Open Archives and Collection Development

David Block

**Curator of Native American
and Latin American Collections
Cornell University**

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Even though the functioning of an information portal is far from defined, its metaphorical sense is quite clear. A portal marks a passageway, a convergence. Through it something dispersed is concentrated. As used in our field, a portal marks a place to go for information; additionally, it has a digital connotation. This paper reflects on how such portals might be developed. It asks, basically, if traditional approaches apply.

Twenty-five years ago Charles Osborne pointed out that the library activity we call collection development grew out of the unparalleled growth of the academy in the 1960s and 1970s when scholarly information began to multiply exponentially and to escape its traditional boundaries. (We also owe our existence to the fact that at many institutions scholars loosened their grip on materials budgets as they invested their time in activities with more potential for career advancement.) Over thirty years or so, collection development became a set of practices designed to align library resources with local research and teaching. The high tide of its codification came with the collection development and management institutes that the American Library Association sponsored in the 1980s.

We now find ourselves in another age, one characterized by ever-increasing investment in large aggregations of digital resources, which marginalize both paper and selection. Some researchers have labeled the new activity information management; Dan Hazen has called it "the twilight of the gods." For the next few minutes, I invite you to consider what you know already, that despite what we might call electronic hegemony, the basic tenets of collection development still apply in any research setting, but with some wrenching twists. As an outline, I will use the collection development canon-- evaluation, selection, use and user studies and budgeting. And for digital examples, I will use the Latin American Open Archives Portal (LAOAP).

Evaluation: In the world of paper information, evaluation entailed counting and comparing. How many items within a call number sequence; what percentage of the bibliography of recognized works in a field? The Conspectus and its Latin American subset are the most notable examples of systematic evaluation. In both cases the objective was to create a "national collection" by forcing participants to declare their collection strengths and to show their holdings in a shared bibliographic database.

What serves as an equivalent as we develop an open access portal? We can certainly make good use of OCLC's collection development analysis

tool as a way of pinpointing overlap and uniqueness, but this approach, as promising as it is, examines only those items appearing in the WorldCat database. Taking the *Instituto de Estudios Peruanos* 157 titles as a test, I found less than a third were cataloged and only three of these showed electronic manifestations. So while this comparison clearly demonstrates the value of the LAOAP as a resource enhancement, it does not augur well for the use of the OCLC tool as a way of evaluating portal holdings.

As far as I know, portal collections are not being evaluated. This may be because of their status as "free and open to the public" as we describe ourselves. But as portals grow we will want readers to know where to go for what and administrators will want us to eliminate overlapping activities. Stay tuned.

Selection: This is how we bibliographers most successfully justify ourselves, by matching information resources with anticipated use. One image of the bibliographer is that of the accountant, complete with eye shade and sleeve garters, choosing each new work with the love and care lavished on childrens' toys. In fact, very few of us have ever selected this way. (One who did is being celebrated next door, as I speak.) Rather, we rely on a series of macros: subscriptions, standing orders, approval plans= with title-by-title selection as a topping off rather than a foundation.

To date, selection for open access portals, at least at LAOAP, has used a similar macro, identifying social science research bureaus whose names we know and whose reputations we trust. That is, if the *Instituto de Estudios Peruanos* is willing to publish something in its working papers, we are willing to add it to the portal. We are, by the way, looking to expand our collection using this approach.

We are also looking to expand LAOAP by linking it to publications done by Latin Americanists in this country. Thus far that effort has not been tremendously fruitful. While many institutions have established open access repositories, their "communities" are unpopulated to date. This is a promising approach, and one that I was pushing at this meeting last year, but it will fulfill its promise only when humanities and social sciences scholars see advantages to open access publishing. Stay tuned.

Use and user studies: Even though bibliographers struggle against its excesses, utility (measured by use) has always been the prime metric of collection development. Use measures value and will ultimately determine whether a subscription is continued, a similar purchase is made, or an item is removed to off site storage. The use of paper information is measured by circulation, now tabulated by computers but the same statistic derived from Mcbee cards or paper slips.

Use of electronic materials is much more nuanced-- does clicking a link constitute a use? Project Counter has developed a set of manageable guidelines for measuring use in a digital environment, and I refer you to their site http://www.projectcounter.org/. However, Counter compliance involves programming, and it is not free.

Virginia García's presentation offers an excellent first step for demonstrating LAOAP's use. It highlights the value of the enterprise both as an alternative to purchase and as a way of accessing materials no longer available from the publisher. This is enough for me, but will it satisfy those who want to know: how many readers at my institution are logging in; what is their status; are they downloading, etc? Again, stay tuned.

Budgeting: And then, of course, there's budgeting. At one time, we hoped that portal development would be analogous to stacks in the paper information world-- gradually increased as collections grew and off materials budgets. In fact portal development has combined central resources, materials funds and entrepreneurship. A TICFIA grant (that's Technological Innovation and Cooperation for Foreign Information Access), written by several of our colleagues and administered by UCLA, built what you see at our portal. Annual dues to LARRP insure the maintenance of

these files. But to enhance them in any significant way will likely require additional levies.

So where are we with this thing, and do the traditional rules for collection development apply to building a portal? Well, clearly we're still at the beginning of the digital age. We continue to develop hybrid collections using much the same strategies as our professional ancestors used thirty years ago to identify, evaluate and budget for paper materials. However, traditional rules, at least not all of them, do not currently guide our development of information portals. I will mention only three examples of why not.

1. Obviously, our concern for overlap and uniqueness, the tenets of evaluation, do not apply where digital linking replaces additions to physical collections. We all "own" these materials. But as I have already mentioned, building new views of the same content has its limitations.

2. Item-by-item selection becomes less important as digital information is increasingly aggregated into unbreakable bundles.

3. Budgeting is, likewise, bundled or centralized into an electronic component, often reserved for that format alone.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for area studies librarians is not so much providing access to ever-larger information bundles but discovering ways to tease out information relevant to our constituencies from the collections we already have. In this sense the Latin American Open Archives Portal is only another feature on the information landscape and collection development's traditional challenge of matching resources with research and teaching still applies to building and using it.