Statement of Competency F

F. Use the basic concepts and principles related to the creation, evaluation, selection, acquisition, preservation and organization of specific items or collections of information

Libraries are not mere agglomerations of books and materials. The key feature that defines libraries is that they are deliberately created as repositories for information and as keepers of the cultural record. Furthermore, this information is organized in such a way as to be easily accessible to all who wish to use it.

In addition, the selection of materials both in libraries and archives is done with the end user in mind. What kind of information do people in the community want to have access to? What kinds of materials do researchers need access to? Are there particular types of information that would speak more to the members of one community than another? Would members of the community who speak a language other than English welcome works in their native language and relating to their own culture? Librarians must take these questions into consideration when deciding which books to acquire for their own particular system, or even branch.

When it comes to archives, the question includes not only acquiring materials for the collections, but also choosing the best ways to preserve them. Archivists are faced with multiple choices regarding the acquisition, preservation and disposition of materials in the collections. As with libraries, archives are tasked with preserving the cultural record and making it available to users, though in this case, the users of archives usually tend to be to researchers.

Both libraries and archives have specific rules and policies in place and use specific criteria to guide them in their acquisition and preservation activities. For archives, many of the criteria for
acquiring individual items for collections relies on whether or not the items in question fit within a collection that is already being curated.

The American Library Association has published several documents that serve as guidelines for libraries’ collection development policies. Among these are the Library Bill of Rights, the Freedom to Read Statement (for written works), and the Freedom to View Statement (for videos and movies). These statements provide for the collection of broadest possible array of materials in terms of scope, but that reflect as much of the diversity of the community as possible.

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) is the main professional organization for archives and archivists, and it has enumerated the Code of Ethics for Archivists. As with the ALA’s statements pertaining to collections development for libraries, the SAA’s Code of Ethics states that archives must provide open and equitable access to its collections without discriminating among users, while simultaneously upholding the privacy interests of both donors and users, and protecting copyright laws.

Unlike, libraries, archives do not aim to provide access to as broad a range of materials as possible to reflect as much of the cultural record as possible. Archives also follow various theories that have been developed by people such as Theodore R. Schellenberg and Frank Boles. These theories provide criteria by which archives can appraise both materials within their collections and those they are considering acquiring.

Their collections are based on bequests from donors, be they institutions or citizens, both public and private. Archival collections must also reflect the collection policy of the particular institution that is acquiring it, as many institutions tend to focus their collections on specific topics. After a collection is acquired by an archive, all further acquisitions and disposition of materials must be evaluated to see
Both libraries and archives follow standardized procedures for cataloging materials to ensure that their users can find the information they need. Cataloging includes rules such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) and procedures such as MARC21 created by the Library of Congress, that help libraries and archives standardize their records so that they can be shared among a wide array libraries and archives.

Both archives and libraries are often faced with backlogs of materials that must be cataloged and placed in areas for access either by members of the public, or by researchers. Archivists are faced with the additional challenge of which materials to make available for public use, as some of the items in question may be valuable or in brittle condition. Often, archives will keep originals in the stacks and will provide duplicate copies for use by researchers.

**Evidence and Selection Criteria**


   In this assignment I examined and compared the collections development policies for both the San Francisco (Calif.) Public Library (SFPL) and the Kansas City (Mo.) Public Library (KCPL). Both libraries adhered to the guidelines set forth by the ALA. I not only examined the specific collections development policy for each library, but also looked at demographic information for each community to see whether the libraries’ collections policies accurately reflected the diversity of the community that they served. Adhering to the ALA guidelines and statements also provides a framework for libraries to respond to requests for reconsideration of materials. Having a
framework in place gives libraries a means whereby they can protect their collections from political and community pressures.

While this paper was written with the principles of intellectual freedom in mind, I feel it also shows how collections development policies are created with needs of the local community in mind, and that by adhering to the various guidelines and statements set forth by the ALA, libraries are able to select resources on as broad a range of topics as possible to meet the needs of their communities.

Note: since this paper was written, SFPL has redesigned its website, and its Collection Development Plan can no longer be found at the URL listed in the paper’s reference section.


