# Collection Development in Library and Information Science at ARL Libraries

**Purpose** – This paper discusses the results of a 2010 survey of LIS selectors at ARL institutions/libraries that do not support an ALA accredited program to learn how and why LIS materials are collected at these institutions.   
**Design/methodology/approach** – Collection development librarians completed a survey that asked them to describe their institution’s selection policies, practices, and budgets for LIS materials, along with their roles as LIS selectors/subject specialists.  
**Findings** – LIS collections primarily support librarians and staff in their daily work and ongoing professional development. However, most libraries’ LIS collections budgets are comparatively small, selectors receive few requests for new materials, and collecting parameters vary by institution, but are limited in terms of subject, publisher, and audience. The majority of LIS selectors are also responsible for collection development in multiple subject areas and most engage in work outside of collection development.   
**Originality/value** – This is the first paper to explore collection development of Library and Information Science materials outside of dedicated library school libraries.

### Article Type – Research paper

### Keyword(s) – Collection development, Academic libraries, Library and information science, ARL libraries

1. **Introduction**

Collection development of materials in Library and Information Science (LIS) has almost exclusively been discussed in the scholarly and professional literature in the context of LIS education or dedicated LIS libraries at institutions offering graduate degrees accredited by the American Library Association (ALA). Given the dynamic and evolving nature of the profession and LIS education, which encompasses fields like information and knowledge management, information architecture, and human-computer interaction, along with public, academic, and special librarianship, archives and records management, and information systems, LIS libraries collect broadly and strategically to support students, faculty, new and emerging areas of research, and a variety of interdisciplinary projects and initiatives. At the same time, virtually all academic libraries that do not support an ALA accredited program also collect monographs, serials, electronic resources, and other materials in LIS. As these institutions do not support teaching or degree programs in LIS, how and why do academic research libraries collect in this field? The assumption is that LIS collections support professional librarians and paraprofessional staff in their day-to-day work and ongoing professional education and development. What, though, are the characteristics of these collections, collection development practices, policies, and budgets, and what kinds of roles and responsibilities do LIS selectors undertake at their institutions?

# Literature Review

The relatively small number of articles on LIS collection development are primarily concerned with policy and practice at ALA accredited library school libraries. Kaser (1964) conducted a survey and published data on the housing of collections, volume counts, expenditures, staffing, and hours of service at 36 ALA accredited library schools while also suggesting better reporting and recording of statistics at LIS libraries. In articles published in the 1970s, Kiewitt (1978) surveyed and discussed core reference collections at ALA accredited library school libraries and Fingerson (1973) called for library schools to establish dedicated libraries to serve as experimental learning laboratories where students could gain practical skills and training before taking up employment in the field. Meanwhile, Lee (1979) identified 197 libraries in the United States and Canada with significant LIS collections, made suggestions on improved access to them, and advocated for more cooperative ventures between the librarians who managed them. Of the libraries identified by Lee, 63 were ALA accredited library school libraries, followed by 39 unaccredited LIS or education libraries, 24 state or provincial libraries, 21 academic libraries, 16 for-profit special libraries, 14 public libraries, 4 association libraries, 3 special and governmental libraries, and 10 additional libraries classed as “other.” Tjoumas and Horne (1986) surveyed collection evaluation methods and practices at ALA accredited library school libraries and proposed that the libraries adopt comprehensive collection evaluation practices in support of students and faculty. Also looking at policy and practice, Prentice (1987) discussed the history of library science libraries, published the LIS collection development policies of three then-ALA accredited institutions (Columbia, Emory, and Tennessee, of which Columbia and Emory are now closed), and suggested that LIS libraries abandon the learning laboratory model advocated by Fingerson and instead build broader, more comprehensive collections to reflect and support new fields of LIS scholarship and practice. The most recent article on the topic by Via (1992) examined collection development policies and practices at 41 ALA accredited library schools and found that LIS collection development was being managed by selectors with multiple subject responsibilities at the same time that many stand-alone LIS libraries were being integrated into larger libraries at universities in Canada and the United States.

