

## Books Selection and Collection Strength

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### Abstract

The issue of limited library collections is continuously voiced among the library users. Its include the issues of lacking of books, books are not suitable to students, and many others criticize come out from users. In relation to that, the strengths of books collections are doubt by users. The strengths of book collections depend on the selection process and criteria of books selection itself. This relate with the selection activities which involved the faculty team as selectors. This study presents the faculty attitudes in books selection pertaining to priority, intention and criteria consideration and its relationships with collections strength. Questionnaires were distributed to 320 random targeted respondents who involved in academic books selection. The analyses were undertaken using SPSS. Descriptive findings showed moderate results in three variables measured where the mean value was in the range 3.96 to 4.60 on a 5-point Likert. Besides that, the results also indicate a positive and moderate relationship between priority, intention, criteria consideration and collections strength. The insights of this study could be useful to library management in enhancing their collection building.

**Keywords:** Books Selection, Collections Strength, Faculty Selectors, Academic Library

### Introduction

With the advancement and spreading of information and knowledge globally, academic libraries facing the issues regarding their roles and activities. Parallel with these phenomena, the academic libraries importance become increase and expand. The activities within the libraries including the collection development activity also has no exception to this reality. Collection development as described by Reitz (2014) is the process of planning and develop a suitable and balanced collections of library resources over period of years, based on constantly assess the information needs of the library's user, analyzing the statistics of usage, as well as the demographic projection, and it is normally forced by the budget constraints. Additionally, collection development involves the formulation of selection criteria, the routine selection activity and also the deselection decisions.

Selection is the heart of collection process. It is the process of deciding which materials to be acquire for a library collection or simply the right book for the right reader at the right time.

Selection decisions are usually made on the basis of reviews and standard collection development tools by librarians designated as selectors in specific subject areas, based on their interests and fields of specialization. In academic libraries, selection may also be done by members of the teaching faculty in their disciplines. Library patrons also recommend titles for purchase, especially in libraries that provide a suggestion box.”

Despite that purpose, academic libraries are required to fulfil their users’ needs, accomplish their organization’s objectives and goals, as well as fitting the budgetary constraints of their parent organization. This crucial task hence need a major collaboration between the library and faculties so that a comprehensive collection is developed. Here, the roles of faculty selectors are pondering. Monographs collection need to be selected first before being acquired by library. This selection activity might involve not only the subject librarians, but also the faculty members (Munro & Philps, 2008). Therefore, in order to ensure that this monograph collections are maintained and align with library collection, it is crucial for library to assess their selections practice with respects to the faculty involvement. This paper attempts to describe the results of the study which aims to examine the faculty attitudes in books selection towards collections strength. The objectives are:

- i. To determine the faculty attitudes in books selection pertaining to priority, intention, criteria consideration and collections strength.
- ii. To examine the relationship between faculty members attitudes in books selection pertaining to priority, intention, criteria consideration and collections strength.

## **Literature Review**

### **Collections Strength**

In defining the concept of collections strength, the theory by father of library science, Ranganathan (1988) is suit-enough and still relevant until today. According to Ranganathan’s Five Laws of Library Science are: 1) Books are for use 2) Every reader his/her book 3) Every book its reader 4) Save the time of the reader 5) The library is a growing organism.

In relation to that, the major aims for reviewing collection development practices is to find an improvement or best practices towards building up collections that are comprehensive besides can fulfil the needs of their users completely. Duncan and O’Gara (2015) in their study of building holistic and agile collection development, seek to discover on how responsive the library resources were, found that the concepts of holistic in collections does not mean the library needs to appraise and evaluate everything related to their collections practices, but rather ensure that the built collections can served their communities effectively by remaining conversation with its users. In other study by Khan and Bhatti (2016) revealed that several factors have been recognized for building effective library collections in the academic libraries and among other it includes the selection and roles of selectors in selecting the reading materials itself.

### **Priority**

Prioritizing can be assumed as the most important thing when dealing in book selection. Priority has been described in Great Soviet Encyclopedia (2010) as the predetermined assignment of value, or importance, to different types of people or events. In collection development, priority referred to the target audience or appropriateness of the materials selected to be added into collections. Certain library might put their students’ needs as the first priority in selecting book for. While another might prioritize the respective subjects or format or genre as their first priority. It is therefore, to ensure that the constituents served

by library receive the best possible materials to meet user needs, library must set the priorities before spending. Recognizing the important of this priority factor, researcher aim to study this priority factor with the collection strength.

There are several previous studies that relates priority, selection and collections (Kuo, 2000; Munro & Philips, 2008; Austenfeld, 2009; Hallyburton, 2013). Setting the priority is indeed one of the dominant factors towards the comprehensiveness of library collections. Austenfeld (2009) outlines priority setting steps used at a small academic library to add materials supporting new university program. Those steps recommend that in building the best collections, selectors should take into considerations for whom to serve and what they have. This statement supported by Kusik and Vargas (2009) in which stated that in building “holistic collection development”, priority should stem from current patron needs (electronic resources over print, new academic disciplines being served, etc.) rather than traditional funding models with set amounts to be spent on specific formats, genres, and disciplines.

