The Undergraduate Library

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The flourishing trend toward creating undergraduate libraries within university library systems began about twenty-five years ago with the establishment of the Lamont Library at Harvard University. Since that time, the idea has become increasingly popular; there are now approximately thirty undergraduate libraries in the United States and Canada.\(^1\) The influences which originally motivated their creation, particularly the lack of space in existing library buildings and the need to make the libraries' burgeoning and specialized collections more manageable to undergraduates, have become increasingly pervasive. University libraries have met these pressures with a variety of responses ranging from creating a duplicate book collection of the most often used book titles in a section of a university library building to constructing a new library building especially designed as an undergraduate library.

Among the several functions of the undergraduate library are: to centralize and simplify library services, to provide instruction in the use of the library, and to act as a link between the undergraduate student and the larger library system. Such libraries usually maintain a representative book collection of the best works in all fields which supports the undergraduate curriculum as well as provides the means for a liberal education. Additionally, an undergraduate library may provide the reserve reading collection, reading and study space, and other occasionally innovative library services such as audiovisual facilities.

Collection building in undergraduate libraries is a unique problem, since these collections largely duplicate portions of the library system's holdings, which are generally available in varying degrees to undergraduates. Limited space is available and duplication of less frequently used titles is unnecessary and costly, thus the undergraduate library collection must be highly selective. It must also

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be flexible, to meet the needs of changing undergraduate curricula and teaching methods.

One trend in undergraduate education is to put less emphasis on a specified number of required courses with assigned readings, and to place more emphasis on specialized or interdisciplinary courses where students rely heavily on their own research. This trend challenges the undergraduate library more than ever. Not only must it assist the undergraduate student in the use of the entire library system, but it must also provide for his primary and immediate bibliographic needs. Because of this, course-related materials which are specialized and possibly unique in the library system are being acquired by the undergraduate library. Thus, the definition of a typical undergraduate book becomes diffuse and useless in terms of selection policy.

The policy for the selection of art and music books in undergraduate libraries is usually that which governs the selection of book materials in general. The initial collections for most undergraduate libraries have been based on published or otherwise available lists of books in existing undergraduate collections, such as the Lamont Library catalog, the University of Michigan shelf list, and the “California list”: Books for College Libraries. The newer lists, which are updated and expanded versions of the older lists, also reflect the particular needs of the institutions for which they were designed. At other institutions, faculty and librarians have further modified these basic lists to provide initial collections appropriate to their needs. These basic lists comprise a well-rounded but selective collection of books in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences. These are considered to be the “best” or most definitive current works available in English.

Six to 8 percent of most initial collections is devoted to art and music books. The proportion is usually maintained as a collection grows, barring unusual changes in course offerings or in the relationship between the undergraduate library and other agencies on campus. This relatively small proportion of books on art and music can be attributed to the fact that on the university campuses where the basic lists were developed, strong branch libraries in art and music exist and are accessible to undergraduates. Undergraduate art majors and music majors tend to use these branch libraries, while the art and music collections in the undergraduate library serve the general student, who may take only introductory courses in these disciplines or have no exposure to them at all. The undergraduate library should then invite
him to explore these fields on his own, by providing a manageable, well-selected and representative collection.

Within the 6 to 8 percent of the undergraduate library book collections devoted to art and music, the proportion of art to music varies. In the Lamont list, 3 percent is devoted to art and 4 percent to music. The percentage of the entire collection devoted to fine arts is smaller than might be expected because undergraduates have access to the nearby Fogg Art Museum Library. At Stanford University’s Meyer Memorial Library, the proportion of art books to music books is much higher. However, the importance of the art collection in the undergraduate library increased substantially when the art library adopted a policy of noncirculation for its entire collection. In the California list, almost twice as many art as music books were selected within the 7.5 percent of the collection allotted to these subjects.

In many cases the most innovative and interdisciplinary courses in art and music, such as those dealing with popular or ethnic culture, originate at the undergraduate level. Particularly since these courses are often open to the general student, it falls to the undergraduate library to support them. Often the branch libraries do not collect extensively in areas marginal to traditional academic pursuits, so the undergraduate library may collect music or art materials which are unique in the library system. For example, the audio library in Stanford University’s undergraduate library includes a proportionately large collection of Afro-American music, much of which is unavailable elsewhere on campus.

The decision whether or to what extent to collect musical scores is a problem unique to the music collection. The policy on collection of scores varies widely in undergraduate libraries. The original basic list, the Lamont Library catalog, includes a representative collection of scores of music primarily from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries; at the same time, no musical recordings are collected by the Lamont Library. The California list includes no scores at all. At Stanford University, scores are purchased (often in multiple copies) only for use with recordings in the audio library which are specified for reserve for undergraduate music courses. However, when these scores are not on reserve, they are shelved with the rest of the music collection in another part of the building. No attempt to purchase a representative collection of scores is made, although a small collection of song books has been acquired.

