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I selected the collection development plan from the Forbes Library, which located in Northampton, Massachusetts. The plan can be found at the following address: <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml>. The policy can be found by clicking on the “About” link, which is at the top of every page, and then clicking on the “Policies” link. The Forbes Library actually has many policies available on its web site.

I will evaluate this collection development policy using the outline provided in the assignment. The first section under the topic heading will indicate how the topic is handled in the Forbes Library’s policy and my analysis will follow. A summary of my analyses as well as any recommendations will follow the description and analysis of the individual topic areas.

Overview

Before even getting into any specifics about collection development, the policy states the library’s mission, which is to adapt to changes in society in order to offer the best materials to the residents of Northampton.

Analysis: This three-sentence paragraph sets the stage for the rest of the policy. It is concise and to the point while making a generalized statement of what the library exists to do. The importance of including the library’s mission is noted in the textbook.¹

General Description of the Service Community

Under the heading “The Library’s Service Population,” the policy cites the City of Northampton’s Web site description of the town; it is described as “offering a sophisticated rural lifestyle rich in cultural, artistic, academic, and business resources.”² The town has been recognized for its standard of living by national magazines. There are five colleges in the surrounding community, and Northampton boasts a population of nearly 30,000 people.

The community is also described to be progressive and demanding of materials on a wide variety of subjects. Since this library is a public library, every member of the community has the potential of being part of the library’s service community, and the policy states just that.

Analysis: The policy does have a detailed description of the actual town of Northampton, which is beneficial when describing the specific users of the library. Also, by providing this detailed background, it is obvious that the library put a lot of time into this section of the policy, which should reflect positively on the library.

¹ Page 54

² <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#population>

Specific Description of Users and Clientele

A description of the users of the Forbes Library can also be found under “The Library’s Service Population” heading. The description begins by noting the library patrons are “of all ages and interests.”³ As can be imagined, with five colleges in the area, the policy states that there is an increasing number of students in the area who use the library’s services and collection for their information needs. More than half of the adults in the area have at least a bachelor’s degree. Many of the adults in the area are employed in the educational, health and social services fields, while employment in the arts and entertainment arenas, professional positions and retail services following.

Interestingly, almost 10% of the population is self-employed. The policy also estimates that 12.5% of the service population speaks a language other than English at home. The policy goes on to explain that the makeup of the community is not expected to change drastically within the next 10 years. Again, the library’s patrons are of all ages, so it is hard to be specific, but this displays that no age group will be forgotten.

Analysis: By profiling its users in such detail, Forbes Library is able to pinpoint needs that are specific to its community. The specific information needs will be detailed two sections below, but including such detailed information about the library’s users allows the reader to understand why they are focusing on these information needs.

General Statement Concerning Parameters of the Collection

Under the “Collection Development Philosophy/Goals” heading, the policy includes the standard library goals: “to meet the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs” of their patrons by providing them with materials in numerous formations and at numerous reading levels.⁴ This echoes the mission’s statement that the library will strive to support the community’s pursuits of knowledge by adapting to suit the community’s needs.

Analysis: There was nothing specific in this opening area about the formats that the library includes in its collection; however, the way that it is reading makes me believe that this is so nothing will be excluded from the collection if it is the most appropriate vehicle for a specific type of information. There is a section that explores the specific types and format of materials collected, and it is suitable.

Specific Description of Information Needs to be Met

The list of specific collection development goals include some of the general information needs to be met by the Forbes Library collection. These are to foster literacy skills, improve job-related skills, supplement education and provide materials for entertainment. The information needs are described more specifically in the section that depicts the type of people that use the Forbes Library.

³ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#population>

⁴ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#goals>

Most users read at the college level, so the collection will reflect that. Many users demand books written in languages other than English, so there will be materials reflecting those languages as well as materials about learning English. Many users are self-employed, so materials related to business services will be collected specially. A special emphasis on children's materials will be placed because of the demands of parents and an increase of home-schooled children. The policy also mentions the very real gap between society's information-rich and information-poor and how important it is to provide materials for both of those groups.

