Guidelines for Liaison Work in Managing Collections and Services

Prepared by the Liaison with Users Committee, Collection Development and Evaluation Section, Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), 1992, revised 2001. Approved by the RUSA Board of Directors, June 2001. Revised 2009 by the Liaison with Users Committee of CODES. Approved by the RUSA Standards and Guidelines Committee, January 2010. Approved by the RUSA Board of Directors, March 2010.

1.0   Introduction

In order to recognize the changing nature of liaison work and to produce a training document for librarians with collection development responsibilities, the Liaison with Users Committee of CODES (Collection Development and Evaluation Section of the Reference and User Services Association, a division of ALA) revised the existing guidelines between 1997 and 2000. RUSA's Standards and Guidelines Committee edited the resulting document in 2001. Revised 2009 by the Liaison with Users Committee of CODES.

2.0   Purpose

This document is intended to help librarians identify library user groups in various types of libraries and to suggest ways these groups can be involved in collection services and issues. It may also be used to identify objectives and continuing education opportunities for liaisons based on the mission statement and priorities of their institution.

3.0   Definition of Liaison Work

3.1   Liaison work is the process by which librarians involve the library's clientele in the assessment of collection needs and services and the measurement of user satisfaction with the collection.

3.2   Liaison work includes identifying user needs, evaluating existing collections, removing extraneous materials, and locating resources that will enhance the collections.

3.3   Liaison work enables the library to communicate its collection policies, services, and needs to its clientele and to enhance the library's public relations.

3.4   Liaison work enables the library's clientele to communicate its library needs and preferences to the library staff and governing body.

3.5   Librarians functioning as liaisons have various titles and job descriptions.

4.0   Training and Support of Library Liaisons

4.1 Library liaisons' educational backgrounds, interests, and professional experiences should reflect the interests and needs of the targeted communities as much as possible.

4.2 Institutional support should develop or enhance the liaisons' knowledge and skills via continuing education, in-service training, mentoring arrangements, formal and informal gatherings, time for developing liaison relationships with

external groups, and orientation to related operations (including fiscal and technical services, provision of professional literature and access to electronic support groups).

5.0   Liaison Work in Public Libraries

5.1 Collection Development Policy
5.1.1 Provide detailed collection development policies that define the parameters of resources and services and describe the mechanisms for amending the policies.
5.1.2 Make the collection development policy available to staff and constituent users.

5.2 Users
5.2.1 Recognize that some users have special needs and interests that require targeted collection assessment and management.
5.2.2 Users include, but are not limited to, recreational readers, civic groups, government agencies, businesspersons, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, students, teachers, institutionalized populations, non-English readers, and persons involved in literacy programs.

5.3 Liaison activities
5.3.1 Involve clientele in collection management as much as possible, in order to ensure that the materials satisfy the clients' needs and that the clients are aware of the materials and services available to them.
5.3.2 Suggested formal activities include, but are not limited to: outreach programs aimed at under-served user groups; cooperative relationships with educational institutions and organizations; coordination with library staff offering adult and juvenile programs; interaction with Friends of the Library chapters and advisory boards; formation of specific user focus groups; and establishing a procedure for staff and users to suggest and/or offer acquisitions.
5.3.3 Suggested informal activities include, but are not limited to: interacting with staff and patrons about collection needs; monitoring the local media for suggested materials; analyzing collection use data; and working public service desks on a regular basis to observe what materials are used and what is needed.

6.0   Liaison Work in Academic Libraries

6.1 Collection Development Policy
6.1.1 Provide detailed collection development policies that define the parameters of resources and services and describe the mechanisms for amending the policies.
6.1.2 Make the collection development policy available to staff and constituent users.

6.2 Users
6.2.1 Identify and define various constituencies (students, faculty, staff, and others) so that all can understand expectations of service.

6.3 Liaison activities
6.3.1 Involve clientele in collection services and issues as much as possible, in order to ensure that the materials satisfy the clients' needs and that the clients are aware of the materials and services available to them.
6.3.2 Suggested formal activities include, but are not limited to: surveys of library users to evaluate satisfaction

with library resources; regular meetings with faculty to ascertain planned curriculum developments and to identify new resources; communication of available materials and services; and establishment of a process by which library users can suggest purchases.

6.3.3 Suggested informal activities include, but are not limited to: participating in campus organizations and activities; monitoring campus media for activities and events that affect collections; and encouraging library use and support by non-users.

7.0   Liaison Work in Special Libraries

7.1 Collection Development Policy

7.1.1 Provide detailed collection development policies that define the parameters of resources and services and describe the mechanisms for amending the policies.

7.1.2 Make the collection development policy available to staff and constituent users.

7.2 Users

7.2.1 Identify and define service populations and clarify the levels of service to be expected by internal and external users based on the mission statement and priorities of their institution.

7.2.2 External users should be encouraged to utilize library resources that support their activities if that use does not adversely affect internal users.

7.3 Liaison activities

7.3.1 Library staff should maintain awareness of organization projects and initiatives, developments in relevant fields, regulations, and production of new materials that support the institutions' activities through interaction with other staff and systematic study of professional journals, catalogs, and planning documents.

7.3.2 Encourage external users to share their knowledge of developments and resources that enhance expertise in the relevant fields.