Aside from Lee’s list of the numbers of academic, governmental, public, and special libraries with LIS collections by category and type, no research has been published on LIS collections or collection development outside of libraries at ALA accredited library schools. In order to expand the literature and to learn more about LIS collections and their use in academic libraries, a survey was developed to capture information about LIS collection development, policy, and practice at Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member libraries that do not support an ALA accredited LIS degree program.

1. **Methodology**

### 3.1 Population

The survey population for this study was built by cross-referencing the list of ALA accredited programs in LIS against the list of academic libraries that were members of ARL as of May 16, 2010 (see: <http://www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/directory/list/index.cfm> and <http://www.arl.org/arl/membership/members.shtml>). National, governmental, special, or public libraries that were members of ARL were excluded. The decision to survey ARL member libraries was made given the group’s relatively homogenous nature, the size and scope of member libraries’ holdings and collections budgets, their commitment to building comprehensive research collections, and the numbers of librarians and paraprofessional staff they employ. Eighty-one (81) ARL member libraries’ parent institutions (excluding the author’s former institution) were identified as not offering an ALA accredited degree in LIS. Library and Information Science selectors at these institutions were then identified using publicly accessible library web sites including selector/liaison/subject specialist lists, staff directories, and online LIS subject guides. Thirty-seven (37) libraries identified their LIS selectors online and gave contact e-mail addresses. In the case of the 44 libraries that did not identify their LIS selector, the e-mail addresses for the associate university librarians/deans/directors responsible for collection development were recorded.

### 3.2 Instrumentation and Data Collection

The author created a survey tool that was reviewed and approved by Yale University’s Human Subjects Committee Internal Review Board. The online Survey Monkey Web site (www.surveymonkey.com) was used to gather and analyze data due to its free access through Yale University Library and relative ease of use. In May 2010, an e-mail with a survey link was sent to the 37 identifiable LIS selectors. The same e-mail and link were also sent to the 44 associate university librarians/deans/directors for collection development at institutions that did not identify an LIS selector with a request that the e-mail be forwarded to the appropriate librarian. A follow-up e-mail was sent two weeks later.

# Findings

Thirty-six (36) individuals completed the survey, a participation rate of 44.4%. Thirty-two respondents (32 or 88.9%) worked at ARL libraries in the United States and 4 (11.1%) worked at ARL libraries in Canada. As expected, all respondents (36 or 100%) indicated that their collection primarily supported professional librarians and paraprofessional library staff. Only 1 respondent (2.8%) indicated that his or her LIS collection also supported teaching faculty, and no respondents replied that their collections supported university staff outside of the library. At the same time, 2 respondents (5.6%) noted that their collections directly supported library staff pursuing degrees in LIS at ALA accredited programs elsewhere, with 1 individual (2.8%) further responding that his or her institution’s collection was important for librarians and colleagues at local or regional universities without access to comprehensive LIS collections and resources. No respondents indicated that their collections supported students aside from library staff pursuing ALA accredited degrees. Additionally, 100% of respondents reported that items in their institution’s LIS collection circulated and are made available to researchers via the libraries’ online public access catalogs (OPACs) and are not maintained as training or “in house” reference collections.

# 4.1 Collection Development Practice and Policy

Despite the ubiquity of approval plans in large research libraries, only 24 respondents (66.7%) indicated that their institutions receive LIS materials on approval from commercial vendors. All respondents (100%) noted that they accepted purchase requests from library users, with 1 respondent (2.8%) indicating that collection development in LIS at his or her institution was “completely demand driven.” The number of purchase requests selectors received also varied. The majority of respondents (21 or 58.8%) replied that they received, on average, just 1 purchase request for news materials a month, while 7 respondents (19.4%) indicated that they received 2 requests per month, 2 respondents (5.6%) received 3 requests a month, and 3 respondents (8.3%) noted that they received 4 and 5 requests, respectively, per month.