Analysis: These descriptions are very detailed and cover very specific information needs that are based on the makeup of the user population. By spending the time to explain the user population, it is easy to see how the specific information needs listed relate to the makeup of the service population.

General Policies

Details of Subject Areas Covered

The subject areas that are collected can be found under the "Guidelines for Specific Subject Areas and Formats" heading. This includes the following general areas: fiction, non-fiction, music audio, recorded books, contemporary and classic feature films, music and theater performances, non-fiction videos, musical scores in a variety of genres, popular interest periodicals and a small number of professional journals, reference materials on a variety of subjects, materials by local authors, children and young adult materials and materials with local interest.

Academic titles, such as school and college textbooks, are not added to the library's collection due to their specialized intent. The Forbes Library also has three special collection areas: a local history department, a photographs/fine arts and image collection, and the Calvin Coolidge presidential library and museum. It is noted that these last three collections have their own collection development policy statements, but these could not be found on the web site.

More specifically, it is noted that fiction selection includes recreational reading, classic literature and representations of various periods and countries, as well as graphic novels. There is no breakdown into Dewey decimal classification under the non-fiction heading, but the policy does state that standard as well as timely works will be included in the collection. Works that are inaccurate or sensational will be excluded. The specific types of scores collected, such as holiday and folk songs, are described.

Analysis: This section does not have the detail of description within subject areas that Evans discusses.⁵ Basically, the policy divides the collection by the areas noted in the first paragraph of this section. There is a little description—usually no more than five

⁵ p.57

sentences—of the type of material. This section borders on subject areas and the below topic, so it was difficult to differentiate between the two.

Types and Format of Materials Collected

The formats of materials collected are in the same section as the above “Details of Subject Areas Covered” section. Throughout the descriptions of subject areas covered, a variety of formats are mentioned. Books, graphic novels, videos, DVDs, scores, periodicals, journals, pamphlets, leaflets, maps, machine-readable materials, electronic information sources, narratives of local history, genealogical handbooks, and formats that are specific to those three special collections.

Analysis: The only thing missing is whether the recorded books are obtained in cassette or compact disc format. As I stated before, it was hard to differentiate between subject area and types of materials collected by the way that this collection development policy was arranged. I do think that it covered a lot of good information about both areas, but it could have been more specific, especially in the nonfiction section.

Electronic Resources

Electronic resources are referenced under the “Reference” section. It states that “electronic information sources, including online databases, are available”⁶ and can be used at the library or at home. In addition, under the “Selection Criteria” section, one of the collection goals refers to downloadable electronic books. It states that they “are purchased cooperatively through the C/WMAS network.”⁷

Analysis: Because this falls under the “Reference” heading, it can be assumed that electronic resources are chosen with the same criteria as print reference materials, but there could be a lot more description about electronic resources. Also, the policy states that electronic books are purchased cooperatively through the C/WMAS network, but no explanation is given about what that network is.

Statement about Responsibility for Selection (who/how)

Under the “Responsibility for Collection Development” heading, the policy states that the Board of Trustees sets the policies involving selection, and the director administers the policy. It also states that selection decisions, which also involve evaluation, weeding and discarding, could be delegated to specific staff members or departments that follow this collection development policy as they select materials.

Although there are no individual positions or names mentioned, the policy makes it clear that the director will decide upon and guide the library staff that are expected to select materials. It is also clear the Board of Trustees sets all library policy, including the collection development policy. By not naming the specific positions that are responsible for material selection, it does make me wonder if the responsibility for selecting materials

⁶ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#guidelines>

⁷ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#criteria>

changes often or if the Board of Trustees wants trusts the director to make the best decisions for the Forbes Library.

The selectors take into account a number of things when selecting materials for the Forbes Library collection: public demand and community interest (popularity, local emphasis, requests), merits of individual titles (quality, accuracy, reputation, critical reviews), how well they fits the goals of the collection (significance, contribution to the collection, currency, format), and financial considerations (price, value, budget). To make their final selection, selectors should read professional reviews and examine the library's current holdings. Suggestions coming from patrons and staff should be given special consideration, and even if a title has negative reviews or will duplicate existing material, it will be purchased if the demand is high enough.

