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# Impact of Collection Management Practices on Intellectual Freedom

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## ABSTRACT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE is to identify practices of collection management that either impede, or have the potential to impede, the freedom of access to information. An underlying assumption is that such impediments are inadvertent or at least so subtle to the librarian perpetrator that they are not intended. This hinges on a further assumption, perhaps equally naive, that the librarian's responsibility is, as Asheim (1983) reminds us, "the defense of access to ideas, to information, esthetic pleasure, to recreation in its literal sense of re-creation, and to knowledge or at least to the process that leads to knowledge" (p. 184). Decisions made by agents beyond the control of collection management, such as by publishers and the government, define the domain in which collection management practices are engaged, and this article will address itself to that domain only. In any event, the relationship between collection management and intellectual freedom surely is a most complex and often ambiguous one. Yet the two are so inherently and inextricably intertwined that intellectual freedom cannot be discussed meaningfully as a discrete consideration in collection management.

## PREMISES AND DEFINITIONS

As used in this article, the term *collection management* is defined as a process of information gathering, communication, coordination, policy formulation, evaluation, and planning that results in decisions about the acquisition, retention, and provision of access to

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information sources in support of the intellectual needs of a given library community. It is treated as a positive process, functioning as a social system that is influential on its environment and that is also influenced by its environment. The term *information* as used in this context is highly generic, having a great many ramifications in collection management, especially in consideration of the range of involvement of collection management throughout any library and also in consideration of the ways in which technology and electronic services are changing our understanding of collections and collection management. That collection management is both central in library operations and pivotal in library relations with the surrounding community is a fundamental consideration in exploring the impact of collection management practices on intellectual freedom.

Information is essential to human evolution, as are, consequently, the information systems that put it to human service (Osburn, 1986). Censorship, the antithesis of intellectual freedom, is a logical attempt to gain possession of, and control over, that force that is vital to life and its continued evolution. Like other social influences, censorship evolves and survives through successful selection and adaptation. As a negative force it can be seen as the antithesis also of collection management. But censorship creates a dialectic in humanity's information system and in the system of collection management that stimulates the positive thrust of both in the long term. For dialectic leads to choices upon which evolution is dependent, and the need for the broadest information in making choices at all levels of the information hierarchy—from biological and individual to social and institutional—is fundamental to the human condition.

By far, most of the literature on the subject of collection management and intellectual freedom focuses on book selection. Book selection is the nucleus of collection management and is the purest manifestation of collection management. In that context, most of the literature on collection management and intellectual freedom has to do with overt public pressure that is either experienced or expected, and a lot of it treats specific censorship cases. This article attempts to examine all aspects of collection management in terms of the principle of intellectual freedom in order to determine where present and potential problems reside.

The purpose of collection management is contained in the mission of the parent library or agency and that varies broadly by the type of library in question. Their area of commonality seems to lie in the notion of service to an identifiable community, a principle that can fairly safely be interpreted as positive and good. The supporting principles, however—those that guide daily management

of collections—vary by type of library and constitute the areas in which the principle of intellectual freedom is either enforced or assailed. Before proceeding with the discussion of how in practice these principles are rendered vulnerable to attacks on intellectual freedom, it may be useful to examine them more closely.

### PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

The basic principles behind collection management present themselves as sets—that is, as a continuum of ideals about the purpose of the collection that extends from one pole to the other. It is not just the point along that continuum that determines whether or to what extent the principle of intellectual freedom has been violated, for that does not necessarily occur even at the poles; it is not that simple. The principle of intellectual freedom can be violated at any point along the continuum of the sets of collection management principles, depending upon the motive of the individual collection manager and the way in which that individual invokes the applicable set of collection management principles.

Guiding collection management are three sets of principles, the weight of each being determined by the type of library and its mission. The one that is evidenced most often as the area for violation of intellectual freedom is the set of principles that can be expressed as the value set. Here the continuum extends from a decision based on an internally derived judgment of the general good a title is anticipated to contribute to the community, to a decision based on an externally derived expression of community demand, either positive or negative. No matter the basis for the decision, it ultimately is made by the collection manager. And, on whichever basis the collection management decision is made, it reflects a judgment of value; in the one instance an assertive judgment and in the other a responsive judgment.

