# Western Libraries Collection Development Policy

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# Introduction

This collection development policy is intended to provide a framework for the selection, management, and assessment of materials for the Western Libraries collections. It sets priorities and guidelines for the types of resources the Libraries should own and access and is intended as a complement to other guiding documents, including [the](https://library.wwu.edu/western-libraries-strategic-plan-2018-2024) Libraries’ strategic plan.

# Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles

### Vision

Western Libraries provides access to library collections in support of Western as a diverse, student-centered, global-minded university. We complement and enhance university teaching and research missions and strive to eliminate barriers so that all members of the university community can engage fully in the exploration of knowledge, curiosity, critical thinking, and self-awareness. In concert with library services, our collections help library users:

* **Evaluate** and challenge traditional and oppressive norms and practices
* Practice **inquiry** for gaining and sharing knowledge
* Develop a sense of **agency** for managing one’s own learning
* **Collaborate** as respectful, productive, and ethical members of a diverse and inclusive intellectual community

### Goals

Western Libraries personnel will develop, manage, and provide access to collections that advance the Libraries’ overall mission and the following specific goals:

* Support the university’s **curricular** needs
* Provide **equitable access** to a growing, changing body of information
* Fuel **original research**
* Meet extracurricular needs and foster personal growth and **lifelong learning**
* Highlight, preserve, and connect people to a **diversity of perspectives** and experiences—whether in their curriculum, research, or extracurricular life.

### Guiding Principles

The Western Libraries strives to build and manage dynamic, current collections in a variety of formats. In order to do this—and meet the goals and vision articulated above—we are guided by the following principles:

* **Timeliness**. Users should have access to library materials in a timely manner, whether they are pulling a book from the shelf, requesting a purchase, or receiving items through Western’s resource sharing networks. (The definition of “reasonably timely” will vary based on the material in question and the goals outlined above.)
* **Collaboration**. Western’s library collections exist within the context of regional, national, and global peer libraries. In some areas, we carry greater responsibility to grow—and share—collections on behalf of the greater good. In other areas, we may supplement local holdings with efficient access to materials from regional and national partners, via consortia like the Orbis Cascade Alliance, commercial services, or traditional resource sharing.
* **Engagement**. Library personnel are full partners with the university curriculum and should actively seek input from all stakeholders. This is particularly important for defining and developing diverse and inclusive collections.
* **Flexibility**. Library collections and related practices must be nimble enough to adapt to a constantly changing landscape. We must not be bound to particular access models, formats, or acquisitions strategies. Collections must be dynamic, vibrant, and ever evolving.
* **Usability**. Library materials must be discoverable, usable, and accessible for all users.
* **Advocacy**. Library personnel are stewards of shared resources and have a responsibility to manage funds and human resources sustainably. However, we should not merely “make do” with stagnant budgets and available labor. Library personnel should advocate—to university administrators, commercial publishers, and library vendors—on behalf of our users and the broader information community.
* **Inclusion**. Western’s library collections should surface and celebrate a diversity of perspectives, especially those that have historically been marginalized and underrepresented. Collections should be accessible to all users, regardless of background or ability. Collections should reduce barriers to information and challenge “gatekeeper” models of information access. Collections should come from a variety of sources, including those outside the commercial mainstream.

These principles are applied to collection development and management decisions and are referenced and incorporated throughout the rest of this policy, below.

# Roles & Responsibilities

Responsibility for developing and managing the Libraries’ collections is distributed across multiple divisions and units within the Libraries. Key participants in the collections lifecycle include:

### Director of Collections

The Director of Collections is responsible for developing, implementing, and promoting a vision for user-centered collections and services. This includes monitoring and communicating trends; leading unit managers; overseeing the collections budget; developing documentation and communication strategies; managing vendor relationships; engaging with the Orbis Cascade Alliance; and coordinating the assessment and development of equitable and inclusive library collections. The Director convenes the Collection Services Managers, the Scholarly Resources Group, and the Collection Maintenance Group, and is a member of the Libraries Faculty.

### Scholarly Resources Group (SRG)

Chaired by the Director of Collections, the SRG is charged with shaping the Libraries’ collections to equitably, strategically, and sustainably support the Western community, with an emphasis on teaching and learning. To that end, the group monitors the landscape—both within Western and externally—for emerging trends and collections opportunities, assesses existing resources and needs regularly, engages with University stakeholders, and plays a critical role in the decision-making processes for collections projects and strategies. The group also serves as a communication channel for collections projects and issues, and a forum for discussing collection management tools and techniques. The SRG is primarily a strategy, visioning, and communications-focused group.

