



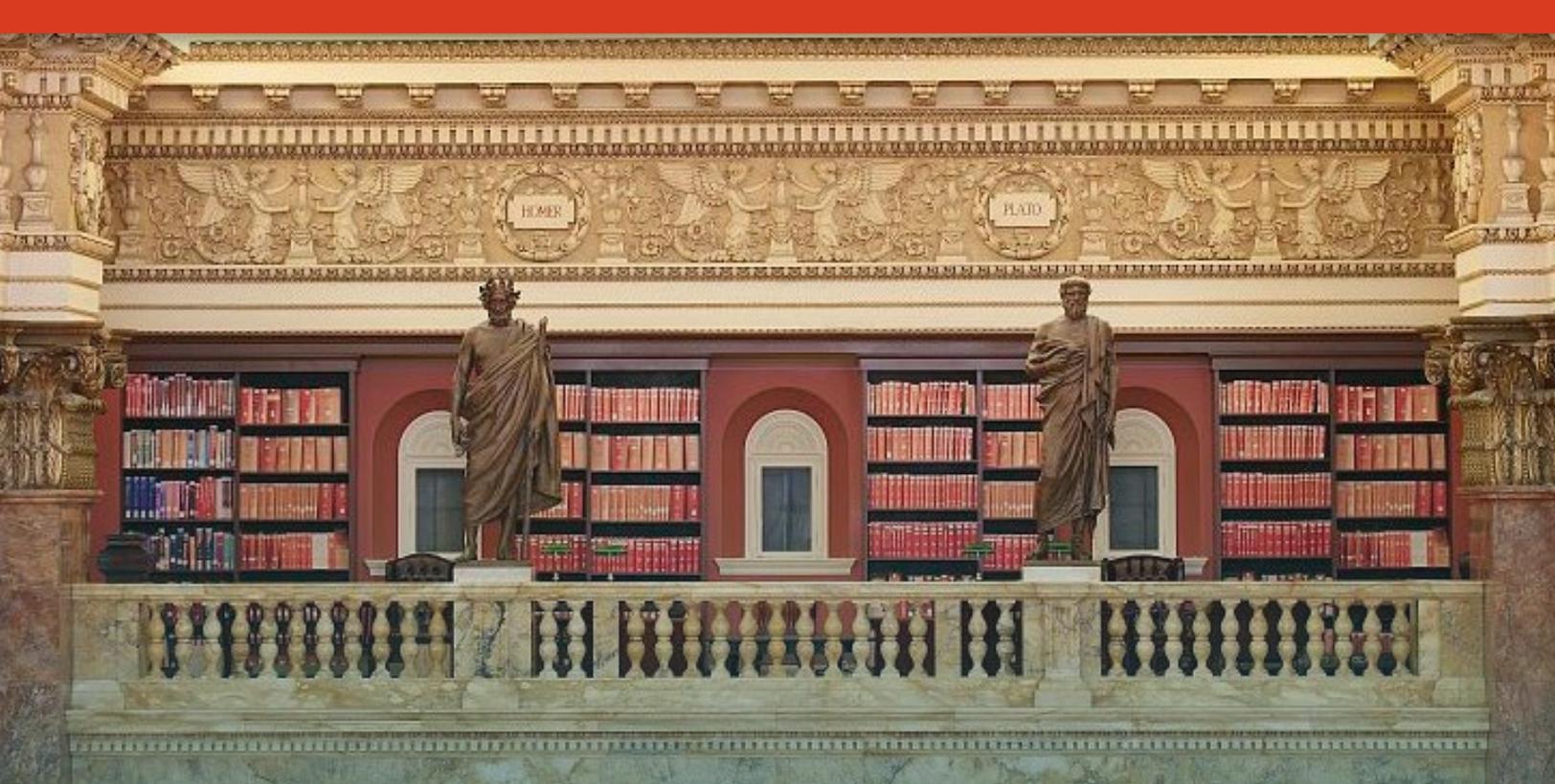
Guide to Federal Librarianship



3

Collections Management





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Pictured above: Statues of Homer and Plato within the Main Reading Room in the Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Building.

