

**Measuring Diversity in Collection Development:
Strategies for the New Millennium**

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Abstract

Developing and maintaining a diverse collection of materials in support of library users' information and research needs is of increasing importance to many libraries. Given that diversity has taken on new importance in collection development, how do libraries assess their collections to ensure that all acquired materials are meeting these needs? This program will focus on the work of a task force at a large academic library system and the methods used in measuring diversity in collection development. This task force was asked to identify strategies to assess the library's efforts to acquire diversity-related materials for the collection and measure the diversity dimensions of the collection. Through this investigation, the task force identified both quantitative and qualitative strategies to assess the collection's diversity, as well as key training needs and opportunities to assist in and facilitate the implementation of the identified strategies. This program will discuss the common approaches to collection assessment, the complexities of diversity in the collection, and highlight recommendations for measuring diversity collections. Focus will be on print and digital collections in addition to the development of resources by the library to facilitate this type of assessment on an ongoing basis.

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Diversity Objectives: Penn State

- Reasonable representation from different minority groups
- Representation from different countries and cultures
- Reasonable balance of gender
- Diversity in curriculum content
- Climate supportive of different minority groups and cultures

"What Do We Mean By Diversity," John Brighton, former Provost, Penn State, 1993.



Diversity Defined: University Libraries

“The University Libraries provide The Pennsylvania State University communities with equitable access to all of its information resources and services.

This access is guaranteed without regard to race, ethnicity, language, age, religion or spiritual beliefs, health, gender, sexual orientation, physical capabilities, or geographic origin.”

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/diversity.html>



Diversity in Collection Development

“Support of the University’s diversity plan by integrating concepts of diversity within collections in all disciplines and strengthening subject expertise in diversity studies.

Design services and resources to accommodate the various learning styles and skill levels of the diverse university community.”

A Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State: University Libraries Strategic Plan 2004 – 2009

http://www.equity.psu.edu/framework/updates_04_09/pdf/libraries_04_09rev.pdf



Diversity Codes

- **Implemented in 1994**
- **Two-letter code assigned to firm orders**
- **Multiple codes could be used to reflect multiple dimensions of diversity**
- **Report generated annually to indicate how much each fund spent on diversity coded materials**



Diversity Codes continued...

Corresponded with minority and underrepresented groups as defined in diversity statement

AA – African-American

AG – Ageism

AR – Arab-American

AS – Asian-American

**AD – Disabled/
Physically
Challenged**

CP – General

Multicultural

GL – GLBT

**HA – Hispanic-
American**

JS – Jewish Studies

NA – Native American

WS – Women's Studies



Diversity Codes continued...

Pros

- Provided systematic method to measure diversity
- Easy to use
- Minimal overhead

Cons

- Inappropriate code assignment
- Depended on selectors to use during ordering
- Only used for firm orders – not used for approval plan, gifts, electronic resources, etc.
- Easy to confuse with other coding used for program or international dimension



Diversity in Collections Task Force

- **Created August 17, 2007 by Associate Deans for University Park and Campus Libraries**
- **Charged to “determine how the Libraries can most effectively measure the diversity of its many collections”**
- **Better assessment of diversity in collections sought as part of push for improved assessment of diversity overall in Libraries**
- **Report due February 1, 2008; recommendations reviewed by Collection Development Council**



Representation on the Task Force

Five University Libraries Faculty Members

- **Selectors of diversity related materials**
- **Current and past members of Diversity Committee**
- **New faculty member -- fresh perspective**
- **Selectors from different campus locations**
- **Included a mix of diverse faculty, including those from underrepresented groups**



Strategy: Literature Review

- Reviewed collection assessment approaches from a general and diversity perspective
- Literature specific to collection assessment for diversity was scarce
- Much of the literature is from the mid-1990s and focused on single diversity collections



Strategy: Reconsider Codes

- **“Retired” diversity codes were examined**
- **Negatives of using codes or a similar system outweighed the positives**
- **Does not provide for passive assessment**
- **Difficult to enforce equitably across a large system**



Strategy: Quantitative

- **Reviewed internal tools – Sirsi Director’s Station and Workflows Reports**
- **Examined the suitability of using OCLC Collection Analysis**
- **Considered traditional collection assessment frameworks including conspectus and brief test**



Quantitative Recommendations

1. Use OCLC Collection Analysis as an assessment tool

- No categorization for diversity
- Assessment based on “basket” of LC Call Number ranges
- Compare collection strengths and weaknesses to:
 - All World Cat Libraries
 - All CIC (Academic Big Ten) Libraries
 - A single CIC (Academic Big Ten) Library



Quantitative Recommendations

2. Periodic assessment of the collection

- Patron centered assessment
- Comparative assessment to bibliographies and core subject lists
- Quantitative assessments using:
 - Reporting tools of library automation system
 - Cataloging and acquisitions reports
 - Automated data warehouse systems



Quantitative Recommendations

3. Retain the Diversity Fund

- Penn State has a separate fund used to purchase diversity materials across system
- Fund is assigned a separate selector and budget
- Fund maintains a “core” collection of diversity materials in the system



Quantitative Recommendations

4. Develop diversity-related tools

- **Create diversity conspectus--systematic measure of diversity across a collection**
- **Formulate brief tests focusing on diversity and used to measure a portion of a collection against common standards**
- **Construct diversity-related bibliographies of materials in various subject fields**



Strategy: Qualitative

- **Complement quantitative data**
- **Recognizes complexity of what is being measured**
- **Additional component for providing an inclusive view of our collection**
 - **Location**
 - **Development**



Qualitative Recommendations

Selector-Driven Recommendations

- Annual stewardship letters drafted by selectors that outline what diversity selections were made
- Creating a collection development statement specific to diversity
- Creating subject guides that highlight diversity collections and electronic resources



Training Recommendations

- **Diversity Collection Development Retreat**
- **Develop an E-series of workshops focused on diversity**
- **Adding diversity elements to the Collection Development Companion**



Summary

- **Represent a mix of qualitative, quantitative, and training methods**
- **Decided against a truly quantitative measure similar to diversity codes**
- **Training essential to success**
- **Suggested diversity representation in collection development decisions**



Questions?

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