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Collection Development Policy Critique
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University Map Collection Policies: Where Do We Go From Here?

Evans and Saponaro (2012, p. 71) and the American Library Association (ALA) (1996) asserted that a well designed collection policy, reviewed about every 5 years, is a necessary component of any library. Collection policies can serve the following purposes: setting goals for the collection; outlining scope of collection; protecting staff in the event of challenge; aiding in weeding; providing training and continuity with new staff or staff turnover; and helping with collection assessment/accountability. Not every scholar, however, advocates the use of collection policies. Snow (1996) felt that policy creation and maintenance detracts time away from collection evaluation, materials selection, and other tasks of librarians. In addition, exceptions must often be made to existing collection policies. Special or unique requests happen regularly. Circumstances occur in which a policy is ignored multiple times and eventually becomes obsolete. Even a policy that is adhered to may not serve the library and service community if it is dated. Douglas (2011) observed that many collection policies were written in a “time of prosperity and gave little guidance on how to deal with budget cuts, manage a predominately electronic collection, or adjust the physical collection to accommodate external demands for space in the library building.” He claimed that today it may be more appropriate for a policy to outline flexible guidelines, rather than rigid procedures. Certainly librarians shoulder more responsibilities now than ever, as positions are combined or eliminated. But it still seems logical that a well made collection policy should be an asset, rather than a detractor, in managing and building a collection. Corrigan (2005) was a proponent of posting policies on the web. He claimed that this transparency not only focuses collection development but helps with funding

because donors and budgeters can easily see that the library has a plan for applying new funds. I agree that collection policies today should be transparent, flexible, and updated regularly.

Knowing a little about increasing dependence on mapping and GIS in the information community, I decided to analyze university map collections. Evans & Saponaro (2012, p. 72) outlined the components of a useful collection policy that could be applied to all materials and formats. An ALA site (2015) gave guidelines for building a basic map collection; included tips on storage, preservation, and cataloging of map collections; and provided links to external sources for those seeking materials and support for their collection. Combining information from both sources, I constructed a comparative table with features that I felt were distinctive to university map collections (See Appendix A, Table 1). I compared and contrasted four university map collection policies: Duke University, Stanford University, the University of Iowa, and the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. Though the policies shared certain features, I found differences in the scope and quality of each document. The following analyses will frame some of these similarities and differences with context about how they might impact the collection and/or its user community.

Though suggested by Evans and Saponaro (2012), none of the map collection policies that were examined linked their policy to that of their parent institution. To me, this seems to imply that university map collections operate independently or view themselves as somewhat separate from their parent library. However, all four policies did recognize an affiliation with their university by prioritizing service to university faculty and students ahead of other potential user groups. All four policies described their collections, including subjects and formats collected, in a narrative format. With the exception of Duke, all of the policies included some degree of conspectus information indicating depth and scope of coverage of certain subjects.

This combination of narrative and conspectus format makes the policy more understandable to users who might read the policy online versus a traditional conspectus format which is probably only decipherable to a trained selector. The Duke and Stanford policies stated specific long term collection goals and Hawaii map librarian had unwritten goals for collection (T. Kwok, personal communication, September 10 and 21, 2015). Any substantial projects or goals should be incorporated into the written policy so that potential donors or volunteers are aware of them and can offer materials or support. Only Duke and Stanford specified types of materials excluded and indicated specific staff names or tools used to aid in material selection. Selector and selection information could be critical for those who would like to make special requests for future purchases and should be part of any policy. Duke's policy was the only one to include methods of deselecting and none of the collection policies included a section on how to handle challenge procedures. This could indicate either that map materials are not typically challenged or deselected or that the map libraries adhere to the parent institution's procedure for challenged or deselected materials. Of the four universities, Iowa alone failed to indicate how it handled gifts/donations. The universities of Hawaii and Iowa omitted a description of the scale of maps collected which may be an important feature for users to know.