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate the kinds of materials they selected for their collections. An overwhelming majority (35 or 97.2%) indicated that they selected monographs, as did those who indicated that they selected print and online serials (31 or 86.1%), as well as electronic databases (30 or 83.3%). Only 6 respondents (16.7%) reported that they selected microforms and 5 respondents (13.9%) further indicated that they selected electronic books (e-books) or that demand for e-books in LIS at their institutions was increasing. In a subsequent question, selectors were asked to indicate collecting parameters for LIS materials by language, format, Library of Congress subclass, and price. Here the responses varied greatly, as illustrated by a sampling of replies:

“Professional level, [E]nglish, no limits on format or price. Primarily interested in research librarianship and special topics as indicated by our strategic interests.”

“Publisher / University Press, Academic Level is limited to “Advanced Academic,” the LC Class is limited as well, format is limited to P[rinted]-Books at this time but I am looking to expand to E-books.”

“We use YBP and include any item published in the LC subclass of library science.”

“English, paperback preferred, Dewey class 020-028, research, guides and handbooks, general.”

“Included in an electronic notification "slips" plan. Limited to English language materials, books, LC subclass, collecting level -- not price limitation.”

“Being notified by slip only…parameters are from certain publishers & mostly contain exclusions like public/school library, etc.”

“We collect books and e-books, basic, essential, and research, peer reviewed journals and LISTA and LISA. US focus.”

“We get all ALA/ACRL publications appropriate for academic libraries automatically and slip notification from YBP for other publishers' offerings.”

“Our approval books tend to be university press materials and the trade books are now part of our selection process.”

“Everything comes on Form (no approval books sent directly). Nothing before 1991. Nothing costing more than $125. Most subjects treating academic libraries included.”

“We have a blanket plan with ALA to get their materials and receive YBP slips for other things.”

“University press publications (in English) dealing with academic library issues.”

“Publications from ALA.”

One (1) respondent who indicated that his or her institution did not receive items on approval also wrote that:

We firm order all monographs as we have a very small budget to work with. Mostly [we] purchase materials to aid librarians in their work, of intellectual interest, or requested by librarians or library staff. We get a small (increasingly smaller) number of journals, which are automatically renewed unless we are going through budget retrenchment.

Two (2) more respondents also brought up issues related to LIS journals. One (1) noted that “We tried to reduce our serials line but were not as successful as I hoped; everyone reads & depends on different sources,” while another commented that “We purchase only very core LIS journals.” Given rising journal prices across all disciplines, along with reduced or flat collections budgets across many North American libraries, it is not surprising that respondents expressed concern about LIS journal usage and cost.

When it came to an articulated collection policy, a little less than half of respondents (17 or 48.6%) indicated that their institution had a formal, stated policy for LIS collection development. Of these 17 respondents, just 8 (44.4% or 22.2% of all respondents) indicated that this policy was publicly accessible on their institution’s web site. At the same time, fewer than half of the respondents (15 or 45.5%) noted that their library offered a web site or online subject guide for their LIS collection, meaning that resources are only accessible to users via the library OPAC or through lists of journals and databases to which the library subscribes. It should also be noted that only 45% of the libraries surveyed in this study included their selector for LIS in any online directory or list of selectors or subject liaisons/specialists.

# 4.2 Budgets

Collection budgets for LIS also varied greatly across the spectrum of the libraries surveyed. The majority of respondents (11 or 30.6%) indicated that their institution’s budget for LIS materials in all formats was less than $5,000 per year. Seven respondents (7 or 19.4%) indicated that their budgets fell between $10,000 and $15,000 per year. Two respondents (2 or 5.6%) replied that their budgets for LIS materials were over $35,000 per year and 1 respondent chose not to answer the question. One respondent (1) noted that LIS materials at his or her institution were purchased on a larger subject fund for education materials that was greater than $35,000. Another indicated that his or her library had no set budget for LIS materials; at the same time, however, approximately $15,000 was spent on LIS materials in the last year. In context, the mean expenditures for monographs and serials by ARL libraries in 2007-08 were $2,716,677 and $7,369,145 respectively.