Analysis: This was one of the more detailed sections of this policy. It was more or less a checklist of what selectors should look for when deciding whether to add material to the collection, and it covered four very big areas.

Statement about Budget Responsibility and Allocation Policies

There is nothing specific about budgetary concerns in the policy other than stating that financial considerations—such as price and availability, value for cost, and the library materials budget—should be kept in mind when materials are being selected.

Analysis: I looked throughout the library's Web site to find information about the materials budget, but I could not find anything. This area is lacking.

Statement about Intellectual Freedom, Access, and Copyright Issues

There are two separate sections in this policy that address the issues of intellectual freedom and access to information. Nowhere, however, does the policy address copyright issues.

The first place that the policy references intellectual freedom and access issues is near the beginning, under the "Collection Development Philosophy/Goals" heading. The policy states that the library complies with the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press by making available materials with wide ranges of viewpoints. The second place that this is mentioned is under the "Objection to Library Materials" heading. Intellectual freedom is defined very clearly in this section, and it is also clear that the library holds this freedom dear: "The Library provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored."⁸ Those are strong words.

The following paragraph also references the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*, which further supports the library's aim to honor the rights of everyone to be

⁸ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#objections>

able to use the library regardless of their “age, race, religion, national origin, or social or political views.”⁹

Analysis: The lack of information regarding copyright issues is noticeable, but so is the wealth of information available regarding the library’s commitment to intellectual freedom and the *Library Bill of Rights*. Certainly there should be some mention of copyright, but the attention given to the intellectual freedom issues and equal access exceeded my expectations.

Censorship / Patron Complaints

Information about censorship can also be found under the “Objection to Library Materials” heading. In addition, it goes well with the section on patron complaints, so they will be discussed together. After the information describing the library’s commitment to intellectual freedom, a paragraph is devoted to describing the process an individual would take if he or she felt strongly about the appropriateness of certain materials in the library’s collection.

First, the individual completes a “Statement of Concern About Library Materials Form,” which is linked from the policy and is also available at the library’s office. Then the library director reviews the title, taking into account the reasons that it was selected, and then meets with the staff and the individual making the complaint. The director will then make a written ruling on the subject based on the details of the collection development policy. If the individual is still unsatisfied, he or she may make a request to the Board of Trustees; the decision by the board is final.

Previously in the document there is a statement that deals with free access to libraries for minors that states that only parents have the right and responsibility to restrict access to materials for only their children.

While the statement about free access to libraries for minors hints at the above access issue, it also sends a message that censorship for the sake of protecting children is not an option, which is why it was included here. I think that it is wise to include the procedure that is taken when an objection to materials arises. That way, library patrons know what steps are taken, and there is no question by library staff as to how this situation is handled. It also sends a good message to library employees that the job protection statement is included.

⁹ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#objections>

Miscellaneous Policies

Gifts

There is a large section about how gifts are handled. First, the policy states that the Forbes Library welcomes and appreciates donations to its collections. It outlines how individuals should donate materials and what types of materials are acceptable. It also states that donated materials are evaluated just as selected materials are, and in such case, may not be added to the collection—if the materials are not added, they may be sold, with proceeds going to the library. It also clearly states that all gifts accepted into the library’s collection become property of the Trustees.

There is also a description of how gifts to the special collections of the Forbes Library are accepted, as well as cash donations. Deferred giving, where the library is named as a beneficiary of an individual’s estate is also discussed. Unrestricted bequests, as well as bequests to establish an endowed fund, are the final two types of gifts described.

Analysis: This was also a very detailed section of the collection development policy. It does seem to be helpful to include this information so prominently in the policy; if patrons have a question about what they should donate or what happens to donated materials, they can be given this policy to review, and it will explain everything in detail.

Deselection and Discards / Collection Evaluation

These two sections are described together in the collection development policy under the “Collection Maintenance/Weeding” heading, and it was hard to separate where one ended and the other began, so they will be discussed together. The section begins by stating, “library collections should be fresh, exciting, and attractive,”¹⁰ and that evaluation of the regular collection (which excludes the special collections housed at the library) has to be an ongoing process.