### Collection Maintenance Group (CMG)

The CMG is charged as a review, advisory, and planning group which will examine issues related to the maintenance, organization, and findability of library collections. The group works broadly, across units and departments, to address collection-related concerns and will present its recommendations to appropriate library personnel. The CMG includes representation from Teaching & Learning, Collection Services, and Libraries Administration. The CMG is primarily a tactical, operational, and implementation-focused group.

### Subject Teams

Subject Teams play a critical role in shaping library strategy and developing library collections, both autonomously (via Team-based collection development funds) and as part of collective efforts within the SRG. The Teams are responsible for liaising with departments and understanding and communicating discipline-specific needs in the context of collection development and review. Members of the Subject Teams serve on the SRG and the Subject Teams Coordinator serves on the CMG.

### Collection Services Personnel

The Collection Services division of the Western Libraries facilitates and coordinates the management of the Libraries’ collections. This collection management includes stewardship of the library resource access budget and active engagement at every stage of the lifecycle of library materials. The division’s work encompasses but is not limited to the selection, acquisition, organization, delivery, and preservation of content, as well as efforts to make content discoverable and accessible; regular and ongoing collection assessment; careful monitoring of physical space; leveraging regional and national relationships to supplement local holdings; and one-on-one service to end users. Representatives from Collection Services sit on the SRG and the CMG.

### Libraries Faculty

The Libraries Faculty participate in the development and management of library collections via the SRG, the CMG, the Subject Teams, and membership in the Collection Services Division.

### Dean of Libraries

While the groups listed above are responsible for developing and managing library collections, the Dean of Libraries has final authority over the resource access budget and business decisions related to the expenditure of funds. Purchases above $100,000 and contracts over $10,000 are subject to the Dean’s review.

### Senate Library Committee (SLC)

The SLC advises and makes recommendations to the Dean of the Libraries and serves as liaison between the faculty and the Dean of Libraries. This advice concerns policies and procedures relating to the library’s development and maintenance of collections, services, facilities and budget so that faculty, students, and staff can effectively and efficiently use the library. The SLC is not a decision-making body for the Western Libraries.

In addition to these groups, certain sub-sets of the Libraries’ collection may be developed and managed by stewards not named here specifically. These stewards are identified by the Collection Maintenance Group and work in coordination with the stakeholders listed above.

Final decisions regarding the interpretation of this policy are made by the Director of Collections or their designee.

# Scope

### Formats

The Libraries acquires materials in appropriate formats, seeking to maximize access. Whenever resources are available in both electronic and print formats, and the pedagogical need does not require print, the Libraries will generally opt to acquire or provide access to the electronic version that can provide access at any time and from a variety of locations. To contain costs and manage space constraints, the Libraries avoids duplicating content in multiple formats and does not collect resources in outmoded formats (e.g., VHS, audio tapes). The Libraries acquires DVD rather than Blu-ray, except at the recommendation of the media librarian. The Libraries purchases DVD or streaming content for non-profit, educational purposes but generally cannot afford to purchase public performance rights. The Libraries does not typically buy traditional textbooks or “disposables” such as workbooks. Library collections do not include software. Exceptions must be approved by the Director of Collections.

### Consortium Collections

Western Libraries is an active partner in the Orbis Cascade Alliance, a consortium of academic libraries in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. As a member of the Alliance, the Libraries benefits from the Summit resource sharing program, which helps maximize our own resources and provide a broad spectrum of materials to our users. In general, the more Alliance libraries hold a particular item the more likely Western will be to rely on Summit for access, unless there is a compelling reason to own a local copy.

### Distinctive Collections

In addition to a general collection aligned with the needs of the university, the Libraries contains a small number of distinctive collections whose scope may differ from that of the broader collection. These include a comprehensive Mongolian Studies collection (shelved throughout the library), a large collection of children’s books and poetry (shelved on the 4th floor of Wilson), and our Northwest Collection (housed in the Wilson Reading Room).

The Libraries also collects maps, government documents, and materials to support a variety of other focused, mini collections. These niche collections are developed by designated stewards within parameters defined in individual collection management plans.

# Collection Development

### The Resource Access Budget (RAB)

The Libraries’ Resource Access Budget (RAB) is the primary source of funding for library collections at Western. The RAB is kept separate from the Libraries’ operating budget, and while operating funds may supplement the RAB at the Libraries’ discretion, RAB funds are not used to cover operational needs. Additionally, the Libraries endeavors to ensure that funding for one-time purchases (e.g., books) is not crowded out by subscription inflation costs. A portion of the RAB is reserved each year for one-time purchases like books and media.

