Why COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT is important

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"Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced." –James Baldwin (1962)

When a school librarian comes into a new space, collection development can seem to be an overwhelming and daunting task, especially when you see so many books in a space and reports to review, along with getting to know the school community the library will serve. As school librarians we know collection development is important, but is knowing this fact enough? There can be thousands of print and digital books in a school library to review and maintain. Whether you are a new or returning school librarian, knowing how collection development impacts students, teachers, and curriculum is the true "why" to taking on this critical component of school librarianship. Our learners are the reason for pushing ourselves to take on what can seem to be an enormous task.

Collection development impacts learners, teachers, and curriculum in so many ways. School librarians carefully select materials to compliment and support the curricular needs of the many content and ancillary areas taught in the various grade levels. The school library materials purchased offer teachers an opportunity to broaden and deepen the lessons and units taught. School library materials gathered by teachers for units are used to pique learners' interests and expand their learning experiences. Learners also access the variety of fiction available for pleasure reading, a critical step in building life-long readers.

Now that we know "the why" what should be done next? To begin, "you must (1) know your standards, (2) know your learners, (3) know the curriculum, and (4) identify your selection criteria." (Kerby 2019, 9). The AASL Standards has

collection development alignments with the Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage Shared Foundations. In each Shared Foundation, there are school library Domains and Alignments that address access to materials, reiterate the importance of providing materials for all learners in the school community, and emphasize maintaining a collection that "supports the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of the range of learners and their communities" (AASL 2018, School Library II.B.1).

Standards Resources for Collection Development

Many states have their own school library standards that may include guidelines or requirements regarding collection development. In Texas the *School Library Program Standards* guide school librarians in building a strong, effective school library, including collection development recommendations. The Texas library standards and AASL Standards were written at the same time, and both are rooted in good library practice. The Texas standards can be helpful guidance to school librarians in reviewing and updating their collection development process.

The standards note that school library collections should provide materials that "support student inquiry and interests, are developmentally appropriate, culturally inclusive, and align with state and district learning standards" (Strand 2, Dimension 1, Expectation 1, 13), and that these materials should be a "carefully curated collection of current materials in a variety of formats." In addition, the standards state, "the library encourages students to read a variety of literature for information and pleasure" (Strand 3, Dimension 1, 20).

In the reading section, the standards state, "library materials (should) reflect diversity, student choice for leisure reading, and reading for information as well as the needs of the curriculum and state standards" (Strand 3, Dimension 3, 22). This is reflected in the expectation that review tools and authoritative sources are used when selecting materials for the campus library and is reiterated in the professional leadership section.

The Texas standards also include a "Collection Refresh Rate" of between 5 percent and 1 percent each year (Appendix 7, Dimension 6, 44), which means weeding outdated or worn items and replacing books when updating sections of the collection. The Texas standards recommend the collection be evaluated yearly for average copyright age, number of materials per student, and circulation data. Rubrics are provided for school librarians to evaluate and set goals for weeding and purchasing materials annually. They recommend updating the library collection development policy annually.

Once school library policies are evaluated and updated, school librarians should make sure administrators are informed of the updates and post them widely so that all stakeholders are aware of the school library's policies.

Training Tools and Other Resources

Before a school librarian purchases material, it is vital to know current collection information. This can be achieved by running the catalog through collection analysis tools. **Collection analysis provides insight into weaknesses regarding collection age, quantity, and age of materials.** The school librarian should run several collection analysis reports to get an overall picture of the collection.

FIGURE 2.2

National School Library Standards: School Library Domains and Alignments for Collection Development

Shared Foundations	School Library Domains and Alignments
I. Inquire	**B. CREATE:** The school library enables generation of new knowledge by: • I.B.1. Providing experiences with and **access to resources, information, ideas, and technology for all learners** in the school community.
II. Include	**A. THINK:** The school library supports balanced perspectives through resources and learning opportunities by: • II.A.3. Providing a **comprehensive variety** of resources. **B. CREATE:** The school library represents all members and their place in a global learning community by: • II.B.1. Establishing and maintaining a collection of reading and information **materials in formats that support the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of the range of learners and their communities.** **C. SHARE:** The school library facilitates opportunities to experience diverse ideas by: • II.C.2. Promoting the use of **high-quality and high-interest literature in formats that reflect the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners** and their communities. • II.C.3. Constructing a learning environment that fosters the sharing of **a wide range of viewpoints and ideas**. **D. GROW:** The school library builds empathy and equity within the global learning community by: • II.D.1. Ensuring that all learning needs are met through access to information and ideas located in **a diverse collection of sufficient size** for the learner population and supported by reliable hardware and software.
III. Collaborate	**A. THINK:** The school library facilitates opportunities to integrate collaborative and shared learning by: • III.A.2. Leading inquiry-based learning opportunities that **enhance the information, media, visual, and technical literacies** of all members of the school community.
IV. Curate	**A. THINK:** The school library provides problem-based learning experiences and environments by: • IV.A.2. Adopting a dynamic **collection-development plan** to ensure that adequate resources **reflect current and in-depth knowledge**. **B. CREATE:** The school library promotes selection of appropriate resources and tools for information use by: • IV.B.3. Employing a **dynamic collection policy that includes selection and retention criteria for all materials** within the collection. **D. GROW:** The school library engages the learning community in exploring resources by: • IV.D.2. **Maintaining a collection of sufficient breadth and currency to be pertinent to the school's program of studies.**
V. Explore	**A. THINK:** The school library supports learners' personal curiosity by: • V.A.2. Fostering opportunities for learners to demonstrate personal curiosity and creation of knowledge through **engaging with a wide variety of resources and technology**.
VI. Engage	**D. GROW:** The school library supports individual responsibility for information use by: • VI.D.2. Providing an engaging learning environment that **supports innovative and ethical use of information and information technologies**.