Because collection management functions as a social system, with all the systems implications, most collection management decisions are made at some point along the continuum from one pole to the other, not usually at either pole. Along that continuum are a number of questions whose answers can help assess the quality and nature of judgment being applied: To what extent is the internally derived judgment of value just speculation? To what extent does it reflect a preconceived notion of the ideal collection that is formed more by technical preparation than by knowledge of the community? To what extent does the judgment of value based on explicit demand take into account the implicit values and needs of the community?

The second set of principles guiding collection management is also frequently the terrain on which the struggle for intellectual

freedom is waged, and that is the set of principles that can be expressed as the diversity set. Here the continuum extends from a decision that a particular title contributes to the overall diversity of subjects and views represented in the collection, to a decision that a particular title will help in the balance of a collection's equal representation of diverse subjects and all views. Balance can be achieved without special regard for the extent of diversity, while broad diversity can be achieved without attention to balance. The concept of diversity in a collection is relatively easy to comprehend because it is single dimensional, unlike the concept of balance, which, being relative and multidimensional, requires many qualifiers. In practice, balance is a limiting factor for diversity, just as the reverse can also be true, and the implementation of the principle of balance always brings with it the potential to violate the most pure interpretation of intellectual freedom, which says that it "promotes no causes, furthers no movements, and favors no viewpoints" (ALA, 1983, p. 36). Balance tends to be an ideal that is difficult to describe and impossible to achieve except in the most narrow of situations, yet it is a very traditional notion in the discussion of all but special libraries because it suggests a rich combination of breadth and depth. By nature it is highly susceptible to successful challenge, however, and is therefore a field on which intellectual freedom is unsteady. By contrast, the principle of diversity in a library collection offers a simple and straightforward goal, yet it is, for all practical purposes, unachievable because implementation is endless; almost anything that is published conceivably offers something new, however slight, thereby contributing to diversity.

The primary problem with the principle set of balance and diversity is that it tends more than most other collection management principles to be a platitude. As these terms are not defined for practical use—and they almost never are—so the principle of balance encourages the most subjective exclusion just as the principle of diversity encourages the most subjective inclusion. Left undefined, these principles focus on the collection rather than on the community, for which provision of access is the purpose of collection management.

The third set of principles guiding collection management is the set of principles that can be expressed as the conservator set. Here the continuum extends from a decision that a particular title contributes to the cultural continuity and intellectual stability of society (as personified by the community) as it evolves, to a decision that a particular title contributes to individual self expression and realization, which in the aggregate is required to advance social evolution (as personified by the community). It is in conjunction with this set of principles that is used the term *library of record*,

meaning a collection that incorporates as great a sample as possible of the record of human expression and achievement, both past and present.

This set of principles represents only an ideal, of course, one whose realizability has diminished steadily since the days of the famed Alexandrian Library. Since then, the problem increasingly has been the division of the simple, comprehensive principle of the library of record into two competing principles. One occupies itself with tradition and the other with innovation—it is the break of the present and future from the past. As manifested in its collections, the conservator role of the library conflicts increasingly with the innovator role, and in this tension, library collection management most closely mimics the society that surrounds it. Embedded in this situation is the struggle of old and new, of the individual and the masses, of conformity and nonconformity.

Each of these three sets of principles behind collection management—value and demand, diversity and balance, conservator and innovator—is invoked on a sliding scale, moving from one extreme to the other in practice. Many variables, influences, and considerations are involved in determining the point on the scale at which a decision will be made. Making matters even more complex is the fact that these three sets of principles are almost certain to be brought to bear at once on any collection management decision. For these reasons, and always bearing in mind that the basic principles present themselves as polarized sets, practical implementation of the very best principles of collection management can be considered hazardous to intellectual freedom.

#### ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

Practical implementation of collection management principles is affected by a staff of librarians whose organization and its structure are, therefore, quite relevant to the maintenance of intellectual freedom. It may be useful at this juncture to recall that, regardless of the process through which a collection management decision is reached, it is in the end made *de juris* or *de facto*, by a collection management librarian. Generalizing the organization and staffing of collection management for the purpose of discussion is made difficult by the fact that collection management is organized and staffed in almost as many different ways as there are libraries. For that reason we will suppose that someone in the library is formally assigned overall responsibility for that function and that if others are involved the person responsible overall is the coordinator of at least the collection management efforts of those individuals. This model is general enough to apply both to a small library situation

where the head librarian is solely responsible and to a large research library where an assistant director for collection management supervises a large hierarchical staff dedicated to collection management.

