asked about bound volumes. The following results are based on the eighty-nine libraries responding to these questions.

Missing current issues are reordered much sooner than missing bound volumes. For example, thirty-nine libraries (43.8 percent) noted that they reorder current issues less than one month after they are reported missing; whereas, only nineteen libraries (21.3 percent) answered that they reorder bound volumes that soon. Forty-five libraries (50.4 percent) responded that they wait six months or longer (many wait longer than one year) before reordering a missing bound volume; but only thirteen libraries (14.6 percent) noted that they wait that long before reordering a current issue.

These data are not surprising. Librarians are very much aware that publishers' supplies of current issues may diminish rapidly and the sooner a missing current issue is reordered, the better. On the other hand, back volumes often

are difficult or impossible to obtain, whether they are ordered immediately or several months later. Furthermore, they are much more expensive than current issues, so one may wish to be absolutely certain that the missing volume is permanently lost (and not just temporarily misplaced) before a replacement volume is purchased.

The Use of Microforms

Libraries were asked whether or not they subscribe to any periodical titles in microform instead of binding. To this question, 128 libraries (87 percent) responded positively, and they were asked to indicate the number of titles subscribed to in microform and what criteria were used in selecting those titles.

Some of the criteria cited were frequently mutilated titles, infrequently used titles, bulky size of bound volumes, newspapers. Also, some libraries mentioned having both bound volumes and microform subscriptions for popular titles such as *Time*.

As far as the actual number of periodical subscriptions in microform are concerned, the data gathered show that 53 percent of the 147 libraries have twenty-five or fewer microform subscriptions, and only 21 percent have more than 100 subscriptions. Although some articles advocate the purchase of microforms instead of binding,² the above data indicate that many libraries still prefer binding.

On the other hand, microforms seem to be used quite frequently for filling in "gaps" in the bound volume collection. For example, 45 percent of the 147 libraries indicated they would purchase microforms to fill in a "gap"; 26 percent indicated they would purchase paper copy; 29 percent stated they might do either depending upon such variables as the number of volumes needed, whether or not the needed volumes were recent, and the cost.

Libraries were queried as to the location of their periodicals in microform.

In 126 libraries (86 percent) microforms are stored in a separate area; in eleven libraries (7 percent) bound volumes and microforms are shelved together; in five libraries (3 percent) some other arrangement is used.

Finally, of those libraries which do not shelve their microforms with their bound volumes, forty-four (30 percent) indicated they placed "dummies" (or similar indicators) on the bound volume shelves to indicate the availability of certain volumes in microform.

CONTROL OF PERIODICAL COLLECTIONS

Open vs. Closed Stacks

For their current issue stacks, 118 libraries (80 percent) indicated that their stacks are open, sixteen libraries (11 percent) indicated their stacks are closed, and thirteen libraries (9 percent) stated some "other" arrangement (often a combination of open and closed). For their bound volume stacks, 139 libraries (95 percent) noted open stacks, five libraries (3 percent) indicated closed stacks, and one library stated another arrangement was used.

Shelf Arrangement

Whether to arrange periodicals in alphabetical or classified order is an interesting question which has been discussed infrequently in the library literature.³⁻⁵ The survey asked libraries about their shelf arrangements with the following results.

On the question of shelf arrangement for current issues, 111 libraries (76 percent) arrange their issues alphabetically by title, 14 percent arrange their issues in call number order, 8 percent arrange their issues by subject (e.g., sciences, social sciences), and 1 percent arrange their issues by some other method.

The respondents were also asked if, in the past few years, their current issues had been arranged in some other way. Of the 111 libraries which presently

use the alphabetical arrangement, seven libraries (6 percent) answered yes. Of these seven libraries, four had used subject divisions, two had shelved current issues by call number, and one had separated government document periodicals from other periodicals. Of the twenty-one libraries which presently arrange their current issues by call number, ten libraries (48 percent) indicated they previously had used some other arrangement. Of these ten libraries, all but one indicated the prior use of an alphabetical arrangement.

No correlation was observed between the number of current subscriptions and the type of shelf arrangement used for current issues.