### **Intention**

The description of intention may involve a wider opinions and topics to be discovered. Intention in this study is referred to the purpose or aim towards determining the necessity factors in ordering books. Among other, it includes the determining of purpose books being ordered. Such questions arrived from this intention factor such as; are the books being ordered based on the needs for teaching? For research? For students use? Or to fulfil their personal interest? Hence, the intention factor contributes to the strength of collections in terms of it relevancy to library users. To add, the intention of choosing suitable books for the audiences is important as Bogel (2011) in his survey found that users will borrow books based on recommendation from friends, librarians and other adults which are their lecturers. To relate, it shows that the faculty attitudes towards recommending books indirectly impact the total use of library collections.

On the other hand, Vignau and Meneses (2005) stated that to develop a collection in a university library requires measures that avoid taking random or subjective decisions that do not respond to specific qualities. It is necessary to take into account an indicator of the great importance owed to the quality of the library collection, and it is therefore it is advisable to count on a collection development policy that governs the selection and acquisition of documents. The policy ought to be clear and one of the aspects that should be includes in the policy is “they are a description of what it intends to fulfil” (Vignau & Meneses, 2005), in this case, the intention. Their study also supported by Arango (1994) that claimed postulates that govern collection development must be geared principally to the needs of the community, more than an abstract standard of quality and to be effective it ought to respond to the total needs, more than the needs of specific users.

### **Criteria Consideration**

In the selection of library collections, issue related with criteria consideration must be concerned. This includes the subject contents, purpose of materials being selected as well as the formats or types of collections. In this technology savvy environment, most libraries try to acquire materials in digital formats or e-resources including e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-magazines and etc. (Kaur & Walia, 2016). Yet, it doesn't mean that this type of materials should be neglected or take it in easy way, perhaps major concerned should focus on the committee that responsible to select these digital materials. To add, Duncan and O'Gara (2015) through their study in building holistic and agile collection development and

assessment, suggested that due to the budget constraints, libraries should develop alternative methods to minimize title-by-title selection of library materials by initiating the demand-driven acquisitions.

Hence, traditional collection development criteria will include subject coverage, price, currency, inclusion on reading lists and requests from academic staff. However, in this technology era, e-books become more popular material selection and number of large-scale studies offer insights into various criteria and drivers for selection of e-book content. Vasileiou, Hartley and Rowley (2012) in their study argued that additional criteria in e-book selection includes the cost of e-books, high usage/demand by the library users, business models and licensing arrangements, platform interfaces, and subject coverage.

### Methodology

A survey research method was adopted to address the research questions. In this study, a set of questionnaires has been distributed to random academicians in one higher institution in Malaysia. The printed and online survey were distributed to selected academicians in faculties. 320 questionnaires are distributed to the respondents via printed form survey and through email. The online version of questionnaire is made up via the Google Form and have been emailed to respondents' email address. Out of 320 questionnaires, there were 173 which is 54 percent questionnaires returned back to the researcher. The respondents involved academicians in respective faculties which includes Professors, Associate Professors, Doctorates, Senior Lecturers, Lecturers and Tutors.

Likert-scale was used to assess the faculty attitudes in books selection and collections strength. The range of scale was starting from scale one (strongly disagree) until five (strongly agree). Data analysis was done by generating the value of raw data. Since, this study used the questionnaire as the instrument to collect the data, the process of analyzing is using the appropriate and most common software which is Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22.

### Results And Discussions

#### Reliability Analysis

The reliability test was performed on each dimension to determine the internal consistency and the reliability. The Cronbach's alpha reliability test results (table 1) show the value for priority (0.767), intention (0.781), criteria consideration (0.868) and collections strength (0.845). Based on the value, it is clearly shown that the values were more than 0.7 and automatically proves that all the data instrument of this study is trustworthy and reliable as well. Therefore, it can be used for further analysis.

Table 1

*Reliability Test Results*

	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
1	Priority	0.767
2	Intention	0.781
3	Criteria Consideration	0.868
4	Collections Strength	0.845

**Faculty Attitudes Pertaining To Priority**

Priority here means the priority audience of ordered books. Table 2 shows the mean score of priority was high in which faculty selectors was agreed that *they select book that appropriate for respective subject* (mean = 4.45) and *they select books that are appropriate for faculty* (mean = 4.24).

Table 2

*Mean Score of Priority*

	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
1	I select books that are appropriate for faculty	4.24	0.712
2	I select books that are appropriate for respective subject	4.45	0.872
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.34</b>	<b>0.708</b>

**Faculty Attitudes Pertaining To Intention**

Intention in this study is referred to the purpose or aim towards determining the necessity factors in ordering books. Table 3 shows the mean score of intention was high. *Faculty selectors agreed that they order library books based on the needs for teaching* (mean = 4.65), *they order library books based on the needs for research* (mean = 4.60) and *they order library books based on the needs for student use* (mean = 4.57).