Organizational structure may at first not appear to have much impact on intellectual freedom in collection management, but structure can either facilitate or impede communication and, therefore, the influence of organizational ideals and principles. There are two fundamentally different structures for collection management: one wherein the chief collection management officer also bears responsibility for other library functions, and one wherein that individual's sole functional responsibility is collection management. In the former model, problems reside in goals of the other areas of the collection management librarian's responsibilities that may very well be in conflict with the goals of collection management. For example, the difficulty of cataloging certain items may dissuade that individual from pursuing an intended acquisition; or, being responsible for reference, that individual may be dissuaded from either a positive or negative decision on any collection management matter, knowing only too well the manner in which certain critical patrons manifest their dissatisfaction on a daily basis at the reference desk. The most serious consequence likely to follow from the model of mixed responsibilities that leave insufficient time for full consideration of options is the decision simply to permit all and only those recommendations for collection management action that come forward from any source. The decision not to make a decision is still a decision.

The alternative structure of collection management—wherein collection management is the single responsibility of the chief collection management officer—presents the potential conflict with intellectual freedom in a slightly different light. For here the issue is one of determining the appropriate level of authority for the individual within the organization and the function, and therefore the appropriate influence, of collection management ideals and principles throughout the library. For example, the development of those ideals and principles, as well as the influence upon the extent to which they are realized in practice, may differ considerably if the collection management officer reports to the library director, or to the head of public services, or to the head of technical services. In this model, collection management is by design not integrated into library operations with the result that it can be viewed as separate and apart and, therefore, as a meddler or even an intruder in the affairs of other functional units. In that environment, the ideals and principles of collection management often are not understood but

instead are undermined. All these concerns apply as well to subordinates whose collection management activities are coordinated through one or the other of these structures.

Few if any collection management librarians are formally prepared to manage the ideals and principles of collection management. Few if any are formally prepared to interrelate those basic principles with local collection management needs and criteria and with the subtleties of intellectual freedom. What they tend to have some preparation for is defense against the censor in specific kinds of cases. In short, the profession is confronted with the unfortunate combination of inadequate preparation in the fundamentals of collection management and inadequate preparation in the considerations of the positive thrust of intellectual freedom.

In the absence of such firm grounding, the trends toward specialization and professionalization are not well channeled. Specialization and professionalization thus serve as distractions from attention to the full significance of intellectual freedom, tending in the case of specialization to foster proclivities toward certain subjects, treatments, or views and, in the case of professionalization, to emphasize ideals of a technical nature. Like others in the profession, collection management librarians have not yet fully recognized that their job is the management not just of people, dollars, stock, and technology, but of more than that; it is the management of ideas.

### COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY

Policy on collection management is intended to regulate the management of ideas in the best interests of the community served by a given library. Traditionally, it has applied to only the selection function of collection management, although more recently it seems to be intended to have broader application, as the range of collection management responsibilities becomes better understood. Whether written or not, collection management policy is the theoretical basis for the relationship between the community and the library, for it summarizes the goals, priorities, criteria, principles, and, in general, the institutional mind of the library. In practical terms, policy guides the nature, breadth, and depth of community access to information, the more so as technology occupies a larger part in the provision of access.

The presence of policy, especially when written, makes the collection management librarian accountable and therefore responsible. This is crucial in maintaining the principle of intellectual freedom because it is the sense of a larger responsibility—engendered also in less formal ways, of course—that creates the intellectual context in which specific elements of the policy are

interpreted in and applied to daily collection management decisions. Consequently, the more the policy genuinely does represent the institutional mind, and the more widely that is understood, and the more closely policy is followed by the collection management librarian, the more influential will be the principle of intellectual freedom. The converse is equally true.

The chief problem with collection management policy at present is that it focuses almost entirely on an intangible, albeit a developing, assemblage of information sources, rather than on the whole, which is a living social organism. Too often we neglect, in planning policy, to incorporate substance as suggested earlier in generating policy, to engage a process through which attendant process values will benefit both the library and the community, and, in adopting policy, to establish the means by which to enforce it. Our penchant seems to be toward making of the collection management policy an internal code rather than a channel of communication between the library and the community. Therefore, we look to written policy as a defense against specific instances of censorship rather than as an instrument of process through which bias and prejudice both within and outside the library can be addressed in a more general context, in advance and in the positive spirit of intellectual freedom.

