

# ***Reference Collection Development Policy***

## **I. Purpose and Scope –**

A. This policy is designed as a guide for the selection of materials to be included in the physical Reference Collection, available on the Main Level of the Madeleine Clark Wallace Library, as well as online, available from the Library's website.

B. The collection is inclusive of material in all formats that provide factual or bibliographic information and are defined by their arrangement, treatment, or content. Reference works and indexes/databases, regardless of format, offer consultation for rapid retrieval of information rather than continuous reading and generally do not circulate. The complexity of reference works often requires librarian expertise for efficient use.

## **II. Goals and Responsibilities –**

A. While not a research library, able and obligated to collect and provide access to all possible scholarly material in certain disciplines or support all individual faculty research, we will endeavor to collect, maintain, and organize excellent access to a robust collection of reference material and article indexes, in order to:

1. support the research needs of Wheaton's evolving curriculum, and
2. support our work of teaching discipline-specific research methods to our students and faculty.

B. Research and Instruction Librarians will hold the primary responsibility for selection, review, weeding, and organizing subject and course access to reference material and article indexing, in all formats, in close collaboration with the Serials/Electronic Resources Librarian and the Director of Library Collections. Faculty members may be consulted, as well, when making selection and weeding decisions.

## **III. General Format Preferences –**

A. In general, we seek to purchase new material, purchase updated material, and purchase replacement material in digital format.

1. Motivations for this preference include:

- a. improved access for users (multiple simultaneous users, remote access),
- b. generally improved functionality within and among resources,
- c. interest in moving towards a more unified digital collection, and
- d. physical shelving space limitations.

2. Funding repercussions of this preference include:

- a. potential revision of the funding structure for serials/electronic resources and monographs, and
- b. increased funding needs for digital materials.

B. In general, we cannot afford to purchase new material, purchase updated material, or purchase replacement material in multiple formats.

C. In addition to removing material that has been replaced with a licensed or purchased digital format counterpart, we will also consider removal of items that have been largely and adequately replaced by freely available digital material.

D. These preferences are subject to the following exceptions.

## **IV. Exceptions –**

### **A. Content Availability**

1. If desired new or updated content is available only in print format, we may choose to purchase the print.
2. Likewise, if replacement material is not available in digital format, we may choose to retain the print.

### **B. Prohibitive Cost**

1. If there is a prohibitive price difference between the digital and print formats in purchasing new or updated content, we may choose to purchase the print.
2. Likewise, if replacement material is extremely costly, we may choose to retain the print.

### **C. Format Functionality**

1. Even if new, updated, or replacement content is both available and affordable in digital format, we still may choose to purchase or retain the print if we feel either:
  - a. the functionality of the specific digital platform is significantly inferior to the print, or
  - b. the print format provides an important inherent functionality to the material that cannot be duplicated in digital format, regardless of specific platform (eg. – certain type of index use, browsability, useful for a discipline in a specific way, etc).

### **D. Historical or Special Value**

1. If current print material is deemed valuable for historical or special reasons, every effort will be made to retain it, regardless of digital replacement or duplication.
2. However, if retained solely for this exception, the material should be moved to a more appropriate collection (stacks, archives, etc), if possible.

### **E. Preservation of Access**

1. We will almost certainly remove print material when we are confident that the free or licensed digital replacements are highly likely to be preserved, and similar access at similar cost will be maintained, into the foreseeable future (eg. – JSTOR, US Government publications, etc), in addition to meeting all other above criteria.
2. We will more carefully review whether to retain our own local, duplicate access to material that could be replaced by free or licensed digital counterparts when we are less assured of continued preservation or similar levels of access and cost from the vendor/publisher/source.

## **V. Access Concerns –**

### **A. The policy outlined above will likely result in several new impediments to access for our users.**

1. Our remaining print material will increasingly become a disjointed and small collection of the above exceptions to our digital preference, kept mainly for guided discipline-specific support rather than as a general browsable collection.
2. The expanding digital collection will not be as easily found, browsed, or distinctions understood as the discrete material and physical space of a print collection has been.
3. Free digital material that may replace some print material is not adequately incorporated into library organizational schemes (eg. – HELIN, A-to-Z, etc).

B. We will address these new impediments by expending an increasing amount of our resources (time, energy, money, etc) on improving current and creating new electronic organizational schemes to provide excellent browsable access to our licensed and selected free digital materials. These new and revised schemes must also do an excellent job of incorporating the relevant remaining print material, as well.

C. We will also address these impediments by incorporating these new electronic schemes, as well as our remaining print material, into our discipline-specific teaching.

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Notes

1. This policy, as all collection development, is contingent on sufficient funding.
2. We will review this policy annually, when possible.