On the question of shelf arrangement for bound volumes, ninety-two libraries (63 percent) arrange bound volumes alphabetically by title, 33 percent arrange them in call number order, and 3 percent arrange them in some "other" way.

The survey asked if, in the past few years, bound volumes had been arranged any other way. Of the ninety-two libraries who presently shelve bound volumes alphabetically, six libraries (7 percent) responded positively. Four of these libraries indicated that their bound volumes were previously arranged in call number order. (Unfortunately, there was no distinction made between the Library of Congress Classification and the Dewey Decimal Classification.)

Of the forty-eight libraries which presently arrange their bound volumes in call number order, sixteen (33 percent) indicated that their bound volumes were previously arranged another way, with all but one indicating that this previous way was an alphabetical arrangement.

The above data would seem to indicate a greater likelihood of a library's changing its bound volume arrangement from alphabetical to call number, than

from call number to alphabetical.

Furthermore, the data collected seem to indicate a positive correlation between the size of a library and the likelihood of a library's arranging its bound volumes in call number order. For example, of the ninety-nine libraries reporting 70,000 or fewer bound volumes, 75 percent arrange their volumes alphabetically by title, 22 percent arrange them in call number order, and 3 percent arrange them in some "other" order. Of the eighteen libraries having more than 70,000 bound volumes, 72 percent arrange their bound volumes in call number order, and the remaining 28 percent arrange their bound volumes alphabetically by title.

Thirty-three libraries stated they shelve bound volumes and current issues together, and of this group nineteen libraries use an alphabetical arrangement and eleven libraries employ call number order.

Sixty-nine libraries (47 percent) indicated that two or more floors of their library building contain bound volumes of periodicals. Of these libraries, 33 percent stated that their bound volumes are interfiled with their books; 25 percent indicated that their bound volumes are in one collection spread among the floors but not interfiled with the book collection; 17 percent indicated that the more recent years of all titles (e.g., the most recent ten years) are on one floor and previous years are on another floor; 7 percent stated that all volumes of frequently used titles are on one floor, and all volumes of less frequently used titles are on another floor; 9 percent indicated that each floor is assigned a particular subject or subjects; and another 9 percent noted that some "other" criteria are used to determine the location of a bound volume.

Circulation Policy

Whether or not to circulate bound volumes and/or current issues of peri-

odicals is a question almost every periodicals librarian eventually confronts. When asked if they circulate current issues of periodicals, 44 percent answered yes, and 53 percent answered no.

To the question, "Do you circulate bound volumes?" 53 percent answered yes, and 44 percent answered no. It is interesting to note that the percentages for "yes" and "no" responses here are just the reverse of those for "yes" and "no" responses to the same question regarding current issues.

The data, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, indicate that libraries which circulate current issues and bound volumes are more apt to loan to faculty than to students. Furthermore, the loan period granted faculty tends to exceed that granted students. For example, seventeen libraries circulate current issues to faculty for a loan period of one week or longer; only two libraries provide this loan period for students.

Of the sixty-five libraries which circulate their current issues, 57 percent indicated that they experience problems

with their loan policy, the primary problem being the users' failure to return material on time (or sometimes, at all). Likewise, of the seventy-seven libraries which circulate their bound volumes, 48 percent indicated that they experience difficulties with their loan policy.

In reading Tables 1 and 2, one should be aware of the following: In general, the category "students" includes all students, both undergraduate and (where applicable) graduate. Furthermore, "other" implies a member of the community, etc. However, in cases where the responding library indicated two different loan policies for students, the undergraduate students are included in the "Student" category and the graduate students are included in the "Other" category. The net effect of this is as follows: "Other" refers to graduate students in two of the six cases noted in Table 1 and in seven of the eleven cases noted in Table 2.

