A Background Report for a

Collection Development Policy for

the Washoe County Library Reno Senior Center

Dave Hartl

INFO665: Collection Development

Gregory Carter, Instructor

October 11, 2009

Table of Contents

I. Overview

Recommended mission and goals

The recommended missions and goals for this special collection are as follows:

1.) to develop a collection that provides information that empowers the patrons to participate to the greatest extent possible as part of their community,

2.) to develop a collection that provides for the interest, information, entertainment, and enlightenment of all the patrons,

3.) to develop a collection that provides materials and information for the programs aiding senior citizens in the county.

These goals are in keeping with guidelines set by the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and the Washoe County's Strategic Plan for senior citizens. A collection that adheres to the above goals will provide a source of intellectual stimulation, answers to informational needs, entertainment, and material to discuss for the social networking provided by the Senior Center's book clubs, computer tutorial classes, its ongoing Lifescapes Books writing project, and its other programs. Working with an awareness of the Senior Center's needs, this collection will enhance the quality of life of seniors throughout the area.

The service community

The service community targeted for this special collection are the senior citizens of Washoe County, Nevada. Washoe County is a bustling area in western Nevada that includes the Reno and Lake Tahoe areas, with a population of 410,000 ("About Washoe County" website, 2009). As aging native citizens are joined by a

growing population of retirees attracted to the area by its natural beauty and cultural centers to form a growing population, the county has responded with aid and information for its seniors.

Demographics of the service clientele

The Senior Center by definition is focused on the senior citizens of the region, although "like all branches of Washoe County Library, people of all ages are welcome!" (Washoe County Library Senior Center website, 2009). Projections of population demographics through 2025 show an increase of 60 to 90% in the over-60 group, translating to an ever-increasing need for relevant library materials. Further information on this area and its population is available at the "Census and Development Information: Washoe County, Nevada" website cited below.

Parameters of the collection

Since the goals of this collection are to provide materials for the betterment of quality of life for seniors, the parameters should limit purchases to those items that have proven interest and practical use for seniors and their caretakers. In interviews with circulation desk workers at the Washoe Public Library and two local suburban Philadelphia libraries with a large retiree patron base[1], fields of interest were identified and provided the outline for areas in which the collection should concentrate.

In addition to books, DVDs and CDs are popular items and should be included in our development. Computer resources, while needed for the one-on-one training sessions provided at the Senior Center, should be upgraded to remain current, but expansion into new areas is not as high a priority as it would be in a regular public

or academic library setting due to the lower participation. In addition, the Nevada Digital Collections website, currently under construction, will provide access to digital collections throughout the state in the near future and eliminate the need for the special collection to maintain databases of its own.

Programs and patron needs

Some of the most active programs currently supported by the special collection are the reading programs, as described on the Washoe County Library Reno Seniors website. There are eight different groups meeting in areas throughout the county and covering a variety of genres. The special collection provides a vital service to seniors by providing access to the books discussed.

In an attempt to develop an Alternative Library Access program along the lines of the Lee County, Florida project (as described in the Bretschneider article cited below), materials for a Books-By-Mail program and a Senior Outreach program should be emphasized in the special collection. This emphasis would help fulfill our goal of providing materials for senior-aiding programs in the region, providing seniors with greater access to needed materials despite being possible shut-ins. In addition to books and printed material, zippered nylon bags and a postal meter would help develop new circulation patterns to seniors currently shut out due to infirmity or unease with travelling to the library. BiFolkal programming kits could provide new activities to the population.

With the popularity of music CDs in the collection based on checkout statistics, one consideration was for a more inclusive expansion of the music area of the collection beyond entertainment purposes into providing musical scores for the

amateur hobby ensembles for which the Senior Center provides rehearsal space. It was ultimately felt this was too large a step to take with the current budget: "If the policy is for an isolated music collection, consistency among the component parts, representing the various source materials (i.e., scores and sound recordings) and the historical, critical, and analytical literature about music and musicians, is necessary since the elements directly complement each other… The collection policy for any one of the music components must be closely coordinated with the others" (Lien, 1987). Instead of scores, we recommend that the CD collection expand in the area of big band recordings, Broadway shows, and compilations of popular singers of the '40's and '50's. Requests for books and scores for now will be handled through interlibrary loan, allowing us to develop music resources more fully along recreational needs rather than informational and educational lines. It is further recommended to start a music listener's club along the lines of the reading groups the Washoe Library currently helps; the opportunity to discuss musical performances with others of similar interest, using library materials, would be a further enhancement to current programs. These listening materials could be non-circulating so that they are available on demand in the library. Multiple copies of any titles could be circulated using the Books-By-Mail program to members who must limit trips to the library.

