

## **Organizational Planning Process: Collections and Content in HCL – Strategic goals and priorities**

### *What assumptions are we making?*

HCL's collections comprise a signature strength of the Library and the University. Harvard's faculty and students, the University administration, and a global community of scholars and libraries perceive these holdings as an essential node in a world-wide network of information resources. These groups also look to Harvard and to HCL for leadership in delineating collections-related plans and possibilities. Our collection development program will continue to provide our users with broad access to the resources they need for their research and learning, and to capture materials that will support scholarship over time. However, shifts in the information environment demand new approaches to both digital and analog formats, different trade-offs between acquisitions and access, and integrated priorities that encompass all of HCL. New academic initiatives and faculty hires likewise require continuously adaptive responses. At the same time, though, we are constrained by increasing prices and diminished budgets.

Success in this challenging environment will be demonstrated as we define and implement a clear path forward that addresses our communities' expectations and goals. Some immediate priorities have already become clear. The Provost's Task Force, for instance, insists upon efficiency as it calls for "one Harvard collection" and for better coordinated acquisitions across the university. Changed staffing models and intensified cooperation will also be in play.

The proposed changes entail new activities, contacts, and collaborations. Both policy and practice must be informed by user needs, particularly those of the faculty. Focused and structured assessment is essential so that our decisions reflect the data that we generate through our everyday activities and through targeted engagement with our users.

### *What are our goals and priorities?*

1. ***Collection development policy statements*** that reflect our emerging practice while also promoting a cohesive vision within HCL, across HUL, and vis-à-vis external libraries and cultural agencies. These statements will identify topical and thematic priorities, as further informed by types of sources, processing expectations, access and security concerns, and preservation requirements. They will ensure adequate recognition of interdisciplinary areas and include a process to address new needs and priorities. They will reflect both unit-level perspectives and a broader vision.

2. ***Procedural and staffing shifts*** will align our work with our collection development policies and make it more efficient. HCL's collections encompass several overlapping yet distinct tiers of resources. Readily available trade publications—books, journals, and e-resources—are fundamental to all our users. These materials are straightforward to identify and acquire, and the associated workflows and staffing arrangements can in most cases conform to standardized routines. HCL also acquires a great deal of material that demands specialized expertise and customized procedures. For some collecting areas, whether defined by subject, unit, or format, tailored approaches may be necessary across the board.

Consciously structuring our workflows and staff assignments will clarify collection development and outreach roles for HCL constituencies.

#### Workflows:

- HCL has designed and implemented several shared approval plans in order to increase acquisitions efficiency, minimize inadvertent cross-unit duplication, and allow new receipts to find their most productive location. This model should be expanded as far as possible, to encompass all mainstream acquisitions of trade and academic publications from North America and Western Europe. Similarly consolidated gathering plans may apply in other areas.
- Comprehensive utilization of the WorldCat Selection Tool and similar products, such as Gobi and other vendor databases, will ensure fuller coordination for firm orders among different units that rely upon the same dealers. Structured processes to identify and accommodate exceptions will allow us to implement procedural efficiencies and to fully exploit our combined purchasing power.
- E-resource licensing and acquisitions specialists will continue to develop streamlined workflows for digital resources that are available on standard platforms and with normalized contract terms.

#### Staffing:

- The recently created “Bibliographic Specialist” positions in Widener’s Collection Development Department focus on high-volume activities that demand substantial expertise concerning mainstream vendors and their internal systems, bibliographic tools, and local processing routines. Bibliographic Specialists will take increasing control of trade acquisitions in all appropriate subject areas, via both approval plans and firm orders. Other Specialists will support standard e-resource licensing and acquisitions and, eventually, such additional categories of materials as become available through clear and predictable channels of production and distribution.
- The work of Bibliographers throughout HCL will then emphasize the development of distinctive holdings that require special effort to identify, select, and acquire. These bibliographers will at the same time sustain and extend their connections with (especially) faculty members and graduate students. In some cases, uncertain booktrades and volatile publishing structures will require focused interventions for almost all of our acquisitions. While less challenging areas can rely more heavily on mainstream arrangements, specialized complementary work will become ever more important over time.