As selection is at the heart of collection management and policy is at the heart of selection, the criteria for selection are the heart of policy. Whether implicitly or explicitly, most policies incorporate very similar considerations in matters of criteria, common among them being: format, treatment, author, publisher, national origin, age or date of publication, language, and relationship to the existing collection or to the wider accessibility of information. One can easily imagine the rich variety of bias or prejudice that could be applied to any of these categories of criteria in a number of different settings. In fact, if one were to list the bases upon which information sources could conceivably be subjected to censorship, this would be the list.

Here lies the delicate balance between collection management and censorship. The differences are subtle, because although polarized, they are polarized on a scale; for the tone of one is positive while the tone of the other is negative; the goal of one is to be inclusive while the goal of the other is to be exclusive; the motivation of one is to enhance access while the motivation of the other is to prescribe access. Motivation is the pivotal difference between collection management (which implies the principle of intellectual freedom) and the influence of censorship. Collection management is motivated by the goal of implementing policy as a whole with each decision made in that total context. Censorship is motivated by the goal of implementing a specific part of the policy, and decisions so influenced

are made in disregard of the policy as an integral whole. The delicate balance between intellectual freedom and censorship in collection management decisions is tested every day as motivation converts policy into practice.

### PRACTICE

Before "collection management" was "collection management," a term that did not come into use until the latter 1970s, it was called "collection development," which now is considered a part of the former set of responsibilities. And it was only for the period of about one decade preceding that the term collection development was used. The evolving perceptions within the profession of a coherent set of functions led to the use of these terms, each more explicit yet more comprehensive than its predecessor. The functions that now routinely are counted among collection management responsibilities number about two dozen, many of which as recently as two decades ago were not recognized formally or were taken for granted (for a list of nineteen responsibilities accepted by the profession, see, Bryant, 1986, p. 154). In any case, it is a major step forward and an advantage for vigilance over intellectual freedom that, generally, throughout the profession, a range of collection management responsibilities is addressed directly. Where it is not, the principle of intellectual freedom is at greater risk.

In a wholly rational situation, the fundamental principles and purposes of collection management would pervade policy, which in turn would translate them into criteria for selection decisions, while serving as an essential tool of communication binding together the library and its community. Thus, in a rational setting, both the letter and spirit of that policy would be implemented in daily practice. But a hazardous journey is traveled from principle to practice. We have discussed the perils inherent in collection management principles and policy, and there is ample documentation of the psychology and sociology behind professional decisions that may be influenced by either personal bias or prejudice. It may be useful at this point, then, to identify eight of the most common categories of decisions in collection management and indicate the types of threat to intellectual freedom held by each.

Budget justification and allocation are plans for action related to, but separate from, policy, stating the parameters surrounding implementation of policy. There is not a clear correlation between policy criteria and dollars, although there is what easily appears to be a correlation between dollars and priority, and this special kind of ambiguity opens the way to manipulation of policy. The situation is further skewed by differentials in the distribution of the information

universe among formats and subjects and by differentials of cost, both extremely complicating factors. Coordination of collection management decisions, another responsibility of collection management, enables censorship through laxness. For only overt action expressly in defense of intellectual freedom—and this is most extraordinary in the course of daily events—can correct censorship that devolves from a situation in which no one bears assigned responsibility for a particular area and all involved are negatively predisposed toward it.

Liaison with the community is probably the single most important function of collection management for it is through this medium that a variety of decisions are made, ranging from those required by the creation of policy to its daily interpretation. Because there are few librarians to undertake this responsibility relative to the size of the community, the collection management librarian must of necessity be highly selective in communicating. This selectivity suggests the likelihood that that person will choose the path of least resistance, thereby gathering information, tastes, perceptions, and proclivities from kindred spirits holding one world view.

Deselection of materials, which amounts to cancellation and weeding, comes the closest of any collection management function to acting in the negative spirit associated with censorship. So premised, the invocation of collection management principles and the application of its policies to this function clearly place the principle of intellectual freedom at risk. The same is true of decisions on transfer of materials to remote or storage locations, although the effects of such decisions made for inappropriate reasons at least are not of definitive consequence. In that connection, it should be noted that collection management decisions on the preservation—either intellectual or physical—of information sources very likely are the decisions with greatest potential impact on the principle of intellectual freedom.

