

Mary and Jeff Bell Library

Reference Collection Development Policy

Purpose

Mary and Jeff Bell Library's Reference department collects and provides access to information resources that support the academic, research, and public service programs of Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, with priority given to curricular needs. The primary users of the Reference Collection are the students, faculty, and staff members of A&M - Corpus Christi.

The collection's resources are available in a variety of formats, including print, microform, and digital. Decisions regarding the content of the collection are based primarily on supporting the university's academic and research programs, and secondarily on providing basic reference sources of interest to community users and alumni. The campus is a non-traditional, commuter school, but the collection supports the curricular needs of students regardless of where they live or attend an A&M-Corpus Christi class.

The Reference Collection Development Policy is designed as a guide for the selection of materials to be placed in the Reference Collection. The collection is developed with the idea that reference materials are consulted for bibliographic and/or factual information and will not be read in their entirety. Occasionally, what would normally be considered reference material will be placed or moved to other collections within the Library, such as the Main Collection or Special Collections & Archives.

The Reference Collection should be as lean and efficient as possible to enable library staff and users to use the collection more effectively. Generally, the Reference section does not serve as a storage place for all materials that have the words "dictionary", "handbook", "encyclopedia" or "directory" in the title; if a title will not be used frequently, then it is located in the Main Collection.

Location of Reference Collections

The main Reference Collection is housed on the first floor of the library. Some low-use, archived materials are located in the second floor annex area. Selected high-use reference materials are located on the Ready Reference shelves behind the Reference/Information desk on the first floor. Electronic products included in Reference books are located at the circulation desk. Additionally, some reference works of local/regional interest and historical significance are housed in the Bell Library's Special Collections & Archives department. Some examples are almanacs, handbooks and encyclopedias related to the history of Texas.

More information about electronic products in Reference books is available in the “Access to Electronic Products Included in Library Materials” policy.

Scope of Coverage/ Language

Language – English is the primary language of the materials in the Reference Collection. However, foreign language materials, such as bilingual dictionaries and foreign-language encyclopedias, may also be collected.

Geographical Area – Materials in the Reference Collection are not limited to a geographic area. Emphasis is placed on North American materials, but other regions of the world are represented in the collection in order to meet curricular and general Reference needs.

Chronological Periods – Having the most up-to-date and current information is a high priority for the Reference Collection. In order to insure timely coverage of key materials within the collection, standing orders are utilized in accordance with the Standing Orders Policy. Subject Liaison Librarians monitor the collection to ensure newer editions are acquired as needed and obsolete materials are removed from the collection. Please see policies in the individual subject areas for details on retention periods for reference materials.

Size – The physical size of the material and the size of the collection are considerations, but not the only determining factors, in the selection of reference material.

Format

Reference materials are available in a variety of formats including print, microform, and digital. In some cases, a reference title might be acquired in more than one format. Digital versions of traditional print titles will be considered by the Reference Librarians, the Associate Director for Collection Development and Reference Services, and the Library Director with consideration given to demand, ease of use, accuracy, authority, stability, cost, and support of A&M – Corpus Christi programs.

- **Print**: Includes commercially produced books and some government publications, as well as loose-leaf titles and maps;
- **Digital**: Includes CD-ROMs, web pages, and databases; and
- **Microform**: Located in the Periodicals section.

Types of Materials Selected

Note: The definitions in this section come from the ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science OR from Harrod's Librarians' Glossary and Reference Book. The source for each definition is provided at the end of each entry.

- Almanac/Yearbook: A compendia, usually an annual, of statistics and facts, both current and retrospective. **(ALA)**
- Atlas: A volume of maps, plates, engravings, tables, etc., with or without descriptive text. **(ALA)**
- Bibliography: A list of works, documents, and/or bibliographic items, usually with some relationship between them. **(ALA)**
- Biography: The branch of literature concerned with peoples' lives. **(Harrod's)**
- Concordance: An index of all words or the principal words in any work or in the works of a single author, showing location in the text, generally giving context, and sometimes defining the words. **(ALA)**
- Dictionary: A book explaining the words of a language, the words being arranged in alphabetical order; it usually gives the orthography, pronunciation and meaning of each word. A dictionary of words in a restricted field of knowledge usually gives only the meaning. **(Harrod's)**
- Directory: A list of persons or organizations, systemically arranged, usually in alphabetic or classed order, giving address, affiliations, etc., for individuals, and address, officers, functions, and similar data for organizations. **(ALA)**
- Encyclopedia: A book or set of books containing informational articles on subjects in every field of knowledge, usually arranged in alphabetical order, or a similar work limited to a special field or subject. **(ALA)**
- Handbook: A compendium, covering one or more subjects and of basic or advanced level, arranged for the quick location of facts and capable of being conveniently used. **(ALA)**
- Index: A systemic guide to the contents of a file, document, or group of documents, consisting of an ordered arrangement of terms or other symbols representing the contents and references, code numbers, page numbers, etc., for accessing the contents. **(ALA)**
- Style Manual: A set of rules drawn up by a printing establishment for the guidance of its staff or contributors to ensure that details of typography, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and other matters about which opinions and customs differ, are in accordance with the prevailing practice of that establishment. **(Harrod's)**