The RAB is structured as shown in the table below. An approximate percent of total RAB expenditures is shown for each budget category (based on FY2022-23 numbers). Up-to-date RAB figures are maintained elsewhere.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Funding Source** | **Broad Budget Category** | **Specific Budget Category** | **% of RAB** |
| State Funds | Direct purchases | Subscriptions | 76% |
| One-time purchases (e.g., monographs, streaming video, digital archive purchases) | 12% |
| Limited access fees | E.g., ILL and course reserves copyright fees | 2% |
| Discovery tools | E.g., OneSearch | 8% |
| Foundation Funds | Direct purchases | Subscriptions and one-time purchases | 2% |

### Open Access (OA)

Western Libraries is committed to open principles and practices: approaches that “seek the free exchange of information and the removal of financial and legal barriers that limit access to knowledge, data, and tools” (from [the Orbis Cascade Alliance Commitment to Open Principles & Practices,](https://www.orbiscascade.org/about/news/commitment-to-open-principles/) adopted May 2021). This includes support for Open Access (OA) publications and initiatives. To that end, we provide curated discovery and access to OA resources by including them in [our online catalog, OneSearch](https://onesearch.library.wwu.edu/discovery/search?vid=01ALLIANCE_WWU:WWU&mode=advanced); [o](https://libguides.wwu.edu/az.php)ur A-Z listing of databases; and [our subject guides](https://libguides.wwu.edu/). OA resources are added to the collection based on the same general criteria as purchased resources.

Further, we commit a portion of our collections budget each year to financially support OA publications and initiatives. This includes [transformative agreements](https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2019/04/23/transformative-agreements/) with journal publishers; support for OA indexes and directories like [the Directory of Open Access Journals](https://www.doaj.org/); support for open databases like the [Indigenous Studies Portal](https://iportal.usask.ca/); participation in crowdfunding initiatives like [MIT Direct to Open](https://direct.mit.edu/books/pages/direct-to-open) or [Knowledge Unlatched](https://knowledgeunlatched.org/ku-select-library-info/); or direct payment of authors’ OA publishing fees.

### Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ADEI) in Collections

It is our goal to build collections that highlight, preserve, and connect people to a diversity of perspectives and experiences, particularly those that have historically been misrepresented by and erased from higher education, libraries, and the publishing landscape. We strive to continuously examine, interrogate, and transform our practices so that we can better amplify these voices, to the benefit of all. This commitment is reflected in our vision, goals, and guiding principles, above, as well as in each of the collection development strategies outlined below.

This section will be expanded following the 2023-24 academic year to include specific goals, metrics, and action steps.

### Prospective Collection Development (PCD)

Prospective Collection Development (PCD), often known as “librarian selection,” involves librarians pro-actively selecting materials for the collection, based on their subject expertise and knowledge of university curriculum and research interests.

The purpose of PCD within the Libraries’ portfolio of collection development strategies is to complement other collection strategies in advancing the overarching goals listed above. Specific roles for PCD include:

* Ensuring that collections are developed on behalf of all stakeholders
* Providing a framework for intentionally nimble, adaptable collection development practices informed by data, peer collaboration, and stakeholder relationships (*how* we collect)
* Intentionally shifting collections into better alignment with current curriculum (*what* we collect)
* Implementing methods and practices that intentionally surface underrepresented and marginalized voices

Within each Subject Team’s allocation, librarians use the Guiding Principles outlined above and associated questions listed below to inform selection decisions. The guidelines are not used as an exhaustive checklist for each individual purchase; however, librarians are familiar with the concepts and questions outlined below and rely on them, as much as possible, to inform collection development decisions.