All four universities indicated that they are part of the federal and/or state depository program. In terms of collection policy and management, this means that at least a portion of collection was preselected and did not need to be budgeted. In terms of access, a potential user needs to be informed of the materials that are available through the depository program. All of the policies described cooperation or collaboration with departments within the university (usually the geology and/or earth sciences departments), and three also had agreements with external universities or institutions. I think this demonstrates a close community of map libraries,

also evidenced by the fact that the same individual (G. Salim Mohammed) participated in the creation of both the Stanford and Hawaii policies! Three of the collections clearly mentioned access to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as part of the services offered to users. If this technology is offered, collection policies should reflect the software and data sets that are collected or supported by the library.

Overall, most of the policies contained the essential features recommended by our text and the ALA. The Stanford policy was comprehensive and current, but harder to access. Stanford did not post their policy online so I had to make a special request with the map librarians in order to receive a copy via email (J. Sweetkind-Singer, personal communication, September 14, 2015). However, the librarian was able to locate the document quickly and was happy to share. Though less specific than Stanford, I felt that the structure and format of Duke's policy was more readable, flexible, and accessible. The Iowa and the Hawaii policy are probably the least descriptive and the most in need of updating. The more current policies (Duke and Stanford) seem to be following the trend, as discussed above, of a guiding, yet flexible, policy that is short enough to be easily editable but descriptive enough to be useful to selectors. Also, it seems to be more common for policies to be posted online or at least available to the public, if requested. As always, the most important feature for any policy is that it is tailored to build a collection that will meet the needs of its user community. This study certainly helped me recognize some of the map collection policy features that would accomplish that task.

References

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Appendix A

Table 1: A comparison of four university map collection policies

Does/Is policy...	Duke	Stanford	Iowa	Hawaii
Link parent institution mission	N	N	N	N
Give overview of service community	Y University students/faculty and public	Y Specific departments and user groups ranked by priority	Y University students/faculty and public	Y University students/faculty, scholars of East-West Center, private planners, state/federal staff, and public
Describe goals/long range plans for collection	Y Purpose and goal section	Y Combined in description of collection	N	N
Describe formats	Y Plus GIS	Y Plus GIS	Y	Y Plus GIS
Specify what is collected	Y Includes scale	Y Includes scale	Y Does not include scale	Y Does not include scale
Specify what is excluded	Y	Y	N	N
Part of depository program	Y	Y	Y	Y Best descriptions of items here
Describe subjects and give depth and breadth of coverage	Y Subjectively	Y Uses conspectus ranking system but integrates it in collection narrative	Y Briefly mentioned in narrative using conspectus terminology	Y Briefly as part of collection narrative. Again in strengths and weaknesses section
Indicate selectors or group of selectors	Y Not people but tools for selection	Y Lists staff	N	N
Describe special requirements (e.g. needing a review)	N	N	N	Y Earth Science Information Center (ESIC)

Detail the relationship between parent branch or organization in collecting (if any)	N	Y Part of cooperative agreements narrative	N Does mention some maps are held in the Geology Library	N
Indicate cooperative agreements	Y Within the university	Y Comprehensive narrative description	Y Only mentioned vaguely	Y On campus and off
Explain how are gifts/donations handled	Y Only briefly mentioned	Y Only briefly mentioned	N	Y Only briefly mentioned
Discuss deselection methods	Y	N	N	N
Discuss how to handle complaints and/or challenges	N	N	N	N
Posted on web	Y	N Policy obtained from J. Sweetkind-Singer, personal communication, September 14, 2015	Y	Y Additional information obtained from T. Kwok, personal communication, September 10 and 21, 2015
When did the policy appear to be last updated?	August 30, 2015 Web page updated. Was content too?	August 12, 2013	August 2007	August 2008
Subjective notes by me	Topics or sections of policy are more distinct than Stanford but lacks the detail of Stanford.	Narrative with multiple topics covered in detail. Very specific in terms of users and items collected.	Least descriptive and informative of all 4 policies but it is posted for anyone to see	Faculty has several goals and projects not indicated in policy. Could use an update?