# Reference - Science, Engineering and Agriculture

## I. Introduction:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the development and maintenance of the reference collection in Owen Library. It provides collection development guidelines in terms of subject scope, depth of coverage, and types of materials to be included. In recognition of the machine-readable formats available and the increasing importance of the internet in academic libraries, this policy characterizes and documents the integration of these alternative formats into the Owen reference collections. This policy also clarifies procedures for acquiring new resources and for weeding to ensure a useful, timely, and accessible reference collection.

The reference collections in Science, Engineering, and Agriculture are: 1) to ensure optimum use of information resources in science, engineering, and agriculture, and 2) to provide support for the teaching, research, and informational needs of the WSU academic community as those needs relate to science, engineering, and agriculture

Defining Reference Resources: Whether the tool is accessed over the internet or is available in print, with few exceptions, reference resources are:\*

designed to be consulted or referred to for definite pieces of information rather than being read continuously from beginning to end

comprehensive in scope

condensed in treatment; and

arranged on some special plan to facilitate the ready and accurate finding of information

\* Isadore Mudge, "Reference Books and Reference Work," in Guide to Reference Books, ed. by Eugene P. Sheehy. (Chicago: ALA, 1976), p. xiv.

## II. Subject Scope and Size of the Collection:

The reference collection reflects the subject scope of the Owen Science & Engineering Library collections. Other selected subject fields and general materials are included as necessary. Verification and location tools are provided to facilitate collection development, acquisition, interlibrary loan, and other technical and support activities.

Specifically, the reference collection provides basic and in-depth information sources in science, agriculture, and engineering. Subjects covered include agriculture, astronomy\physics, biological sciences, computer science, chemical, civil, electrical, environmental, mechanical, materials, and biological systems engineering, environmental science, geology, mathematics\statistics, nutrition and food technology, and physical sciences. Coverage of education, humanities, social sciences, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine is excluded.

There is an upper limit on the size of the physical collection expressed by the stack space in the reference and A&I collections. A compact, current group of materials proven useful or required for the changing university environment must be constantly defined and applied. Within the collection, prevailing demand from curriculum changes, student enrollment, and research emphases serve as guidelines to relative growth rates of subject areas.

## III. General Selection Guidelines:

Language: Priority is given to materials in English. See statement on Dictionaries under Section IV for collecting of foreign language dictionaries.

Chronological Guidelines: Except for history of science and engineering resources, emphasis is on current materials.

Geographical Guidelines: No area is excluded.

Treatment of Subject: Academic level.

Types/Formats of Materials: All formats may be purchased if they meet the criteria for subject and scholarly content. Accessibility outside of the library should be considered.

## IV. Types of Resources

Abstracts and Indexes: Include abstracting and indexing materials for all levels of science and engineering resources within budgetary limits. Minimal overlap of paper and electronic is desirable.

Almanacs and Yearbooks: Include two general almanacs (current year only) and the second oldest edition of the Canadian yearbook. Encyclopedia yearbooks, both general and scientific, may also be maintained.

Atlases: Include at least one major, comprehensive world atlas, one road atlas, and one commercial atlas. Since oversize space is limited, large subject oriented atlases are reduced to a few major items. Regular size atlases are chosen according to reference need.

Bibliographies: Collect bibliographies based on curricular and research demand in science and engineering areas.

Biographical sources:Collect science and engineering biographical material in index, encyclopedic, dictionary, or directory format. General sources include the second oldest editions of Who's Who and the National Faculty Directory.

Dictionaries (including foreign language):Collect unilingual, bilingual and polyglot science and engineering related dictionaries in major and selected minor languages, and non-science related dictionaries for major languages. Include general dictionaries in reference and on mini-reference (2nd-6th floors).

Directories: Collect broadly to provide current information on institutions, research, companies and products, organizations, etc., in science and engineering areas.

Encyclopedias: One general multi-volume encyclopedia set is maintained as well as one science and technology multi-volume set. Subject specific encyclopedias are collected in all science and engineering areas.

Field Guides: Include in collection only when other reference sources do not cover need.

Gazetteers and Place Name Sources: These are no longer collected in print. Web-based or electronic versions are now preferred over print in this category.

Government Documents: A number of basic federal government reference sources such as Statistical Abstract of the U.S. and the U.S. Government Manual are maintained. Also, document yearbooks, handbooks, and directories related to science and engineering are located n the reference document collection. Various electronic indexes to publications of government agencies are made available. Selected non-federal government documents sources are also located in Reference Documents. Government Documents staff in the Holland and Terrell Libraries assist with supplying these titles.

Handbooks, Manuals, and Guides: Collect handbooks and manuals as appropriate in science and engineering subject areas. Web-based or electronic versions of Subject guides to the literature in these areas are collected comprehensively.

Library Catalogs: These are no longer collected in print. Web-based or electronic versions only are used.

Maps: Local maps (WSU, UI, Pullman, Moscow, Lewiston/Clarkston, Spokane) are available for handout or viewing. An extra copy of U.S. geological map indexes to states are kept in Reference.

Statistics Sources: There are no longer collected in print. Only Web-based or electronic versions are used.

Style Manuals: Maintain several standard all-purpose style manuals. Those produced by science and engineering associations/societies such as the Council of Biology Editors and the American Chemical Society are collected comprehensively.

Telephone Directories: Local directories, including University of Idaho, are maintained. Web-based or electronic versions of telephone directories are used for other locales.

Uncataloged Material: Collect free sample science and engineering commercial catalogs to provide library users with examples of products and prices of suppliers; many chemical and laboratory supply catalogs are now available on the Web.

## V. Selection of New Materials

The Owen Reference Collection Manager has immediate responsibility for the selection and maintenance of the reference collection. Acquisition and deletion of materials in specific subject areas are based on recommendations from Owen reference librarians. Input on other reference collection development decisions will be sought from the reference staff when necessary. Orders or approval books may be designated for reference by all Owen librarians, with the final decision on inclusion being made at the time of receipt in Owen Library by the Owen Reference Collection Manager.

Evaluation guidelines for selection of reference material:

Relation of title to materials already in collection.

Authority, quality, and reputation of author and publisher.

Currency.

Potential use.

Relative cost.

Arrangement of contents.

Existence of favorable reviews in reputable sources.

## VI. Deselection of Materials

The entire reference collection is weeded regularly by Subject Specialists.

Options for disposition of titles:

Leave in Reference.

Request later edition.

Search replacement title.

Send to the stacks or withdraw.

Send to mending or replace if in poor shape.

Criteria for weeding:

Number of reference works required by the discipline/topic.

Importance of this publication for reference use (Check inclusion in general or subject guides to reference works or consult with faculty in subject areas.).

Quality, comprehensiveness, scope, depth.

Frequency of use.

Age of publication; availability of later editions.

Criteria for retention of reference items in stacks:

Material not used with any degree of regularity, but has unique value in the collection.

Backfiles of annual publications

Superseded editions and duplicate copies of lesser used works which may be used as circulating copies.

Joel Cummings

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