Collection evaluation is a very significant function of collection management because it can lead to revision of policy and of financial planning, and because it can become a useful tool of communication with the community. The basis of the evaluation is of some concern in consideration of intellectual freedom because that very basis could reflect bias or prejudice. Two of the most common bases for evaluation are standard lists and use studies. It is obvious that great care must be taken in choosing the list that is to serve as the basis for evaluation. Perhaps less obvious but equally important as an unobtrusive influence on intellectual freedom is the relationship between a collection's use and its potential value to the community. For, at best, collection use may only reflect convenience in the community,

while at worst it may reflect only the biases and prejudices of a small minority of the community. Of direct concern to the interests of intellectual freedom is the fact that collection evaluation can be very influential in matters of policy, finance, and community relations.

As observed earlier, the selection function is the nucleus of collection management, just as it is the nexus of intellectual freedom concerns in the library. Because a great deal has been written on that subject, and because everything in this article addresses in one way or another the selection-censorship issue, comment here will be limited to a few specific issues. First are the extraordinary implications for intellectual freedom that can accompany gifts, whether financial gifts or gifts in kind. While, in theory, decisions about gifts in kind should be screened through the same policy considerations as are any other acquisitions, there is no ignoring the fact that they present themselves quite differently, and in some cases must be treated differently, thus attenuating the forces for intellectual freedom. The same can be said for financial gifts for restricted acquisitions, which circumvent the collection management system and which must be treated specially.

The other aspect of selection that is noteworthy in its connection with intellectual freedom is the influence of selection tools. Depending upon what is included or excluded in the media employed by collection management to scan the information universe, and depending upon how those tools classify or label their contents, and depending upon the nature of explicit judgments they may include in the form of reviews, annotations, or advertising, the librarian can unwittingly become a collaborator in subtle expressions of censorship. This is but one of the many environmental influences on collection management that have potential to restrict intellectual freedom.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS OF COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

As a system, collection management can be expected to influence and be influenced by its environment. In a general sense, environmental forces include all aspects of civilization and all do exert influence, but some have a very direct and immediate effect on collection management. Chief among these are: the publishing industry, which we can refer to more generally as the information and knowledge universe; technology, which at the present time is a powerful enough influence to be considered a separate environmental factor, although that should not always be the case; economics; and the community. From a systems perspective, one system is not neatly distinguishable from another or from its environment, but for purposes of discussion here a system will be treated as a discrete

entity. Of those four primary environmental concerns just listed, the last two, economics and the community, are of most constant concern in the relationship between collection management and intellectual freedom.

The influence of economics on collection management is rooted in the simple fact that no library can financially afford all the materials and all the accessibility implied in the extreme interpretation of the principle of intellectual freedom. That always has been true, and it surely will continue to be true for a long time. In recent decades this condition has been aggravated by a universal increase in the production of information, in the broadest sense, and by concomitant surges in cost. If cost were of no consideration in collection management there would still be issues of censorship to deal with, to be sure. But consideration of cost is a basic function of collection management, and tensions surrounding intellectual freedom often are commensurate with economic constraint. The manifestations of this phenomenon range from very gross and subtle shifts in emphasis to the determination that a specific book title cannot be acquired. In each case representing the extreme, the justification for the collection management decision is economic constraint, which may be quite valid, or may be subterfuge for censorship, or may be the reflection of nondecision-making (nonfeasance).

The extreme example of determining not to acquire a particular book on grounds of insufficient funds needs no explanation, but the example of gross yet subtle shifts in emphasis in collection management probably does require explanation. This is a situation common to most academic libraries during the past two decades, and perhaps familiar in other settings as well. It is a situation whereby journals, because of their nature in combination with price increase differentials, gradually occupied a greater and greater part of the acquisitions budget, causing a diminishment of access to books and, with it, a diminishment of access to certain kinds of information that are conveyed more appropriately in the book medium. Along with this shift in local libraries, which then was extrapolated nationwide, a shift in subject emphasis took place because of the differences in the way scholarship functions among disciplines. At issue here is not the judgment of whether these shifts were for the better or worse, but the idea that they were effected because of economic forces rather than because of planning deliberations engaged in jointly between the library and the community or even within the library. While these shifts continue, a new economic force has entered the arena, and that is the growing corpus of electronic

sources. What gross and subtle shifts in the provision of access will this new format stimulate? Will we be in a position of control or one merely of observation?

