

## CREATING FUNCTIONAL POLICIES

*Etta D. Gold*

**Description:** How do I decide what to buy and where to buy it? What reference sources do I really need? How much do I spend on books, compared to videotapes, audiotapes, and compact discs? Speakers will discuss collection development policies, including the mission statement, management of donations, and weeding. They will present selection guidelines, resources for identifying and evaluating new materials and sources for purchasing. Maintenance of a current, relevant, balanced collection will be discussed.

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The following comments are based upon the conditions under which most of us here today operate; that is, we are members of the SSC Division who work in smaller, non-academic, non-public libraries.

### **The Written Mission Statement**

The purpose of the mission statement is to ensure that everyone knows what he or she is aiming for. It is important that the staff of the library identifies with and ‘own’ the mission. If they do not, the mission is unlikely to be achieved, particularly if you are offering services that depend upon the commitment of staff. The other stakeholders (board, funding bodies etc.) should also be able to fit the mission to their idea of what the organization is about. It’s important to note that if there is too much of a mismatch (e.g. if you were running a small synagogue library and had as your mission ‘to be the best library in the world,’ people might become slightly skeptical. Mission statements are particularly relevant to *marketing*, because you can only set priorities for your marketing plan, if you know your overall priorities.

Main areas of consideration:

1. Mission statement should contain the stated purpose, goals, and activities of the library.
2. Mission statement should contain the stated vision and values of the library.
3. Staff must relate to and ‘own’ the mission
4. Periodically re-examine mission

### **The Written Collection Policy**

While actual strategies for book selection will be discussed later by Linda Silver and Merrily Hart, it is necessary for your library to have a written policy that covers that process and addresses the issues of gifts and donations. Gifts should be viewed as an addition or supplement to, **not** a reduction of, the operating budget of the library. Staff should routinely determine if gifts are acceptable under this policy. Remember, don’t accept a gift you wouldn’t buy.

Main areas of consideration:

1. It is the librarian's duty to select, organize, preserve and make freely available materials that satisfy the stated mission of this library.
2. Regarding donations and gifts: the librarian will set guidelines for acceptance which state:
  - a. Conditions under which gifts will be accepted.
  - b. Disposal of gifts.
  - c. Recognition of gifts.
2. The final responsibility for material selection lies with the head of the library.

### **The *Written Weeding Policy***

Basically, the reason for a written weeding policy is to avoid the “guerrilla librarianship” syndrome. It's also a good time to re-look at the Collection Development Policy and reread the library's Mission Statement. It's good policy to make weeding an ongoing task, weed obvious items as you handle them.

Main areas of consideration:

1. Evaluation of collection
  - Make space for more valuable items.
  - Provide a more appealing, more up-to-date collection.
  - Serve current curricular needs.
2. Combine weeding and inventory – timing.
3. Subjective weeding
  - Poor physical shape.
  - Poor format.
  - Poor content – inappropriate, out-of-date.
4. Objective weeding
  - Publication date.
  - Circulation statistics.
5. What not to weed
  - Local history.
  - Special Collections.

# Web Sites guaranteed to answer all your questions:



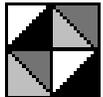
Library Spot: a connection to unlimited library information and resources.

<http://www.libraryspot.com/libshelf/>



American Library Association: The major professional library association in the USA. This site has a variety of news and information.

<http://www.ala.org/>



The Internet Public Library: On the Job Resources and links to serve every need.

<http://www.ipl.org/svcs/>



An information resource site for librarians and library support staff.

[http://www.itcompany.com/info retriever/acq\\_dept.htm](http://www.itcompany.com/info retriever/acq_dept.htm)



The Shy Librarian: for librarians who refuse to be classified!

<http://www.shylibrarian.com/>



Digital Librarian: a librarian's choice of the best of the Web.

<http://www.digital-librarian.com/librarians.html>