

Leddy Library

Reference Collection Policy (revised March 2009)

I. Introduction

In keeping with the Leddy Library's Mission Statement and Core Values, the reference collection reflects the overall goal of supporting the research, teaching, and learning needs of the University of Windsor's academic community, and to a lesser extent, the non-academic community both on and off campus.

The reference collection contains material in both print and electronic format. Priority will be given to web-based resources as they provide broader access to the university community and are highly preferred by our patrons. Web-based formats have become the focus of publishers' development, often leading to the evolution of new forms of reference material. Indexes to serials, typically the largest component of an academic reference collection, have become almost exclusively available online, and other traditional reference tools are rapidly following suit.

Given the increasing availability of, reliance on, and preference for electronic resources, selection and retention of print titles in reference is highly selective. The print reference collection is a functional working collection intended as a supplement to the electronic. The print collection will reflect current, authoritative information and unique coverage.

II. General Selection Criteria

1. *Subject Coverage*

The reference collection supports a broad-based undergraduate program and provides additional support for subject disciplines with graduate programs and research centres. Levels of subject coverage are governed primarily by the depth of the academic programs.

2. *Language*

English is the preferred language, although certain types of reference materials may be acquired in any language (e.g., language dictionaries).

3. *Currency*

Currency is vital for an effective reference collection. Reference resources in both print and electronic formats are kept up-to-date through regular review of the collection. Superseded print editions are not kept in the reference collection.

4. *Redundancy*

Access to similar information through several different resources will be kept to a minimum. Rare exceptions for significant scholarly or historic reasons may be made at the discretion of the librarian responsible for managing the reference collection.

5. *Format of Materials*

Normally, materials will be purchased in electronic format to assure wide access to information through web-based delivery. Preference will be given to purchase

arrangements where the Library has permanent ownership of the content, either directly or through consortia to which we belong. In all cases, reliable, stable, and permanent access will be desired. Consideration will also be given to ease of use and convenience for users.

In rare cases materials will be purchased in print format where no satisfactory electronic equivalent is either available or affordable.

6. *Price*

Where possible, electronic reference tools should be purchased outright. Consideration should also be given to ongoing subscription or access fees that may be part of the purchase of electronic content. All purchase considerations for reference should take into consideration the impact on the Library's overall acquisitions budget.

III. Types of Materials Included

Electronic, web-based formats are preferred for all reference materials. The evolving nature of web-based publication has led to a blurring of the traditional definitions of reference materials. The types of materials selected for the reference collection may include: almanacs, bibliographies, biographies, concordances, dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias, genealogical sources, geographic sources, handbooks, indexes, legal materials, quotation and proverb books, sacred books, and style manuals.

With this in mind, the following strict limits will be placed on the collection of print materials for the reference collection. New book titles with typical reference terminology will not automatically be placed in the reference collection: they will only be routed there with special instructions from the librarian responsible for managing the reference collection.

Almanacs: Only the most recent edition of almanacs or yearbooks of local, provincial, or national interest not available electronically will be held in reference.

Biographies: Only key biographical sources not available electronically will be held in reference.

Dictionaries: A small collection of English and other language dictionaries will be held in the reference collection.

Directories: Only local directories from the current year (including the local telephone book) will be held in the print reference collection. Older editions of directories where historical interest warrants will be transferred to the serials collection.

Encyclopedias: Current multivolume sets not available electronically may be housed in reference.

Indexes: It has become quite rare that indexing and abstracting materials are not published electronically. Where exceptions exist, back-runs greater than five years old will be removed from reference and either withdrawn or transferred to the serials collection at the discretion of the relevant subject specialist.

Style manuals: The reference collection maintains a single copy of the current edition of all major style manuals. Additional copies are kept at the reserve desk or in the circulating collection.

While the possibility of rare exceptions exists, due to the proliferation of web-accessible versions of these formats, typically print bibliographies, concordances, genealogical sources, geographic

sources, handbooks, legal materials, quotation, proverb, and sacred books will not be held in the print reference collection.

IV. Weeding

Weeding of the reference collection (both print and electronic) will be undertaken following the Policy and Procedures for Weeding and Review of Library Materials. Items withdrawn from the print collection will be transferred to the circulating collection. Subject-specialist librarians may subsequently choose to withdraw these titles from the Library.

V. Responsibility

Responsibility for selection and deselection rests primarily with the librarian with assigned responsibility for the reference collection. Due to the consortial nature of many of our collection activities and the interdisciplinary nature of a reference collection, broad consultation will be necessary.

Reference should not be the storage choice of all titles that bear the words "dictionary," "encyclopedia," "handbook," "directory," or any other typical reference terminology. Many professional handbooks, for example, are simply collections of scholarly articles or other kinds of materials that would require extensive study. Many dictionaries and encyclopedias are very narrow in scope and will not be heavily used in the reference collection. Items of a "reference" nature purchased in print for the Library by funds other than that dedicated to the reference collection will not be placed in the reference collection.

Approved, Information Services Department
March 6, 2009