

RBMS
Collection Development Discussion Group
Minutes of the June 24, 2017 Meeting
Chicago Hilton, Chicago, IL

The Collection Development Discussion Group met Saturday morning, June 24, and addressed the topic of funding and other structural challenges to building collections in new areas, especially areas that are more diverse and inclusive. Some of the obstacles and possible remedies identified in the discussion were:

Obstacle: Lack of staffing to be proactive. Suggestions: 1) work with what you have, even if very limited, to do an event with faculty, and galvanize enthusiasm and ideally resources for further collecting in a given area; it can be helpful to prove to administration that there is faculty interest. 2) create collection development policies and align them with campus mission statements; get to know your neighboring institutions to decide who should be collecting what; responsible collective collecting can happen formally and informally

Obstacle: Lack of funding. Suggestions: 1) if one can align with campus-wide diversity and inclusion initiatives, it might be easier to advocate for more support to collect in new areas. 2) apply for external project-based funding; sometimes once one has won an external grant or foundation support, then internal support follows. 3) when collecting is initiated from elsewhere in your institution, assert that the financial support, inc. help with fundraising, should also follow to support that collecting; make sure that your partners are aware of the in-house costs of storing and servicing collections

Obstacle: Self-censoring donors. Suggestion: develop trust; demonstrate and or scholarly interest in an emerging topic; give it time, the cast of characters may change; explain how archival collections are organized and accessed, which may alleviate some privacy concerns

Obstacle: Lack of staff expertise, background, or relationships with certain communities. Suggestions: 1) work with faculty and other staff members (i.e. subject librarians/bibliographers) and the local community to identify collections; the challenges of working with adjuncts include their lack of professional training in condition assessment and other library concerns, so these people either need selective training, need to be asked/invited to attend library meetings, or need to visit collections with archivists or another professional. 2) suggestion: be willing to show up to meetings to advise and listen, not just acquire; don't assume that your institution will be the best repository or that the material should end up in a repository; for some Native American communities, for example, the best decision might be to leave the material with the communities. 3) hire more diverse staff!

Obstacle: Difficulty of assigning and asserting value (research and monetary) in new collecting areas. Suggestion: stay in conversation with dealers about the new collecting areas that you are trying to develop.

Respectfully submitted,

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