Table 3

*Mean Score of Intention*

	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
1	I order library books based on the needs for teaching	4.65	0.477
2	I order library books based on the needs for research	4.60	0.492
3	I order library books based on the needs for student use	4.57	0.592
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.60</b>	<b>0.442</b>

**Faculty Attitudes Pertaining To Criteria Consideration**

Criteria consideration in this study is defined as a matter weighed or taken into consideration when doing selection. Table 4 shows the mean score of criteria consideration in which the overall mean score is 3.96. Faculty selectors was agreed that they *consider well-known authors in book selection* (mean = 3.99) and they *consider well-known publishers in book selection* (mean = 3.95).

Table 4

*Mean Score of Criteria Consideration*

	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
1	I consider well-known publishers in book selection	3.95	0.851
2	I consider well-known authors in book selection	3.99	0.964
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>0.796</b>

### Faculty Attitudes Pertaining To Collections Strength

Collection strength in this study is refer to the use of library materials that can satisfied users need in which the adequacy, relevancy and perceived value of materials were taking into consideration besides other indicator of strength. Table 5 shows the mean score of collections strength with overall mean score 4.43. Particularly, the faculty selector was highly agreed that *their library collections have good quality* (mean = 4.58). They also agreed that *their library collections are helpful for research purpose* (mean = 4.46), followed by *their library collections are helpful for students' assignments* (mean = 4.45), *their library collections are valuable* (mean = 4.42), *their library collections are relevant* (mean = 4.41) and last but not least, *their library collections are adequate* (mean = 4.26).

Table 5  
*Mean Score of Collections Strength*

	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	My library collections are adequate	4.26	0.635
2	My library collections are relevant	4.41	0.493
3	My library collections are valuable	4.42	0.539
4	My library collections are helpful for students' assignments	4.45	0.544
5	My library collections are helpful for research purpose	4.46	0.500
6	My library collections have good quality	4.58	0.495
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>0.418</b>

### Relationships between Faculty Attitudes and Collection Strength

Table 6 shows the correlation between the three dimensions of faculty attitudes (priority, intention and criteria consideration) and collections strength. The following correlations are significant. Collections strength is positively and moderately correlated with intention ( $r=0.558$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and priority ( $r=0.458$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), while collections strength is positively but low correlated with criteria consideration ( $r=0.207$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

Table 6  
*Correlations between faculty attitudes and collections strength*

	PR	INT	CC	COL
Priority	1			
Intention	.297**	1		
Criteria Consideration	.579**	.410**	1	
Collections Strength	.458**	.558**	.207**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### Discussion And Conclusion

The findings reveal that collections strength is positively and moderately correlated with intention and priority, while collections strength is positively but low correlated with criteria consideration. In this study, intention includes the determining of purpose books being ordered. In higher institution, they committed to focus in serving their students through the quality of teaching and at the same time act parallel with the research development, as well

as focusing on students' needs. The relationship between intention and collections strength remark the quality of library collections as the faculty selectors committed to focus in serving their students through the quality of materials selected and thus contribute to the overall satisfaction of users which are students. This is supported by Munro and Philips (2008) which revealed that in one university of their study, academics and librarians share the responsibility for their collection. Hence, the 'teaching' and 'research' material are selected by academic staff in fulfilling the needs of their students as users of university's library.

Secondly, the relationship between collections strength and priority. In doing books selection, priority is an important factor to be taken into consideration. This determine the appropriateness of the materials selected to be added into library collections. In this study, faculty selectors prioritize the books based on the respective subjects and also select books that are appropriate for their faculty. Based from this finding, it shows that the collections are strength enough as the faculty selectors selected the books based on their expertness. This result indicates that the library collection is built from the expert from the field whereas the specific subject become prioritize in building relevant library collections. However, Munro and Philips (2008) argued that even though faculty members have a specialised knowledge in their subject areas, reliance on academics for collection development can result in a narrow focus in collection building leading to gaps in the collection.

The results show the moderate answer from respondents and this demonstrates that faculty attitudes alone did not contribute much to strength of library collections. However, the collaboration between faculty members and library organization have seen not only give benefits to the organizations individually, but also will value users in overall. Since there is a mutual understanding between faculties and library, it is recommended for management of library to take an opportunity by providing a good information on library direction in collection development to the faculties. The policies involved, as well as the budgets allocations should be presented to the faculties representative so that they can understand and help library towards developing good quality collections.

Collection Development Policy (CDP) has to be revised from time to time according to the need and situation of the library. Library must prepare Collection Development Policy (CDP) in general as well as specific guidelines. Besides, policies should include the existing strengths of the collection for the selectors' reference. For a future study, it is recommended that another research will includes not only academicians as respondents, but also the library users and the library staff itself to evaluate on the strength of collections with additions of more dimensions to be studied and taking considerations the other factors of collections strength too.

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