



Section 3 of this Handbook discusses the evaluation of the library's information services. Collection evaluation may be one aspect of the evaluation of information services.

Selection

Selection is the process of deciding which resources the school acquires, either through purchase or other means. Selection is based on the school's collection development policy. Responsibility for selection usually rests with the teacher-librarian, who consults with members of the school community as appropriate.

Criteria for selection

Key points to consider when deciding which resources to acquire are frequently brought together as a checklist or set of criteria. In applying selection criteria, the teacher-librarian integrates knowledge of the resource under consideration with the school's collection development policy. The same criteria for selection should also be applied to existing information resources on a regular basis. Those deemed no longer appropriate should be culled from the collection.

The literature on collection development and selection abounds with sample selection criteria. Some are general, others are topic or format specific. Appendix 3 is an example of general criteria for selection; Appendix 4 is for fiction; Appendix 5 is for software, CD-ROM and online services.

Selection aids

A variety of tools is readily available to assist in the selection process. Bibliographies, review journals, books and advertising are examples of selection aids. Appendix 6 lists some selection aids readily available in NSW.

Disputed materials

School library collections may include some materials which express attitudes and opinions or include information to which some students, staff, or school community members may object.

A necessary inclusion in the school library's policy statement is a clear procedure for handling such objections, arrived at through discussions with the principal, who is responsible to the school community for all activities conducted in the school.



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The Memoranda to Principals *Sensitivity to community attitudes and feelings* [83-011 (S.O.83)] and *Controversial issues in schools* [83-037 (S.O.95)] are policy statements which should be read and discussed before the formulation of library policy on controversial material. The Australian School Library Bill of Rights (Australian School Library Association) and the Statement on Freedom to Read (Australian Library and Information Association) present the professional viewpoint of librarians on this issue (see Appendix 1).

In practice, the existence of a written statement of policy and procedures for handling complaints provides a logical, non-emotive, established method of responding to challenges on materials, whether the objections are on political, moral, racial or other grounds. The procedures should state clearly:

- How will the objector be asked to document the objection? (A suggested form is provided as Appendix 7)
- What will be the process of review?
- Who will reassess the material?
- Will it be temporarily withdrawn from circulation pending a decision?
- What will happen to the material if the objection is sustained? not sustained? For example will it be made available to all students, no students, a restricted number of students?
- How will the objector be informed of the school's procedures and decision?

A review committee should think carefully before agreeing to the withdrawal of useful material from all students in response to an objection from a minority group.

Culling

Culling the resource collection, sometimes referred to as weeding, involves the removal and disposal of resources that are considered unsuitable for continued inclusion in the collection. It is as important as the initial selection of resources. When the school's collection development policy is being formulated, guidelines for culling should be included so that they can be endorsed as school policy.

As with evaluation of the collection, culling should be a continuous and regular process. By using some of the appraisal methods already suggested in this section and other appraisal methods developed by the teacher-librarian, a systematic approach to examining the collection will be established, and culling will not be restricted to a specific time in the year.