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3. Collections Management

How to Build User-Centered Collections

Identifying the Users

The first step in building user-centered collections is to identify the library's user groups. Reviewing the organization's website and/or intranet site, legislative mandates, and other foundational documents provides an overview of existing programmatic areas, the organization's mission, strategic plan, and emerging initiatives. Depending on these characteristics, the library may have a case for reaching out to the public as well as staff within the institution.

Over time, librarians may build liaison relationships with various offices throughout the institution that can help them identify other user groups, such as human resource departments and senior-level managers responsible for multiple work teams. With experience, reference desk staff will also develop a broad understanding of institutional needs and should be an obvious resource for identifying user groups.

Determining User Needs

There is no single path to understanding the needs of existing or potential library users. Qualitative methods such as informal conversations, feedback mechanisms, and focus groups should be considered along with quantitative mechanisms, such as surveys, user studies, and usage statistics. Library size and scale can play a significant role in this information gathering. Some information professionals are physically embedded in work teams, lending them a precise knowledge of user needs. Many libraries serve thousands of remote patrons and are better equipped to disseminate online surveys to understand their user segments. Keeping these parameters in mind, librarians should strive to collect user feedback in as many ways as possible and document it systematically. Inevitably, library budgets will limit the quantity of newly acquired materials and ongoing subscriptions. Being able to triangulate feedback from several different sources can lend some credibility to the task of prioritizing purchases.

User-expressed needs are an obvious resource for building and managing collections, but librarians may also look beyond their immediate institutions for building stronger collections. Many librarians still consult discipline-specific resources (e.g., research guides, bibliographies/reading lists, green slips, publishers' catalogs, online review services) to fill collection gaps and/or compare local collections with those of peer institutions. Librarians may also base purchases on the reputation of publishers, journal impact factors, and the availability of consortia to help offset costs.

Librarians must understand the cost-benefit relationship for emerging formats and new purchasing models, allowing them to shift from a just-in-case collection development model to a just-in-time model.

Establishing a Collection Development Policy

Once patron needs are assessed, the librarian's next step is to formalize an approach to decisions in collection management. The main reason to write a collection development policy is to create a planning, allocation, informational, administrative, and training document. It should describe the library's purpose for building a collection, selecting, deselecting, and purchasing materials.

In the event of library staff turnover or reorganization,
the collection development policy codifies collecting priorities
and offers a roadmap for collection management decisions.
Thus, it is an essential internal management tool for the library.

The collection development policy will also explain and defend the library's plan for providing necessary access to information resources for the community it serves. In this sense, it also addresses audiences that are external to the library, from senior managers to donors of materials.

To write a useful policy, it is essential to understand the local information ecosystem and other sources of information whether they are informal colleague networks that extend beyond borders and agencies, other libraries in the area, or cooperative library networks. These sources will naturally affect the library's collecting decisions. For example, if an expensive run of journals is available in the local university science library, it may be redundant to collect another set. These considerations need to be captured in the policy.

Sample Federal Library Collection Policies

Federal libraries or libraries in your field may offer useful collection development policies.

Below are sample federal collection development policies.

- » [DC Public Library](#)
- » [Library of Congress](#)
- » [Library of the Marine Corps](#)
- » [National Agricultural Library](#)
- » [National Library of Medicine](#)
- » [National Transportation Library](#)

For additional information on over 1,400 federal libraries and their collections, see the [FEDLINK Federal Library Directory](#).



Detail of frieze of winged half figures with torch of learning.
Main Reading Room, Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson
Building, Washington, D.C.

Digital Collections Development

Many libraries formulate a separate collection policy for digitized and electronic resources due to inherent challenges, including management, discovery, delivery, usage statistics, and maintenance.

In addition to born-digital materials, many libraries are digitizing their print collections (see forthcoming Chapter 6: Preservation and Digitization). After digitization, libraries may still maintain original print copies. For example, the National Library of Medicine has a framework for a national print retention program to ensure continued access to the historical literature. To learn more about this effort, see [Collection Development Guidelines of the National Library of Medicine Retention Program](#).

eResources: Special Considerations

One of the more expensive categories of library materials is eResources (e.g., eBooks and eSerials). Libraries are challenged with balancing print and electronic acquisitions as part of the collection development workflow.

Identifying the best resources to develop your collection requires more than just budgeting and may require coordinating between different offices in your agency. The list of considerations below may help you when planning to acquire digital resources.