# 4.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The majority of respondents (22 or 61.1%) indicated that they had collection development responsibilities in addition to LIS. Asked to identify the number of subject areas for which they were responsible, 7 respondents (29.2%) indicated that they selected for 5 or more subject areas, followed by 4 subjects (6 respondents or 25%), 2 subjects (4 respondents or 16.7%), 3 subjects (3 respondents or 12.5%), 5 subjects (2 respondents or 8.3%), and just one subject (2 respondents or 8.3%). Twelve (12) survey participants declined to answer the question.

Moreover, the vast majority of respondents (33 or 94.3 %) indicated that they had duties in addition to collection development ranging from reference and instruction to library systems to technical services, with the majority of respondents (21 or 60%) noting that they worked in reference and instruction. Only 2 respondents (5.7%) indicated that they had no responsibilities other than collection development. Clearly, LIS selectors at ARL institutions fulfil many roles at their institutions, of which LIS collection development is only one. One respondent described the many demands on his or her time, combined with a perceived lack of interest in LIS as a subject/area of study at his or her institution:

While I would like to do a simple LibGuide for research in LIS, it is bottom priority given my other projects and a major field for which I am responsible…Likewise, we do not have an LIS category in our database list, although all the electronic resources appear alphabetically. There's just no awareness of LIS as a discipline, except by a few historians on campus.

Respondents were also given an opportunity to describe and discuss in their own words collection development in LIS at their institutions. In an e-mail to the author, one respondent wrote that:

I struggle with this at my campus - everyone reads different sources & the journal literature can add up from the societies [and] professional associations…We try and serve our library staff who are enrolled in many different distance ed MLS programs as well as provide continuing education and professional development for the professional staff… The scope of our jobs has changed greatly….I see less need for the traditional materials like library history, basic functions, and skill sets. As we morph into new roles, our need for continuing education, case studies, etc., increases and the perception that we need less is blatantly wrong.

# Discussion and Conclusion

Collection development practices and policies in LIS at ARL libraries that do not support an ALA accredited degree vary from institution to institution. At the same time, however, survey responses supported the author’s initial (and perhaps somewhat obvious) assumption that LIS collections primarily support library staff in their ongoing professional development and education. The study also revealed that the majority LIS selectors have multiple responsibilities including selection for other subject areas, as well as in public and technical library services. As well, collections budgets for LIS materials are not large, selectors receive relatively few requests for materials to be added to the collection, and collecting parameters are defined so as to limit to relatively inexpensive and practical English-language materials.

This study also showed that LIS selectors and collections are somewhat hidden from the collections’ primary users—those librarians and paraprofessional staff who work in the library itself. While materials may be found in library OPACs or online lists of journals and databases, less than half of the librarians surveyed indicated that their library had either an online subject guide/web site or a collection development policy for LIS, and most LIS selectors are not listed in their institution’s directory of subject specialists or liaisons. To increase the visibility of their collections and LIS as a discipline and field of scholarship, LIS selectors should attempt relatively simple, yet focused, outreach to promote their collections through the creation of an online subject guide or web site. A basic subject guide need only contain a list of and links to appropriate LIS journal indexes and databases, subject headings appropriate for LIS research, a list of important journals in the various fields of librarianship, and links to professional organizations and continuing education resources. Furthermore, LIS selectors should arrange with their library’s web manager/librarian and associate university librarian/dean/director for collection development to be listed on the library’s directory of selectors and subject specialists. While an online subject guide and up-to-date and comprehensive listing of selectors may seem insignificant, they are important yet easy ways of highlighting the existence of a library’s LIS collection and promoting its resources. Selectors should also, where time and other demands permit, work with the head of their institution’s collection development department to articulate and promulgate a LIS collection development policy, which should also be made available online if this is the case with other subject collection development policies or statements. Library and Information Science selectors may also wish to consider reaching out to teaching faculty whose scholarly and research interests are allied to LIS. These can include, but are not limited to, manuscript, book, and printing historians, education faculty interested in pedagogy and emerging methods of instruction and teaching, digital humanists, and computer science faculty engaged in research and teaching on information retrieval and storage and human-computer interaction.