The section goes on to say that materials that are no longer determined to be appropriate (by taking into account currency, appropriateness to the community’s needs, format, physical shape, lack of use) for library use by the appropriate selectors will be discarded “according to the accepted professional practices.”¹¹ The statement then refers to the *CREW Manual*, a standard weeding instruction guide, for further information, and that “disposition of deaccessioned materials will be according to the library’s discretion.”¹² Materials discarded because of reasons other than the ones stated above will be considered for replacement.

Analysis: The policy handles the touchy subject of deselection very carefully. The marks of a good collection are described, and the reasons that some things need to be disposed of are also explained. By citing the *CREW Manual*, the policy shows that collection weeding is a necessary and accepted practice. I think that this section was handled well.

¹⁰ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#weeding>

¹¹ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#weeding>

¹² <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#weeding>

Miscellaneous

One

It is interesting to note that immediately after the information detailing how a patron should go about submitting a complaint about library material, a small section of the General Laws of Massachusetts: Policy for Selection and Use of Library Materials and Facilities is cited. This states that no employee can be dismissed because of his or her selection of library materials when that selection was “made in good faith and in accordance with the American Library Association.”¹³

Analysis: This serves as a message to anyone who hopes to get a selector fired for his or her choice of materials as well as to staff. It shows that the state as well as the library supports the selectors of library materials, and this is outstanding to include.

Two

The end of the policy denotes that the policy should be reviewed and revised by collection development staff as well as the Board of Trustees on a yearly basis. The last revision date is March 20, 2006.

Analysis: It is always good to include how often a policy should be reviewed to make sure that it is still relevant, and it also shows that the document is important enough to demand regular upkeep.

Final Analysis

There are many good things included in the Forbes Library collection development policy, but there are also some things that could be examined more closely; however, I do think that the positive aspects of this policy do outweigh the absences.

On the positive side, the length at which this policy describes access to information and intellectual freedom for its users is to be commended. As these are the building blocks for a library and its collection, it is important to keep these things in mind. Placing them and their descriptions in this policy is a good thing.

The outline that selectors should refer to when choosing library materials is also a strength of this policy. It is detailed yet simple to use.

The community evaluation, which leads to the evaluation of the user population, is right on target. It is detailed enough to paint a clear picture of the library’s users, yet concise enough as to not become cumbersome. After reading the description of the town and the different types of people that call it home, the reasons for purchasing specific types of books, such as foreign language materials, seemed just. The description of the town and its users included in this collection development policy makes it obvious why doing

¹³ <http://www.forbeslibrary.org/policies/collection.shtml#objections>

things such as community analyses are necessary; selectors will be able to choose materials that will make the most impact to the library's users.

One weakness of this policy is the lack of detail about subject areas to be collected. There could be a lot more detail given in the general fiction, non-fiction, and reference sections. These sections make up the core of a public library's collection, so I feel that including more detail, ideally by genre or Dewey decimal classification, would be beneficial to this policy and helpful to the selectors.

The section on electronic resources was almost nonexistent. With the increase in e-materials (not just online databases), more information could be given on this subject, such as how the library chooses specific services and what the implications of using electronic resources rather than print sources are. It does mention that electronic books are purchased through a cooperative network, but I would include a separate section on electronic resources rather than grouping them with the description of reference sources and a brief mention under the selection criteria section..

Sections that were nonexistent were those on copyright and about the library's budget.

Issues regarding copyright and intellectual property could easily be included as a separate section near the end of the policy. It could be something as simple as an explanation of fair use and other issues that often arise in libraries.

As stated above, there were no direct mentions of a budget or fund allocation. The only financial issues discussed were those dealing with the direct purchase of material that seemed only to say that selectors should be mindful of financial considerations when selecting materials. It may be hard to pinpoint exact numbers and keep them up to date on a document such as this, but some sort of general budget description, such as where funds come from and what percentage of the funds go to what types of materials, should be able to be included.

Overall, however, I do think that this policy was well constructed. It is readily available on the library's web site and even includes links to forms mentioned in the policy. Most of the issues were handled satisfactorily, and quite a few were outstanding. By including relevant information on copyright issues and specific information about budget responsibility and allocation policies, this document would be superb.