Libraries may want to consider a resource evaluation trial or demo before purchasing electronic resources. Be sure to work with your contracting office before launching your trial.

A selection of considerations for acquiring electronic resources:

► Access

» Availability

- What vendors provide access to this electronic resource?
- Is the electronic resource available via a web-based platform, or does the library need to download it (via digital files provided by vendor or physical CD) for incorporation onto the library's servers?
- Does access to the electronic resource mimic the print counterpart by including all graphics, illustrations, charts, tables, etc.?
- For eBooks:
 - What edition is available?
 - If a new edition is published, does that need to be purchased separately?
- For serials:
 - How quickly does the vendor update the electronic resource to reflect new print issues?

» Access Points

- How will the electronic resource be incorporated into the library's collection?
- Will the electronic resource be available on and compatible with different browsers and/or devices?
- Does the vendor provide access to a web-based reader platform?
- Are the eResources available in both a mobile application and a web-based reader platform?



» Interface Issues

- Will the electronic resource platform integrate with established library systems?
- Will the library need technical expertise to configure the electronic resource platform's interface?
- Does the electronic resource meet the ADA's [Section 508](#) Accessibility Standards for Electronic and Information Technology?

► **Information Technology**

» Agency Specific

- Does the agency have IT guidelines for electronic resources?
 - What are the internal approval processes for acquiring electronic resources housed on external platforms?
 - What are the internal approval and configuration processes for acquiring electronic resources housed on internal servers?
 - Are there any internal policies or processes for electronic resources requiring special software or hardware needs?
- What are the agency's internal processes for ensuring 508 compliance?

» Security

- What security protocols are in place to ensure user compliance with electronic resource access limitations?
- Does the FedRAMP (Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program) authorization apply in your agency?
- Are there any firewall constraints that need to be configured internally by the agency or externally by the vendor?
- What mode of authentication does the electronic resource or electronic resource platform require (such as IP-authentication, password, proxy server, or some other type)?
- If the electronic resource limits access to specific work location sites, how is that configured?

► **Procurement**

» Cost

- Is the price for the electronic resource more expensive than print?
- Is there a bundle option to purchase the publication both in print and electronic formats?
 - Does the bundle option for both formats provide an overall cost savings versus purchasing each format individually?
- Is it more cost effective to purchase individual electronic resources or a bundled package?

» Ownership

- Are the electronic resources being purchased as a subscription, for perpetual access, or licensed for a determined period of time?
 - What are the limitations to the perpetual access?
 - What are the limitations to the license?
 - ◆ Is the license limited to a specific work location site for access?
 - ◆ Does the license allow for remote access by verified agency users?
 - ◆ Is the license for unlimited access, a specified number of users, or limited number of downloads?