Librarians ask:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Is the item reasonably priced? | Is the cost of the item justified based on the content, nature, and format of the work? Is the cost inflated? Are there ongoing fees associated with the item? | Advocacy |
| Are there restrictions on use? | Will the item be available to users equitably? Is it more, or less, usable than comparable materials (in the same or different formats)? | Advocacy |
| Is the topic a collection strength for Western? | Does Western’s collection in this topic serve as a resource to the state, the region, the country, or the world? Does it warrant deeper collection development? Is this a topic where we could rely on other institutions for depth? | Collaboration |
| Who is this work most likely to support? | Is this work more relevant to undergraduates, who may be under tighter time pressures than faculty? Should we rely on consortial collections or own the item locally?  Is the work relevant to programs or users outside of the Bellingham campus? | Collaboration, Timeliness |
| Is the topic relevant to any of the university’s institutes or centers? | Could this item support interdisciplinary research and teaching at Western? Could the item contribute to support for and connection with the university’s centers and institutes? | Engagement |
| What format might be most appropriate for the topic and treatment? | Is it a foundational or broadly applicable text that might benefit from the browseability of print? Is it a more specialized research area? | Flexibility |
| What sensitivities should be considered for this work? | Are there apparent affective reasons why patrons might want to see or read this work physically? Electronically? For example, is this a traumatic topic? Does it include traumatic imagery? | Flexibility |
| Who is the author, editor, or creator? | Is the author explicitly and publicly a member of an underrepresented, marginalized, or oppressed group?  Could adding their work to our collection help correct imbalances in the scholarly publishing ecosystem or enable underrepresented library users to see themselves reflected in the scholarly conversation?  Are there other works about this topic that might better enhance the inclusivity of our collection? | Inclusion |
| Who is the publisher? | Does the publisher or vendor’s business model align with our organizational values?  Is the publisher a non-profit, B Corp, professional society, or university press? Are they a small, independent, BIPOC-owned, or regional business?  Is the publisher—and by extension, the work—likely to be featured in every library across the region or the nation? Are they distributed through mass-market channels like Amazon, or library mass-market channels, like GOBI?  Are there comparable works by smaller, independent presses that might benefit from the business of an academic library?  Is similar content available from another vendor or publisher, e.g. a small press, a BIPOC-owned business, or as an Open Educational Resource (OER)? | Advocacy, Inclusion |
| How is the subject treated? | Does the approach represent a non-Western way of knowing? If we expanded our conception of the topic, are there other ways to understand or explore it?  If the work is about an underrepresented, marginalized, or oppressed group, what is the author’s relationship to or credibility with the affected group? What were their methods in researching and creating the work?  Does the work center a “deficit” narrative about the affected group?  What is the likelihood that the work could cause harm to members of the Western community? Can we mitigate the harm at all? Are there still compelling reasons to acquire the work? | Inclusion |
| How accessible is the work? | Who may or may not be able to use this work? Would a different format provide broader access while still meeting the need?  How many obstacles stand between the user and the work? If it is electronic, are users required to download special software or create individual accounts? If it is print, will the item be easy to find, access, and use—or are there barriers (physical or social) preventing full use?  If this is a print title, is it part of the HathiTrust corpus?  Is there a similar work in a more accessible format or on a more accessible platform that could substitute, instead? | Inclusion, Usability |
| How discoverable is the work? | Will the underrepresented aspects of this work that drove its acquisition be visible in the catalog? Could Libraries personnel enhance the records in-house if needed? | Inclusion |
| How have stakeholders been involved in identifying collection focuses? | What do we know about emerging areas of research and study based on Studio interactions and other reference inquiries? | Engagement |
| How will stakeholders be made aware of relevant acquisitions? | Will this title have broad appeal, or will it be of interest to a more targeted group of users? | Engagement |

PCD allocations, acquisitions, and methods will be assessed regularly to ensure we are meeting the Libraries’ collection development goals.

### Approval Plan Collection Development

Western uses an approval plan to streamline the acquisition of books that meet a pre-determined set of parameters (known as a profile). The approval plan vendor ships titles that match against Western’s profile directly to the Libraries for inclusion in the main circulating collection.

The purpose of the approval plan within the Libraries’ portfolio of collection development strategies is to:

* Meet user needs implied in circulation and resource sharing rates
* Acquire core, curricular-relevant materials

Within an overall allocation, the approval plan is scoped based on:

* Usage of the local collection compared against size of the local collection
* User reliance on resource sharing (I.e., Summit and ILL) within each subject area
* Qualitative input from subject librarians

The approval plan is assessed periodically to ensure we are meeting the Libraries’ collection development goals.

### Demand-Driven Acquisitions (DDA)

Western utilizes Demand-Driven Acquisitions (DDA) to build its collection based on specific purchase requests from library users.