3. ***Organizational change.*** HCL’s bibliographers currently report within their local units, with only informal means for interaction on a broader scale. Some units pursue emphatically inward-facing collections, with at best sporadic cross-unit coordination in policy and practice. Dual reporting structures in which bibliographers are associated with their home units and also the broader collections function, or are sited within well-defined matrix relationships, will facilitate the necessary combination of individual expertise, local responsiveness, and HCL coherence as we develop our collections. Shared approval plans, common selection tools, and Bibliographic Specialists with cross-cutting responsibilities all mandate a more closely integrated organizational structure for collection development.

- A new Collection Development Council will provide a formal mechanism to propose policy shifts and priorities to the HCL administration, to advise on budget allocations and priorities, and for formal assessment efforts.

- The tiered approach to collection development described under item 2 will not be our only organizational model. Widener’s area studies units also address the need for staff with specialized language skills and deep familiarity with publishing structures and cultural/intellectual trends in particular world areas. These staffs are responsible for selection, acquisitions, processing, and public service within highly efficient integrated units that also support experimentation and innovation with regard to selection, processing, and service. Ongoing assessment may indicate that the area studies approach is appropriate for other collecting areas. Hybrid arrangements—or entirely new structures—may be needed as well.

4. **Budgets.** HCL’s materials budgets are now managed within individual units. Allocations ordinarily reflect current pay-outs on the endowed (and other) funds that have historically been associated with a particular collections program. Some units find themselves perpetually underfunded; some hard-to-spend endowments might be more effectively deployed on a larger scale. Whenever possible, materials budgets will be managed as a system-wide resource with specific allocations then based on policy, priority, and need. The new Collections Council will play a prominent role in the allocations process.

- Budgetary oversight must be structured to prevent distortions if/as costs rise disproportionately in some areas, and as different library functions (for example processing or preservation) seek to tap funds that have heretofore been associated with collection development. Special care will be required in areas that rely heavily on external support (for instance HYL) or where particular conditions apply (for example some science libraries).
- The emergent practice of “pay as you go” charge-backs against collections budgets to process unusual acquisitions will require broadly shared understandings as special additions become more central to our work.

5. **Cooperation.** Intensified cooperation within and beyond Harvard is essential as comprehensive local collecting becomes less realistic and as shared challenges increasingly predominate within the digital environment. Initial steps include information-gathering and then evaluations of existing cooperative activities (now underway) in order to ensure that our efforts are achieving useful ends. Work to expand and/or redirect our cooperative efforts will follow.

Who are the individuals and constituents impacted?

The proposed changes will reverberate through the Library and also our user communities. Our collections specialists, the bibliographers and selectors, will be most immediately affected by changes in priorities and workflows. Those whose functions are linked to collections and content, among them staff in teaching and outreach positions, technical services, and financial services, should anticipate new expectations and alignments. Short-term shifts will require interventions from human resources and perhaps operations, should workspaces need to change. Perhaps the most profound yet most unknowable shifts will reflect a different distribution of decision-making and operational authority as HCL’s distributed units interact with a collection development function that emphasizes shared priorities and goals.

In broader terms, local users, external constituencies, and actual and potential partners will all be affected by these changes. Some vendors will see additional business in conjunction with higher expectations.

Others may lose their Harvard accounts. We will become ever more active in cooperative programs, with the associated requirements for meetings and travel.

*What are the opportunities, challenges, and obstacles to meeting goals?*

A number of caveats have already been introduced. In addition:

- Communications must be open, free-flowing, and consciously sustained over time.
- Policies for collection development priorities and needs, informed by ongoing assessment, should drive our processing capacities and configurations. The current restructuring initiative within HCLTS is creating a more flexible organization that will mesh well with many elements in the proposed collections plan. Other features will require more extended consideration.
- The diversity of approaches and purposeful multiplicity characteristic of our current environment may be reduced by these changes, in turn increasing our risk of overdependence upon particular processes and agents.
- We face political risks as units that have become accustomed to highly autonomous operations, budgets, and staffs face a model for collection development that emphasizes an integrated approach for all of HCL even as it acknowledges local constituencies and their needs.
- We need to guard against the mission distortion that might result if consolidation and efficiency come to be seen as goals sufficient unto themselves, rather than means to accomplish our greater purpose of serving the scholarly community.