As can be seen from the data gathered, academic libraries of moderate size appear to be equally divided on the

TABLE 1
USERS' STATUS AND LOAN PERIOD AT THE SIXTY-FIVE LIBRARIES
WHICH CIRCULATE CURRENT ISSUES

Users' Status	Less than 1 Day		1-3 Days		Loan Period				Period Not Specified		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Faculty	24	37	18	28	1	1	17	26	4	6	64	98
Students	28	43	8	12	0	0	2	3	0	0	38	58
Staff	10	15	2	3	0	0	4	6	3	5	19	29
Other	5	8	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	6	9

TABLE 2
USERS' STATUS AND LOAN PERIOD AT THE SEVENTY-SEVEN LIBRARIES
WHICH CIRCULATE BOUND VOLUMES

Users' Status	Less than 1 Day		1-3 Days		Loan Period				Period Not Specified		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Faculty	14	18	22	29	1	1	34	44	5	6	76	99
Students	24	31	7	9	0	0	5	6	0	0	36	47
Staff	9	12	3	4	0	0	7	9	4	5	23	30
Other	4	5	5	6	0	0	2	3	0	0	11	14

question of whether or not to circulate periodicals. Indeed, one library noted that circulating periodicals decreases mutilation; whereas, another library noted that several years ago it had circulated periodicals but had lost many of them. Several libraries mentioned faculty pressure as a determining factor in the establishment of loan policy.

Theft Prevention

Thirty-six libraries (24 percent) stated they had installed an electronic detection system for preventing theft of library material, and an additional ten libraries (7 percent) replied that they would install such a system in the near future.

Of the thirty-six libraries with a detection system, 14 percent sensitize current issues of all periodicals, 53 percent sensitize current issues of frequently used periodicals, 58 percent sensitize bound volumes of all periodicals, 22 percent sensitize bound volumes of frequently used periodicals, and 6 percent sensitize no current issues and no bound volumes. One library noted that it sensitizes current issues of all periodical titles which are "kept" (i.e., it does not sensitize those titles for which older issues are discarded), and another library noted that it sensitizes its more recent bound volumes, 1972 to date.

The survey asked libraries if they have any method to discourage mutilation of periodicals. Several libraries indicated that they post signs warning users not to rip out pages. The availability of inexpensive photocopies was cited by many libraries as a deterrent. Circulation of periodicals, closed stacks, and exhibiting mutilated material were other methods occasionally mentioned.

A study by Hendrick and Murfin suggests a publicity campaign designed to make users aware of the high replacement costs.⁶ The data gathered by this survey indicated no sure answer to this problem, except in the case of one li-

brary which noted "there is a public hanging, drawing, and quartering of one detected offender each semester!"

SUMMARY

The results of the nationwide survey of moderate-sized academic libraries are summarized by the following eight points:

1. Faculty play a major role in the selection of new periodical subscriptions, and the library administrator is frequently responsible for the final approval of selections.
2. When claiming issues of titles ordered through a subscription agency, a sizeable group of libraries (34 percent) do not rely solely on the agency for these claims.
3. Libraries tend to order replacement copies for missing current issues much sooner than for missing bound volumes.
4. Although 87 percent of the libraries indicated having some microform subscriptions of periodicals, 53 percent of the libraries indicated having only twenty-five or fewer microform subscriptions. However, libraries indicated that they often use microforms for filling in "gaps" in the bound volume collection. Periodicals in microform usually are stored in a separate microform area, rather than being shelved with bound volumes of periodicals.
5. Open stacks seem to be preferred over closed stacks for both current issues and bound volumes of periodicals.
6. The most common shelf arrangement for both current issues and bound volumes is alphabetically by title. However, there appears to be a positive correlation between the size of a bound periodical collection and the likelihood of its being arranged in call number order. Furthermore, there seems to be a

greater likelihood of a library changing its bound volume arrangement from alphabetical to call number than vice-versa.

7. Libraries appear to be equally divided on the question of whether or not periodicals should circulate.
8. Approximately one quarter of the libraries report having an electronic detection system to prevent the

theft of library materials. Sensitizing all bound volumes of periodicals and some current issues (e.g., issues of the most frequently used titles) seems to be the trend. Finally, none of the libraries reported having a fool-proof method for discouraging the mutilation of periodicals.

REFERENCES

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