The Senior Center Library with its limited space must choose between recreational, informational, and educational sources of information. In Reno we have the University of Nevada-Reno, Morrison University, and University of Phoenix-Reno to cover much educational material. In addition, computer training

6

courses provide seniors with new tools for accessing online educational resources. For these reasons, we recommend development stressing informational and recreational lines for this collection.

II. Details of Subject Area & Formats

Users of collection

Primary users of this collection will be seniors. In addition to entertainment needs, informational needs concerning this age group will be met with the collection. In the aforementioned circulation desk worker interviews, the following areas were identified as high-usage subjects in this age group:

- Fiction: popular authors for men included Dan Brown, Tom Clancy, and western novelists such as Louis L'Amour; for women, authors such as Mary Higgins Clark and religious themes were the most popular.
- Biographies: men enjoy reading of the lives of public figures such as presidents and older celebrities; women favor biographies of their peer group members.
- Other non-fiction:
  - U.S. history is a favorite topic for recreational reading.
  - Travel books are popular for those seniors planning trips, and travel videos are popular with those who are not actually going.
  - Medical information and health guides are a big source of interest.

- Craft books and cookbooks are popular mostly among the female users.

- It should be noted that political books are notably unpopular with this age group and should be generally avoided.

It is reasonable to assume that a secondary group of users, the caretakers and dependents of these seniors, will want to access library materials either for their own information, or to help their elders find what they need. To find out more information concerning this secondary group, we recommend examining the current library card information and assess for age, if available, and possibly similar family names or employment information to identify characteristics in more detail. By so doing, we may see how many non-seniors need the materials to answer questions in their jobs aiding the seniors, and how many non-seniors are motivated by family need.

From our interviews, it seems that the largest single topic the secondary users required were books of legal advice. It seems that people in our primary age group have set things up legally for themselves and the secondary age group does the research to double-check the decisions. The next most popular topic was medical information and health-related subjects.

Formats

Books, in general, should favor large-print editions wherever possible. One other purchase which would greatly enhance accessibility of the entire printed catalog would be software that translates text to speech; the added ability to produce mp3 files would allow any book to be used by sight-impaired patrons.

Cheap mp3 players that could be used in circulation could, with a bit of training[2], become an alternative to the traditional checked-out book.

As noted previously, electronic resources don't need to be expanded beyond keeping presently owned materials current, but any other possible purchases should be seen through the goals and demographics of this special collection. "Incorporating electronic resources into the collection development policy allows the resources to take their place in the collection as supportive of the library's goals for each specific area. Selection of electronic resources outside the guidance of a collection development policy leads to haphazard unfocused groupings of resources that may or may not support the mission of the library." (Vogel, 1996). This statement should be kept in mind when considering electronic resources for our primary group of patrons.

Who selects materials

The head librarian ultimately makes selections for the special collection, but since the goals of the collection is to provide meaningful materials to a senior user base, every effort should be made to get input from the users themselves. Standardized suggestion forms at all librarian desks would help impromptu comments change to insightful ideas for collection. Also, communication with the tutors of the computer training programs and with those volunteers who run the other programs should be encouraged to meet the needs that arise there.

Criteria of selection

With the collection's stated goals in mind and emphasis on what is useful to our user group, the main selection criteria will be twofold: what is directly

requested by the patrons via the means described above, and what the program

coordinators and volunteers suggest that can be useful to them. The direct requests

will be mostly for entertainment (current bestsellers, DVDs, etc.) and information

(how-to guides, "Gardening for Dummies" type of overviews). Any material that gets

more than a single request should be considered; this would avoid anomalies caused

by a single unusual request. It would also be beneficial considering the limited

budget and shelving space to avoid items held by other local resources that could be

obtained through interlibrary loan, any textbooks, and "items of a sensational,

violent, or inflammatory nature" (Evans and Saponaro, 2005), especially in light of

the anecdotal evidence that political titles are not too popular in this age group.

Selection aids

With selection criteria largely dependent on user and program director

input, and with a limited demographic group targeted, extensive use of selection

aids will not be as important as in a general use library. Examination of circulation

statistics should be used to generate a short list of "must have" authors and non-

fiction topics; the head librarian should keep aware of bestsellers via the New York

Times Book Review and weekly information published in periodical magazines;

promotional materials from publishers of material of local history and subjects

should be carefully read for items of interest; and purchase of replacement copies

could be helped by using the circulation statistics again to identify heavily used

items with a quarterly physical check of condition.