► **Vendor Relations**

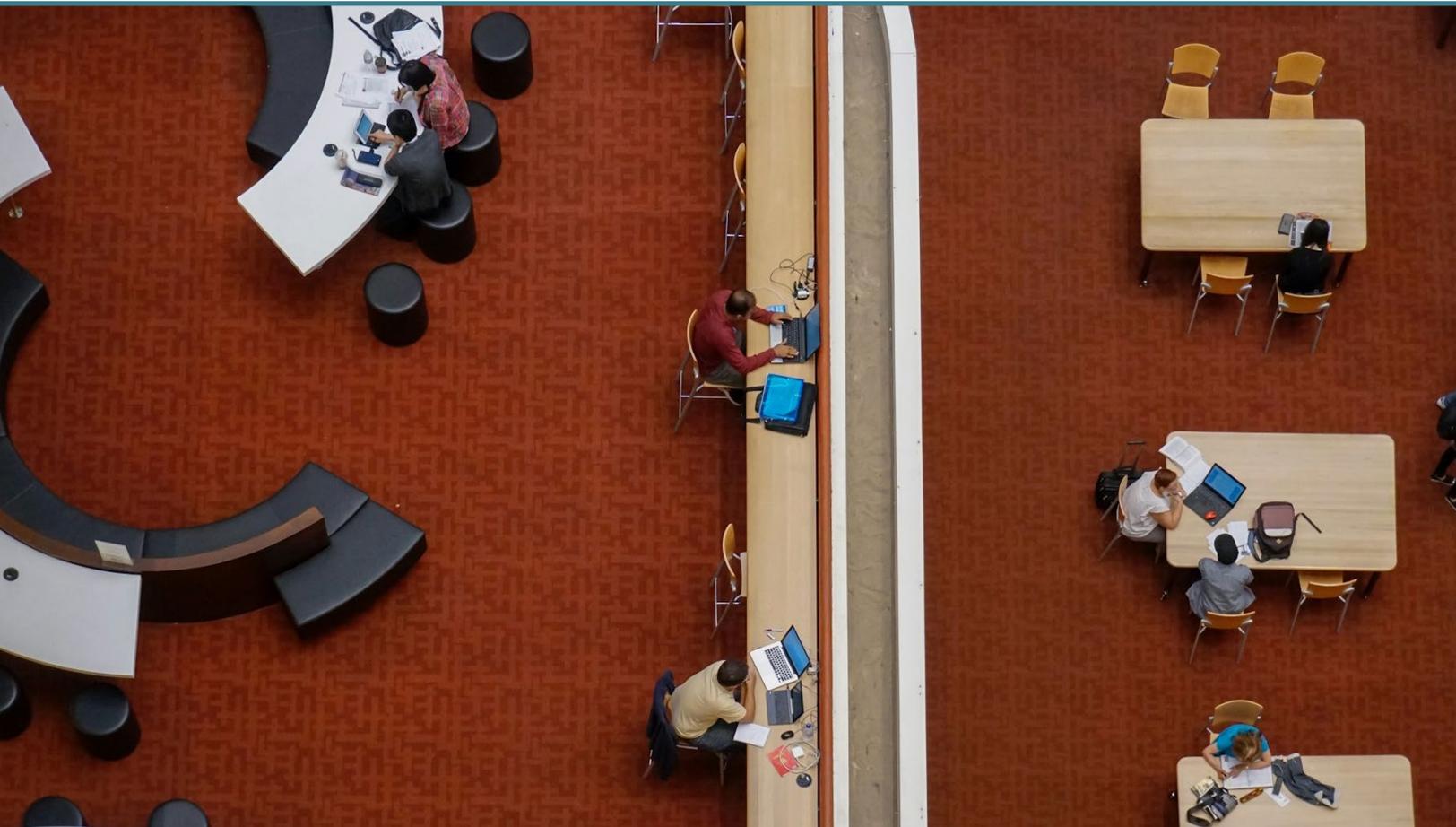
» Trials

- Is there a trial available for this electronic resource?
- Can the trial include library users, or is it limited to library staff?
- Will the vendor provide training during the trial period?
- Does the contract office require a resource evaluation trial or demo before purchasing electronic resources?

» Customer Service

- Does the vendor have a reputation for providing reliable access to electronic resources?
- Do other agency libraries contract with this vendor for electronic resources?
- Once procured, will the vendor continue to provide training as needed?
- Does the vendor provide access to usage reports?
 - Is there an administrative dashboard where the library can monitor usage of the electronic resources?
 - Are usage statistics available for download in various formats?
 - Does the vendor provide COUNTER-compliant usage statistics?

- » Digital Rights Management
 - Is the vendor or library responsible for digital rights management of the electronic resource?
 - What are the vendor's Digital Rights Management requirements for controlling access to copyrighted materials?
 - What are the vendor resources sharing policies for agencies?
 - Does the license allow interlibrary loan?
 - Is there an embargo period?
- **Alignment with Library Services Model**
 - » Configuration
 - Does the electronic resource platform allow for library customization and branding configuration?
 - » Policies
 - Does your library have digital rights management policies and procedures in place?
 - Will the electronic resources be precluded from interlibrary loan lending?
 - » Privacy issues
 - How does the electronic resource handle user data and track users?
 - Do users register for the resources and create a login, or does your agency authenticate users?



How to Obtain Materials

Acquisition Resources

The acquisitions process in federal libraries is the same as in all libraries: to identify, select, acquire, and provide access to publications, electronic materials, and any other format or type of information materials needed to fulfill the mission of the library and its larger authoritative body. Each agency approaches acquisitions from a slightly different perspective. Depending on the size of an agency library, a department or an individual may select and acquire materials. Like all libraries, federal libraries will have in-house procedures and guidelines for managing acquisitions.