Collections of popular music and scores of musical comedies are
frequently requested by undergraduate students for campus activities or recreational use, although most undergraduate libraries collect minimally, if at all, in these areas. Although limiting such a collection can be problematic, if a library can afford to purchase materials for primarily recreational use, such materials are fully justified provided patron demand is great and this need cannot be satisfied elsewhere. It must be noted that such things as popular music and musical comedies are not intrinsically "recreational"; such materials can be and increasingly are studied in academic courses. What is recreational depends entirely on the use made of the materials. In several library systems, the undergraduate library avowedly serves the recreational learning needs of the entire university population. However, such acquisitions are usually quite limited and are in no way intended to emulate the acquisitions policies of public libraries.

Since art books are relatively more expensive than other books and vandalism of these books is a possible problem, careful consideration should be given to the circumstances of their use and their availability elsewhere on campus. The need for these materials is, however, indisputable for any curriculum in art and they must be available.

After the initial collection has been selected, the undergraduate librarians oversee the selection of additional materials. Even when the undergraduate library is large enough to have several reference/selection librarians on its staff, it is unusual to have any of them with a subject speciality in art or music. For a library to search specifically for a librarian with a subject speciality in either, much less both, of these subject areas seems unwarranted when such a small proportion of the collection is devoted to art and music. However, if there is much activity in these areas or if the library includes a large music listening facility or other special services in art or music, special subject or library qualifications become more desirable. Occasionally, a generalist librarian will have a particular interest or knowledge in music or art, and the selection of materials in these subjects will naturally fall to him. It must be noted, however, that having avocational interests in these areas does not necessarily make a librarian any more qualified to deal with art or music than any other of his colleagues. But if no one with such expertise is on the staff, the librarians most interested and willing to learn about the subjects and how to deal with their materials should have the responsibility for them.

The undergraduate collection, once established, will grow by several means. Faculty members will request new titles for reserve or course
The Undergraduate Library

reading; otherwise, faculty interest in the undergraduate library is typically nonevident. Therefore, the growth of the collection depends largely on the librarians in charge of selection. The less knowledge of art or music a librarian has, the more important it is for him to establish a relationship with specialist librarians in the music and art branch libraries for guidance and insight in selection. Ultimate decisions in selection must be made by the undergraduate librarian, however, since it is he who can best assess the needs of his clientele. Even when the librarians assigned the areas of art and music have special knowledge in these fields, it is still important for them to know the specialist librarians, the branch collections, and their selection policies, for coordination and referral purposes. This will result in the most efficient and economical use of library book funds and provide for the highest quality reference for library patrons.

In addition to books, undergraduate libraries often collect audio and/or visual materials, which may relate to music and art. In general, such materials and services are innovative for most academic libraries, but are much more limited and conservative when compared to such institutions as community colleges. The principles for the selection of special materials are usually an extension of those for book selection; however, none of the published undergraduate library basic catalogs include phonorecord holdings. One catalog of sound recordings held by an undergraduate library is available in book form: the Meyer Library Audio Catalog. This collection at Stanford University's undergraduate library is a comparatively large collection of about 6,000 records and tapes; it reflects a broadly conceived selection policy in music and the spoken word.

A majority of undergraduate libraries collect sound recordings and have listening facilities of varying types and sizes. The decision whether to include listening facilities in an undergraduate library is based primarily on the existence, availability, and capacity of other such facilities on campus. Further, it must be determined whether existing facilities are expected to continue to accommodate the requirements of the undergraduate population. If the undergraduate library is to include listening facilities, a careful assessment of the needs of the community it is to serve must be made in order to design an installation which will efficiently and effectively serve these needs. It is not sufficient to model listening facilities on those in existing undergraduate libraries. For example, it is essential to determine the uses the faculty will make of the facilities on that particular campus. Also, the existence, composition, and availability of other sound
collections on campus will affect the use of the undergraduate listening facility for listening which is not course-related.

All of the undergraduate library listening collections include spoken word recordings, and many contain only spoken word recordings. Often other collections of music recordings exist on campus—as in the music library—and if these are fully able to accommodate use by undergraduates, there is little need to set up another music listening collection. In those undergraduate libraries which collect music recordings, an attempt is usually made to collect a representative collection of classical music, usually without collecting more than one performance of a composition unless it is especially important. Representative recordings in ethnic, folk, jazz, and popular music are collected in varying degrees according to the philosophy of service, budget of the library, and needs of its patrons.

Often, the best collection on campus of nonclassical music and/or spoken word recordings is held by the audio library in the undergraduate library. Because of this, the audio library must expect many potential users in addition to the undergraduates. These other users may also wish to use the library if the sound equipment is newer or better, the room more spacious and comfortable, or the location easily accessible. As a rule, members of the university community who are not undergraduates are permitted free use of these facilities unless during peak use hours they displace undergraduate listeners.