III. Miscellaneous

Gifts

With the limited space at the Senior Center Library's disposal, it is felt that a stated policy would help avoid any misunderstandings concerning gifts, donations, and bequests to the library. A copy of a statement explaining that all gifts are to be used or disposed of as seen fit by the library, signed by the donor and kept on file, would enable the library to keep and display any given resources that are useful and to sell any other resources at an annual used book sale, the proceeds of which would be added to the library's budget and thereby allow the library to avail itself of the generosity of the donor at its own discretion.

Deselection & Discards

Since the collection's goals are based on involvement of the targeted group, a documented lack of use of an item would make that item a good candidate for deselection, especially in the realm of fictional titles. Non-fictional, informational titles could have an extended shelf life with little use since their material lends itself to long-term use and not "what's hot now." But it is recommended that the collection development policy include parameters of circulation data to help weed out underused titles.

Discarding can be helped by the aforementioned establishment of an annual used book sale, which would help recirculate funds back to the library's purchasing budget for new titles. Titles that fail to sell could be disposed of by a "free books" shelf near the entrance and by means of regular county paper recycling.

Evaluation

Again, with selection and usage dependent on the demands of the users to a greater degree than in other libraries, evaluation of the collection should come for the most part from the users themselves. Questionnaires included annually in checked-out books could be returned in the books themselves. Electronic versions of the questionnaires could be included as part of the computer help training and hotlinked on the website. A suggestion box prominently displayed near the entrance could bring in ideas for improving policies and selection procedures.

Any areas which the questionnaire or suggestion box identify as lacking should be given priority in the selection process in a rotating annual update.

Complaints & Censorship

With the suggestion box and questionnaires, some complaints and criticisms are bound to come in. The head librarian should have the discretion of whether to take action on specific issues, and whether to pass along problems due to budgetary and other restraints to the governing board of the Special Center. In the spirit of the ALA's Library Bill of Rights, it is recommended that the only censorship be a simple statement of the library's support of point number three in particular: "Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment." Selection of materials by the suggestions made above concerning avoidance of inflammatory materials in this use-oriented library would tend to render this a moot point.

IV. Notes

1. The two suburban Philadelphia libraries are the Indian Valley Public Library in Telford, PA, and the Buck County Library Pierce Branch in Perkasie, PA.

2. This training could be incorporated into the present computer assistance service described in the Washoe County Library Senior Center website.

V. Bibliography

About Washoe County. (2009). Retrieved October 8, 2009, from
http://www.co.washoe.nv.us/index/about.html

American Library Association (1992). Guidelines for developing beginning genealogical collections and services. *RQ* 32(Fall), 31-32.

American Library Association Library Bill of Rights. (1996). Retrieved October 7, 2009, from
http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.cfm

Bretschneider, N. (1995). Lee County (Fla.) Library System's Alternative Library Access Project for the Elderly. *Interface: Association. of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies*, 17(4), 1-2.

Census and Development Information: Washoe County, Nevada. (2009). Retrieved October 9, 2009, from http://www.co.washoe.nv.us/comdev/publications_maps_products/census_demographic/census_demographic_index.htm

Evans, G.E., & Saponaro, M.Z. (2005). *Developing Library and Information Center Collections (5th ed.).* Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Lein, E. (1987). Suggestions for formulating collection development policy statements for music score collections. *Collection Management*, 9(Winter), 69-101.

Nevada Digital Connections. (2009). Retrieved October 13, 2009, from
http://www.clan.lib.nv.us/nvdigital.htm

Strategic Plan for Washoe County Senior Citizens, 2006-2016. (2006). Retrieved October 6, 2009, from

http://www.co.washoe.nv.us/repository/files/27/WCSS%20Strategic%20Plan%20Final%20PDF.pdf

Vogel, K.D. (1996). Integrating electronic resources into collection development policies. *Collection Management* 21(2), 65-76.

Washoe County Library Senior Center. (2009). Retrieved October 6, 2009, from http://www.washoecounty.us/library/snr_center.html

Washoe County Library Reno Seniors. (2009). Retrieved October 6, 2009, from http://www.washoecounty.us/library/seniors.html

Washoe County Senior Services Home Page. (2009). Retrieved October 7, 2009, from http://www.co.washoe.nv.us/seniorsrv