The community is the single most important source of information for collection management policy and practice. At the same time, the community is likely to constitute the single greatest threat to intellectual freedom. Therefore, the more society (the aggregate of communities) becomes dependent upon information, and the more information that is produced and at greater cost, the more critical becomes the role of library collection management in ensuring intellectual freedom through the provision of access. Institutions and professions hold the public trust and can survive as institutions and professions only if they keep that trust. For many reasons, however, not the least of which is the influence of economic considerations, the public demands ever greater accountability in exchange for trust. Trust must be earned. Having evolved from the time when its community was composed of patrons—a word whose root meaning is protector, defender, and advocate—to a time when that community is composed of clients—meaning those who are defended—collection management has attained a station toward which the community looks for the guardianship of its intellectual freedom. But this position is tenuous. Community expectations for access have been heightened in recent years by the prevalence of information technology. Collection management has not yet devised the kinds of mechanisms needed to communicate effectively with a broad segment of the community. Collection management interacts largely with a select minority of the community, sometimes referred to as an elite that supports the library that serves it. In this situation, the distinction between patron and client may seem obscure, but it is clear that the roles are reversed when a collection management decision is biased or prejudiced by a patron (in the original sense).

### INTERLIBRARY COOPERATION

In response to pressure exerted on collection management by increased publishing production, increased cost of materials, rapid introduction of technology, and heightened demand and expectations of the community, collection management has gradually become dependent on various forms of interlibrary cooperation. Among the various and interlocked manifestations of this dimension of librarianship is the cooperative development of collections, which is an approach that means that agreements other than those between the library and the community will determine the breadth and depth of immediate local accessibility. From a community perspective, the idea of formulating local policy, at least in part on the basis of

agreements established to serve other communities, must be something like learning that the earth moves around the sun, rather than the reverse. To whatever extent collection management may have focused on the needs, goals, and ethos of the local community prior to the adoption of cooperative policy, that focus thereafter was diverted. Cooperative collection management is not a strategy to economize, it is a strategy to expand accessibility. Quite the opposite of saving money, it is certain to cost more money, if only in administrative overhead. Therefore, as a program with a dimension of cost, cooperation further tightens the parameters in which local collection management decisions are made. The dilemma that emerges from this set of conditions is that a decision against cooperation is equally a decision against greater general accessibility, while the decision in favor of cooperation is one that heightens the tension surrounding intellectual freedom because of greater specific economic constraints locally. This is because the concept of regional or national resources is not yet accepted fully by the profession, much less understood by the community, thus setting the stage for an ironic conflict between accessibility and intellectual freedom. In these terms, agreement to the goal of enhanced access is not achieved easily. For one thing, agreement on programs of cooperation assumes agreement on increased expenditures, and more so as technology and access become almost synonymous. Again, economic concerns are an inhibiting factor. Of greater concern to those whose agreement to this kind of enhancement of accessibility must be garnered is agreement to specialize locally in some way, which is implicit in the concept of resource sharing. Guiding deliberation in this matter is the principle that the elimination of browsability is tantamount to the diminishment of accessibility, a principle that takes on added weight when it is understood that the local core of resources will steadily shrink as a proportion of the total accessibility to resources afforded by the library.

Bearing in mind the potential for negative influence on the maintenance of intellectual freedom in collection management decisions that is wielded by the community—or a select part of it—cooperative collection management programs can pose threats to intellectual freedom at two levels. One is at the local level where it always has been, but generating increased tension in decisions about the local core as it shrinks proportionally and, perhaps, absolutely. Another threat is introduced by a new tension surrounding collection management decisions, a tension similar in nature to that experienced at the local level, but extrapolated at a high level of complexity with far-reaching implications when collection management decisions

determine accessibility nationwide. It is likely that advances in information technology will enhance the ease of, and extend the ramifications of, decisions that would limit intellectual freedom.

### THE SYSTEM EVOLVED

Three interrelated shifts are driving an evolution in the social system called collection management. The first is the evolution in the physical matter of collection management, or the media, which is an evolution that has gone from a book centered system to a journal centered system to an electronic centered system. The second is the evolution in professional perspective, which has proceeded from a goal of ownership to one of access in collection management. The third is the evolution in public or community attitude toward the collection management system, which has taken us from an attitude of trust to one requiring accountability, to an attitude of heightened expectation.

The coincidence of these three evolutionary changes has the potential to place the already unsettling intersection of intellectual freedom and collection management in an environment whose most characteristic attributes are the ethereal pervasiveness of the electronic format, the abstractness of access, and the expansive dimensions of expectation. Surely such an environment renders that intersection of collection management and intellectual freedom even more subtle and ambiguous and, therefore, more hazardous.

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