1. **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study raised a number of additional questions. Future researchers may wish to study how library administrators view LIS collections. Is there a set of formal or informal expectations that libraries must collect materials in support of their staff and their work? Are LIS collections more important now that professional development funds for conference travel, training, and education have or are being reduced or frozen across North American academic libraries? If so, how are LIS collections being used or promoted? Future researchers may also consider studying the number of years that LIS selectors have managed collection development for this subject. One respondent to this survey noted:

This is only the 2nd fiscal year I have collected LIS materials. Over the last decade, the responsibility for LIS materials has been transferred to a series of different librarians every one or two years, often librarians on term positions. I have a permanent appointment.

This mirrors the author’s own recent experience at his former institution where over the course of approximately 5 years, 3 successive librarians (including the author) selected for LIS. While it can be argued that all librarians should be capable of selecting in this field, frequent selector turnover may negatively impact a library’s ability to build a comprehensive, focused, and useful collection. As well, future researchers may consider studies to assess the use of LIS collections, particularly electronic journals, among professional librarians and paraprofessional staff in order to measure and assess demand, cost-per-use, and trends within librarians’ information gathering and research patterns.

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## Appendix

**Survey**

1. Are you employed at an American or a Canadian academic institution?
   1. American
   2. Canadian
2. What group does your LIS collection primarily support?
   1. Students
   2. Library staff (professional and paraprofessional)
   3. Faculty
   4. University staff (excluding library staff)
   5. Other (please explain)
3. In what formats do you select? Select all that apply.
   1. Books
   2. Serials (print and electronic)
   3. Electronic databases
   4. Microforms
   5. Other (please explain)
4. Do you accept requests to purchase new materials?
   1. Yes
   2. No (if no, go to question 6)
5. If yes to question 4, how many purchase requests (on average) do you receive per month?
   1. 1
   2. 2
   3. 3
   4. 4
   5. 5
   6. More than 5
   7. More than 10
6. Do print materials in your LIS collection circulate?
   1. Yes
   2. No
7. Are LIS materials included on your approval plan/plans?
   1. Yes
   2. No (if no, go to question 9)
8. If yes to question 7, what are the parameters? What materials are included or excluded (i.e., by format, language, price, LC subclass, collecting level, etc.)?
9. Does your institution have an LIS collection development policy?
   1. Yes
   2. No (if no, go to question 11)
10. If yes to question 9, is this available on your institution’s web site?
    1. Yes
    2. No
11. Does your LIS collection have a web page or subject guide available through your institution’s web site?
    1. Yes
    2. No
12. What is your institution’s total budget for LIS materials in all formats?
    1. Less than $5,000
    2. $5,000-$10,000
    3. $10,000-$15,000
    4. $15,000-$20,000
    5. $20,000-$25,000
    6. $25,000-$30,000
    7. $30,000-$35,000
    8. Greater than $35,000
    9. Prefer not to answer
    10. Other (please explain)
13. Are you responsible for collection development/selection in another subject area in addition to Library and Information Science?
    1. Yes
    2. No (if no, go to question 16)
14. In how many subjects/subject areas do you select?
    1. 1
    2. 2
    3. 3
    4. 4
    5. 5
    6. More than 5
15. In which subject areas do you also select? Select all that apply.
    1. Humanities
    2. Arts
    3. Social Sciences
    4. Sciences (Natural and Applied)
    5. Medicine
    6. Other (please explain)
16. Do you have responsibilities in addition to collection development?
    1. Yes
    2. No (if no, go to question 18)
17. If yes to question 16, in which other areas do you also work? Check all that apply.
    1. Reference and Instruction
    2. Technical Services (inc. Cataloging and Acquisitions)
    3. Rare Book/Archives/Special Collections
    4. Administration
    5. Access/Circulation/ILL
    6. IT/Systems
    7. Other (please explain)
18. Please add any additional comments that you think may be helpful for the purposes of this study.