The purpose of DDA within the Libraries’ portfolio of collection development strategies is to:

* Meet user needs in a timely and responsive way
* Address specific curricular, extracurricular, and research needs not met by other approaches to collection development

Current Western students, faculty, and staff, as well as retirees and emeritus faculty, are eligible to place DDA requests. Within an overall allocation, Collection Services personnel evaluate purchase requests based on the following criteria:

1. **Local Holdings**. Personnel review local holdings to see if the Libraries already owns the item, either in print or electronically.
2. **Summit Availability.** Personnel check Summit holdings to determine consortial availability. Items owned by eight or more Summit libraries are typically not purchased, though exceptions may be made depending on demand and availability at the point of need (e.g., if a particularly timely book is widely held but unavailable because every Summit copy is checked out).
3. **Price**. Requests for books costing more than $250 and media materials costing more than $350 must be approved by the Director of Collections.
4. **Format**. Personnel verify that the item is not an excluded or obsolete format, e.g., a textbook, workbook, exam prep book, directory, music CD or LP, or musical score.

Exceptions to the Summit availability criterion are forwarded to the Libraries’ Subject Teams for potential purchase using Prospective Collection Development (PCD) funds. Any other exceptions to the DDA criteria must be approved by the Director of Collections.

### Resource Sharing

Whenever feasible, and in alignment with the goals and guidelines described in this document, the Libraries tries to meet user needs through [resource sharing.](https://library.wwu.edu/borrowing-other-libraries-ill-summit) This is particularly true for items already owned by many neighboring libraries and for more specialized research needs that fall outside the scope of a regional, comprehensive university like Western. Current Western students, faculty, and staff, as well as retired and emeritus faculty, may request items from the print collections of other Washington, Oregon, and Idaho colleges and universities via the Summit resource sharing service. Materials not available through Summit may be available through broader interlibrary loan networks.

Resource sharing networks are a consideration in the demand-driven acquisitions workflow and during prospective collection development decision-making, both described above.

### Gifts of Library Materials

The Libraries does not accept gifts for the circulating collection, except as outlined on [the Libraries website “Donating Materials” section](https://library.wwu.edu/giving-western-libraries). For rare or archival materials, the Libraries’ [Archives & Special Collections division](https://library.wwu.edu/archives-special-collections) welcomes inquiries about potential donations suitable for its collections.

### Subscriptions

The Libraries subscribes to 200+ individual journals, 75+ databases, a handful of e-book packages, and comprehensive e-journal collections from several major academic publishers. These subscriptions are managed through the Libraries’ [subscription review process.](https://library.wwu.edu/subscription-review-scoring) Western students, faculty, and staff may [submit requests for new subscriptions](https://library.wwu.edu/subscription-review-request-form) at any time; these requests are reviewed annually alongside all existing subscriptions.

### Decision Packages

Decision packages that are approved and funded by the legislature may result in base increases to the Resource Access Budget. Traditionally these have consisted of $10,000 for each faculty line included in the decision package.

These funds are administered by the Libraries as part of the Resource Access Budget. The funds are used to develop collections in support of the relevant academic programs and are expended in close consultation with departmental faculty. Funds may be used for one-time purchases (e.g., monographs, streaming video, digital archives) or for subscriptions up to 75 percent of the total funds (in order to allow for inflationary increases).

Decision package funds are held as a separate line in the Resource Access Budget for three years, after which they cease to be earmarked for a particular program and become part of the overall RAB. At the end of each year, funds left unspent or unencumbered are pooled with any other RAB carryforward, unless prior arrangement has been made with the Director of Collections to roll funds forward for a specific purpose.

Subscriptions acquired via decision package are protected from review for three years, after which they become subject to the annual subscription review process.

### Deaccessioning Materials

The Western Libraries undertakes regular, systematic reviews of print materials to ensure the collection remains relevant and dynamic over timeand to manage the stacks capacity of the facility more strategically. As a result of these reviews, items are identified for withdrawal and routed into a quarterly withdrawal process.

Librarians consider a variety of criteria in making deselection decisions, including but not strictly limited to:

* Usage, especially for items that are older, damaged, or have wide Summit availability
* Whether items are used primarily by Western users or ILL/Summit users
* Electronic availability
* Curricular relevance
* Whether content is outdated, superseded, or duplicated
* Whether sets are incomplete
* Damage
* Whether the creator is affiliated with Western
* Historical or artifactual value

To allow newer materials a chance to be discovered, items acquired within the most recent 5 years may be excluded from review as a matter of course.

At the end of Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarter each year, library items identified for potential withdrawal will be announced to the university for review prior to being removed permanently from the collection. Members of the university community may request that an item be reinstated to the collection (pending approval by the Scholarly Resources Group) or transferred to their department.