Audio libraries which collect music recordings usually have the responsibility for reserve listening materials for undergraduate music courses for nonmajors, and sometimes also for majors. The former group includes large introductory music appreciation classes with much assigned listening. In order to most efficiently serve large numbers of students, listening assignments are often played at regularly scheduled intervals from a central control room to individual listening positions through a dial access system. Random access tape facilities, such as those installed in some of the newer community colleges, have not yet been used in undergraduate libraries. The larger audio installations in undergraduate libraries have been more conservative, and patterned largely after the first such installation in the University of Michigan Undergraduate Library. These installations have a central control room with dial access at listening positions throughout the audio room, which also contains tape and disc players for individual use. Most students prefer to listen to their assignments individually, so they can start and stop the recordings at any point; they will exercise this option over waiting to dial an entire
program at a particular time, if they have a choice. This option is particularly important to music students, who may need to repeat a section immediately upon hearing it. Such listening habits can be wearing on disc recordings, so often-used assignments may be taped even for individual use.

Large listening facilities with many music recordings can best be supervised by a librarian with a music background and some general knowledge of sound equipment. Here also, a knowledge of other sound collections on campus and a good working relationship with their personnel is invaluable in collection building and service to the users. In such a situation, the audio librarian is typically part of the reference/selection staff, and selects music books for the undergraduate library as well as recordings. A good audio technician should be employed to maintain the sound equipment, dub recordings, and perform other technical duties. Often such a technician is shared with other facilities on campus, and may work for a department other than the library. Sometimes this technical work can be successfully contracted with a firm outside the university. In other cases, students have been successfully employed for this work. More rarely, a full-time undergraduate library staff member with technical sound experience may assume these duties.

Sometimes undergraduate libraries are designed so that the books on subjects represented by recordings are in proximity to the listening facility. This is meaningful particularly if the books and recordings are in the same room, as in the Woodberry Poetry Room in Harvard's Lamont Library. However, if the listening facility is in a separate room (even on the same floor) from related books, it is usually necessary to have a small collection of reference books and discographies in the audio room itself.

Several undergraduate libraries sponsor concerts which are held in the undergraduate library building. The University of Michigan Undergraduate Library's audio room has the equipment to broadcast recorded concerts from the audio room through loudspeakers in another section of the library. Many libraries use free channels in their audio control room to play programs of music or literature which can be heard through earphones at the listening positions. At Stanford's undergraduate library, such tape, disc, or radio programs can be broadcast to carrels equipped for listening on all three floors of the library. Earphones for this purpose can be checked out at the general circulation desk which is on a floor other than the audio library. Some libraries have sponsored successful and well-attended live concerts in
their buildings. UCLA's undergraduate library has presented a popular concert series, giving a concert at least once each quarter on an evening when the library does not offer regular services.

Some undergraduate libraries provide facilities for various types of art displays, including space for a print study gallery to be used by students of undergraduate art courses. Prints for these study rooms and supervision of them have been typically provided by the art department rather than the library. As a rule, none of the undergraduate libraries collect prints or slides of artworks, either for use in the building or for outside circulation.

Also found in some undergraduate libraries are art exhibit areas where changing exhibits of art can be displayed for the enjoyment of library patrons. Student artwork is often exhibited. Those libraries which exhibit borrowed or rented original artworks usually have locked glass exhibit cases and carry insurance against theft or damages.

A few libraries maintain cultural events calendars which include information on art and music events being held locally. Stanford University's undergraduate library uses its former (unsuccessful) art print study gallery for this purpose. Newspaper clippings, press releases, and other announcements of events in art, music, theater, dance, cinema, etc., are thumbtacked to the bulletin board walls.

As the purpose of an undergraduate library varies widely, from providing only a collection of most-used books and a comfortable place to study to serving as a full-blown cultural center with an active role in interesting students in all kinds of learning experiences, so does the role of art and music in these libraries. The extent to which the undergraduate library's function extends to that of a campus cultural center largely determines the amount of emphasis art and music receive in its collections and programs. The particular campus setting and the relationship of the undergraduate library to other libraries and to academic and cultural agencies affects its function and use. What is appropriate and successful in an undergraduate library on one campus may have little value on another.

Among the important considerations in planning art and music facilities and services in an undergraduate library are: the existence of branch libraries in art and music, audiovisual facilities elsewhere on campus, student union services in art and music, and the extent to which all of these serve the undergraduate student; the physical location and accessibility of these facilities to undergraduates; and the climate of learning, especially the position of art and music not only in the curriculum, but also in the general cultural atmosphere of the
campus. However, conditions which appear seemingly similar have produced dissimilar but equally successful responses. For example, Cornell University decided not to include music recordings in the undergraduate library's listening room because of the existence of two other music collections on campus. However, at the University of Texas' undergraduate library both art and music materials are emphasized because of considerable layman interest in these subjects, despite the existence of departmental libraries in both art and music. The adequacy or inadequacy of the undergraduate library's collections in art and music, and the success or failure of its services, depend on a careful analysis of the library's role in its particular campus environment. It is a mistake to believe that special services or methods of presenting them which are successful on one campus will therefore be desirable in any undergraduate library. The most successful programs in art and music are those which have been designed with all of the previously mentioned factors in mind and have become part of an informal network of related services on campus. Such cooperation affords a more economical and efficient use of library funds; better support from and a closer relationship with other staff and faculty; and, as a result, better library service for undergraduate library patrons.

References
