

Reference Collection Policy

Last reviewed: July 2009

Definition

Reference works are publications that are referred to or consulted briefly, rather than read in their entirety. There are two main types:

- informational: e.g., almanacs, yearbooks, atlases, dictionaries/encyclopaedias, directories, handbooks, manuals, etc.
- bibliographical: e.g., bibliographies, indexes and abstracts, library catalogues

Scope

- The Library maintains a core collection of standard academic reference sources.
- Specialized reference resources may be collected to support advanced research.
- Many non-core, peripheral or narrowly focused books that would have been placed traditionally in Reference may go directly into the circulating collection.

Responsibility

- Collections librarians are responsible for identifying core items in their areas of subject responsibility and maintaining these areas.
- Collections librarians are responsible for overall management and recommendations for purchase of general reference sources to the Information Resources Committee.

Relationship with Other TUG Libraries

- This policy adheres to the TUG Annex Last-Copy Agreement.
- When selecting reference books, especially specialized sources, librarians should also take into account the holdings of the other TUG libraries. For some materials a common policy of one-copy only is desirable (e.g., union catalogues, pre-1956 imprints).
- Laurier Library's policy of lending reference works to its TUG partners is permissive, although requests for such items are decided on a case-by-case basis. Laurier will encourage the same approach for Guelph and Waterloo. Collections librarians will be asked to decide such requests.

Formats

- Reference works are acquired in print and/or electronic formats.
- This policy recognizes the changing patterns of library use, whereby users often prefer to work remotely rather than near print reference tools. Therefore, the print reference collection should be a smaller entity of basic core materials for quick reference or of sets that are large (in size or in number of volumes) and don't lend themselves easily to circulation.

- Preference is made to purchase electronic formats of bibliographical sources, when available.
- In the case of multiple formats of reference works, electronic ones with perpetual ownership are preferred to their print equivalents.
- Reference works in print format are normally non-circulating, since any one user should not need them for long periods of time, and other users are deprived of access to the same or different information found in them.
- Print Reference works need not necessarily be shelved in a single location. Parts of the collection may be split off as distinct entities – e.g. book review indexes, biography, music – and be located elsewhere. Particularly low-use sections might be relocated, if space constraints dictate, without undue confusion to the end user.

Guidelines for Choosing Print Versus Electronic Formats

- Many reference sources are now offered in both print and electronic formats. The following guidelines should be considered when deciding which format to purchase:
 - Potential use
 - audience - general vs. specific interest; core item vs. narrowly specialized one; anticipated numbers of potential users
 - convenience to the user – usability of electronic interfaces vs. print as to material content
 - searchability of print versus electronic
 - Is this a tool that can be used by librarians for chat reference or by multiple Laurier libraries
 - limits on simultaneous users
 - ability to print or download vs. photocopying
 - Equivalence
 - are the two formats identical in content
 - coverage (many electronic resources contain most recent information only)
 - online automatic updating versus purchasing revisions of print editions
 - duplication of information (overlapping coverage by similar publications)
 - Cost and ownership
 - online subscription access that may be lost if not renewed vs. perpetual ownership of print and some electronic resources
 - one-time versus ongoing costs
 - physical space considerations

Print Review/Weeding Criteria

Criteria considered in making retention decisions for print reference works will vary according to discipline, but should include:

- Significance of the work
- Age and currency

- Availability of later editions
- Physical condition of the item
- Duplication of content in other works
- Past and anticipated use
- Relevance to campus teaching and research
- Completeness of holdings, if a set or run
- Availability in other formats (e.g. electronic)
- Accuracy of information
- Availability in other TUG locations (Universities of Guelph or Waterloo, Annex)