Source: Excerpted from the AASL *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries*, standards.aasl.org, © 2018 American Library Association.

IF YOUR CAMPUS IS NOT DIVERSE IT'S EVEN MORE IMPERATIVE TO PURCHASE DIVERSE MATERIALS SO THAT LEARNERS CAN BE PROVIDED A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD THEY LIVE IN.

The collection should include formats such as print, audio, e-book, and graphic versions of materials. In addition, relevancy, diversity, equity, age appropriateness, and variety should be considered. Any outdated materials or books with negative stereotypes should be weeded. Notes should be taken on topics, genres, and Dewey sections that are missing from the collection to seek out materials for possible inclusion.

Knowing which professional review sources can be used and the number of professional review sources required are proactive ways to determine whether purchases are a fit for your elementary, middle, or high school libraries. School librarians should consider book reviews supplied by *Kirkus Reviews, BookList, School Library Journal, The Horn Book,* and *Voice of Youth Advocates* (*VOYA*); these should be considered primary review sources as they are created by experienced librarians in the field.

There are also many secondary reviews sources, such as Classroom

Bookaday, Nerdy Book Club, and more, that can also be employed to keep abreast of the new materials published as well as internet sources such as GoodReads, blogs, and social media mavens who regularly share book reviews.

Gathering Suggestions from Your Community

Engaging your community to solicit feedback is imperative in the collection development process. These include, but are not limited to, learners, teachers, administrators, and community members. Collecting wish lists can be done in a variety of fun, creative ways. Setting up a Google Form allows users to submit requests; a URL short link or QR code offers opportunities for easy access for learners to submit requests for new materials around the school library. These same links and codes can also be included in school print or digital newsletters. Also, don't underestimate the importance of just-in-time conversations; these personal interactions can lead to additional suggestions for library purchases.

Creating a student advisory group is another way of garnering collection suggestions. Student and student/parent book clubs are additional sources for suggestions. Advertising

collection recommendation tools at parent gatherings increases visibility and often brings additional input for a school library collection.

Another resource are publisher and vendor reviews. Many book vendors and publishers share book reviews and positive book blurbs from other authors and readers online and on the back of the book cover.

Award lists are additional collection development sources librarians can use for purchases. See table 1 for a list of American Library Association-sponsored awards and recommendations.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Finally, we specifically want to address equity, diversity, and inclusion. For our purposes, we refer to the following We Need Diverse Book definition of diversity as it encompasses what we feel supports the needs of all learners and school communities:

> We recognize all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities*****, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities.

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDED YEARLY LISTS	
Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC)	Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)
Mildred L. Batcheldor	Alex Awards
Pura Belpré Award	Edwards Awards
Randolph Caldecott Award	Morris Award
Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal	Nonfiction Award
Randolph Newbery Award	Printz Award
Odyssey Award for Excellence in Audiobook Production	
Robert F. Sibert Award	

Table 1. American Library Association–sponsored awards for collection development consideration.

We subscribe to a broad definition of disability, which includes but is not limited to physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, chronic conditions, and mental illnesses (this may also include addiction). Furthermore, we subscribe to a social model of disability, which presents disability as created by barriers in the social environment, due to lack of equal access, stereotyping, and other forms of marginalization. (n.d.)

The definition above challenges us to consider the make-up of the students we serve to intentionally purchase books highlighting representation. If your campus is not diverse it's even more imperative to purchase diverse materials so that learners can be provided a global perspective of the world they live in. The books you purchase will offer learners opportunities to broaden and expand their understanding of the world, preparing readers for the global society they will be living in.

Diverse literature also broadens our understanding of cultures, ways of life, and the lives of others. While nonfiction selections can provide historical context, reading fiction selections that include characters with different abilities, cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds help build empathy and help readers change their understanding of those differences.

If we want our school library spaces to be welcoming, inclusive, and diverse, we must make a commitment to do our own personal learning around equity, diversity, and inclusion and be courageous in implementing the important takeaways from this learning. Every learner deserves our commitment to intentionally purchase materials that reflect our school community and the world outside this community.

Final Thoughts

Each school librarian's collection development journey is unique, but the foundational tools mentioned here will give the librarian a solid place to start. The most important thing to remember is that every collection and campus is unique. To fully support a campus, the school librarian must know both the collection and campus community well. This takes time, which means forming a two-to four-year plan to document needs and intentionally plan for purchases. Along with reflecting and referencing your plan yearly, it's important to check for any curriculum updates and changing needs of your school community.

Collection development work is never completed; it's an ongoing process that continues due to new books being released, curriculum being updated, and the learning needs of readers changing. The constant throughout this process is the school librarian. AASL supports the position that "reading is the core of personal and academic competency" (AASL 2018, 13). This responsibility is one that requires a school librarian's leadership, focus, and persistence; the impacts of all this work will ensure a collection that reflects readers' interests while also supporting the academic needs of the school—a true win-win for everyone.

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