The acquisitions process combines locating appropriate library materials, finding the best possible prices, providing access to materials, and sharing resources among libraries. For example, book jobbers and serials subscription agents may offer significant discounts from the publishers' list price. They can supply popular titles, locate specialized or difficult-to-find materials, and provide advance information about forthcoming titles.

These functions must be carried out by following standard U.S. government agency procurement practices and supplemental agency policies. They are normally carried out through appropriate regulatory and statutory authority such as [Federal Acquisition Regulation \(FAR\)](#), the [Economy Act](#) (31 U.S.C. §§ 1535 and 1536), and the [Federal Acquisitions Streamlining Act \(FASA\)](#). In addition to these authorities, consult with your procurement and contracts offices as needed.

Considerations for Acquisition Policies

When creating or updating a federal library acquisition policy, consider that all successful policies for collection development and acquisitions share certain traits and are unique in others. While a library's collection policy guides overall collection management, the acquisition policy defines the process and procedures for acquiring necessary materials. Like other libraries, federal libraries must align services and collection with the mission of their agency. The difference for federal libraries is that agencies must follow federal acquisitions law. Federal librarians work to refine the collection and acquisition policies to demonstrate value and serve as good stewards of the agency's resources.

The procurement of resources requires federal libraries to employ various acquisition methods, such as contracts, purchase cards for micro-purchases, and donations. For each type of acquisition mechanism, different documentation is required dependent upon appropriate regulatory and statutory authority. Often a statement of work is required to define the acquisition, outlining the nature and goals of the work, and the period of performance. Other documentation such as independent government cost estimates (IGCE) may be developed as well to support certain acquisitions. This work may include liaising with the agency's office of acquisitions, assigning contracting officer's representatives (CORs) within the library to manage library contracts, and identifying librarians as subject matter experts to support the procurement process.

Regardless of acquisition method, obtaining the best value is the key goal. Print and digital materials may be purchased directly from publishers and vendors, intermediary sources — such as serials agents, book jobbers, and federal acquisition consortia — can streamline agency workflows, provide value added services, and increase cost savings.

Often, federal libraries are members of a consortium with other affiliated agencies and organizations (see forthcoming Chapter 8: FEDLINK).

Coordinating the acquisition of materials can avoid duplication across collections, increase efficiency, and reduce costs.

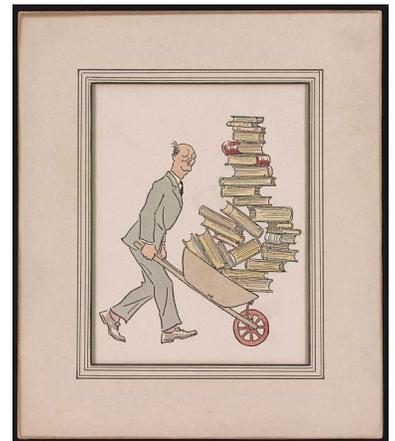
Occasionally libraries make micro-purchases directly from vendors or even publishers at the discretion of staff, within procedures as outlined by the agency and FAR. The federal library may have assigned purchase card holders to complete micro-purchases or may work closely with purchase card holders from other areas of the agency. Micro-purchases can be one way of purchasing relevant materials that are not available from typical suppliers. Because purchasing procedures vary by agency, federal librarians must be familiar with their agency's acquisition policies and requirements.

Donations to the Library

Donations help libraries grow their collections, but rules for accepting donations vary from agency to agency. Unfortunately, most libraries cannot accept all donations.

Libraries should have a written policy that specifies what the library will accept and in what subject area(s). Staff members will want to ensure the patron understands that the library does not automatically add donated items to its collection. The donation policy should include information about what happens when an item is not added to the collection. Libraries should also plan proactively for what to do with donations that are not added to the collection.

Libraries may have policies regarding donation acknowledgement. The library may provide a letter of receipt for tax purposes, but the donor will assign a value to the donation. Many writers like to donate books they have authored, but libraries should use restraint when accepting these materials, always ensuring items added to the collection align with the collection development policy.



Philadelphia bookseller George J.C. Grasberger pushing a wheelbarrow piled high with books