Sources

Pyrtherch, Ray, ed. Harrod's Librarians' Glossary of Terms Used in Librarianship, Documentation and the Book Crafts. 6th ed. Brookfield, Vermont: Gower, 1987.

Young, Heartsill, ed. The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science. Chicago: American Library Association, 1983.

New/Revised Editions

As the library acquires a new or revised edition of a title, the older edition will generally be removed from the collection. At the discretion of the Subject Liaison Librarians, the older edition of a particular title may be deemed important enough to keep within the Library collection. Location of this older edition will be determined by the Subject Liaison Librarians based on the collection development policy in their assigned subject areas. This may denote a shift from Ready Reference to General Reference; from General Reference to the Main Collection; or from General Reference to Special Collections & Archives.

Criteria for Selection

Selection criteria for the Reference Collection include the following items, not in ranked order:

- The observed strengths and weaknesses of the existing collection
- Reviews or citations in basic reference collection guides
- Author and/or publisher reputation
- Currency of topic
- Date of publication
- Cost of publication
- Availability in digital format
- Recommendations from the University community

Professional literature on Reference titles assists Subject Liaison Librarians in choosing titles to consider for the collections; sources include (but are not limited to) reviews from Booklist, Choice, College & Research Libraries, Journal of Academic Librarianship, Library Journal, RQ, and subject-specific journals. Liaisons also make notes of titles from annual lists of notable reference titles and publisher catalogs.

Weeding

The Reference Collection is weeded on a three-year cycle. While each subject requires a different treatment with respect to historical or current sources, geographical importance, and other criteria, the Reference Collection follows these general guidelines for weeding the collection:

- **Significance of the publication:** If the publication is of significant value in supporting the curriculum of the university and the research needs of library users, it may be retained. If a title is listed in one of the standard “core reference” catalogs, it will be retained.
- **Age and currency:** Materials 5 years or older are evaluated as to the usefulness of the information for patrons. If a significant portion of information is outdated, the item will be removed from the collection.

- Availability of later editions: Earlier editions may be removed from the Reference Collection. Depending on the utility of the item, it may go to the Main Collection.
- Physical condition: Books that are in poor condition, incomplete, or damaged are generally removed from the collection. This guideline includes books infected with mold or mildew.
- Duplication: Duplicate copies of items are generally removed from the Reference Collection. Depending on use statistics, they may be transferred to the Main Collection.
- In-house use statistics: Based on in-house statistics, items not used in 5 years are considered for removal from the collection.
- Improving access for patrons in circulating collection: Items that may be more useful to patrons as a circulating item are housed in the Main Collection.
- Availability in digital format: Many indexes are now available online, and some reference items are also available online, as well. If online electronic versions are available to patrons, weeding of items in print format that are duplicated by online resources is considered on a title-by-title basis.
- Superseded items are automatically removed from the Reference Collection.

The Reference Collection is assessed on an annual basis, with a third of the collection weeded each year. Subject Liaison Librarians consulting with liaison faculty, Reference staff, and the Associate Director for Collection Development and Reference Services will be responsible for weeding their liaison areas.

Gifts

Donations are welcome, but they must satisfy at least one of the requirements outlined in the “Criteria for Selection” section of this policy to be added to the collection.

Excluded subjects/items

The Reference Collection does not include consumer-oriented reference sources, such as college catalogs, coin and stamp books, genealogy, travel guides, test preparation books, corporate reports, how-to books, self-help manuals, auto mechanic manuals or price books, or child care books.

If a reference item does not support the curriculum, it will not be added to the collection, unless it is very general and academic in scope or supports the University’s mission.

Approved by the Library Director 2/24/06.