2. LIBR 256 – Archives and Manuscripts – Appraisal Criteria Forms

This was an exercise using a collections appraisal tool developed by the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley to evaluate items currently in the collection to see if they should be retained, as well as items that the archive would like to acquire to see if they fit within the scope of the archive’s collection policy. For this assignment, members of the class were given access to digital copies of artifacts, and asked to appraise them according to the criteria set forth on the forms. The form itself was developed based on theories of archival appraisal set forth by Schellenberg and Boles.

Although the forms used attempts to simplify the appraisal process, I feel this exercise demonstrates my ability to apply critical thinking to the subject of appraising materials for archival collections, by closely examining the artifacts in question to see where they fit into the criteria. It
Jonathan Leff – Statement of Competency F

also demonstrates my ability to understand and work with systems that are created by archives to assist in the process of appraisal and acquisition.

3. LIBR 259 – Preservation Management – Questions and Responses

These are responses to questions posed during Units 1-9 of LIBR 259 – Preservation Management taken during the Fall 2010 semester. In these responses, I have attempted to apply the knowledge that I have gained from each units’ readings to demonstrate how I have understood topics in question. Preservation management is a broad field, and the topics discussed range from the history of preservation, theories of preservation for both books and digital materials, the responses by professionals in the library, archive and preservation community to the needs of preservation of various materials, as well as controversies and issues surrounding these theories. As preservation is a very emotional topic, some fair amount of emotion is reflected in these posts. In addition, a key component of answering these questions was to engage with and wrestle with the same questions which professionals in the field deal with. Many of these questions and theories are works in progress, and are constantly changing as new theories are developed based on evidence gained from the implementation of older theories. This is especially true of the area of digital preservation, the importance and complexity of which has only started to become realized within the past 25 years. Indeed theories of digital preservation are still evolving and probably will be for some time to come.

This evidence demonstrates my understanding of the issues involved in the preservation of a variety of materials held by libraries, archives and even individuals, as well as the evolution and complexity of the theories by which professionals seek to address these issues so as to preserve materials for future users, as well as for the historical record.
4. LIBR 294 – Professional Experience: Internships – Gleeson Library: Acquisitions and Cataloging

As part of my internship experience at the University of San Francisco’s Gleeson Library/Geschke Center, I had the opportunity to meet with the heads of Cataloging, Acquisitions and Library Systems, which are part of the library’s Technical Services department. Through these meetings, as well as through follow-up emails and conversations with other members of the library staff, I was able to gain an understanding of the procedures and processes used by the Gleeson Library to acquire new materials in book and non-book formats, and the means by which they are cataloged and classified. Books, non-book materials and databases are purchased through a variety of electronic systems, both directly through web sites, and through software interfaces that provide access to services provided by library vendors known as book jobbers. Cataloging is done primarily by accessing records in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) that can be altered to meet the library’s needs, and then downloaded automatically into the library’s catalog. Items are classified according to the Library of Congress Classification System (LCCS), or according to the Superintendent of Documents system (SuDoc) for federal government documents. In addition, I gained an understanding of the Library Systems section that ensures that all of the systems that support the cataloging tools, the software interfaces used for purchasing books from book-jobbers, and the databases – both those used for reference and those that support library administrative functions – are maintained.

This evidence demonstrates my understanding of the processes that a library uses not only to acquire materials for its collection, but also to ensure that these materials are organized in a logical fashion according to a classification scheme that is relevant to the material being classified and that enables users to locate the information that they need.
Conclusion

As keepers of the cultural record, libraries and archives have a duty both to collect materials that reflect the cultural record in all its forms, as well as to provide access to this material for those who wish to use it. Libraries must consciously select as wide a range of materials as possible while also ensuring that they collect materials that reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, and consequently, those communities’ diverse information needs. Collection development guidelines that follow the ALA’s principles of intellectual freedom help to ensure that libraries collect materials with as open and unprejudiced a mind as possible.

Archival collection plans tend to be more restricted than libraries in that they are intended to fulfill the aims of the institutions in which they are situated, as opposed to serving the needs of a broad user base. However, archives still follow guidelines that provide for the provision of equitable access to users. Archives also follow various theories of appraisal to help them determine which items and collections will help fulfill the collection development plans of the institutions that they serve.

The key to making information accessible is to make it findable, and the way to do that is to organize the material according to cataloging and classification systems such as those developed by the Library of Congress and AACR2. Both libraries and archives follow these rules and standards to ensure that their collections are well organized, and therefore of use to those who may wish to partake of the information they contain.