A Prescription for Faculty Librarian Collaboration: Updating A Pharmacy Book Collection and Matching Curricular Changes

Kimberly Lyons-Mitchell and Mary J. Ferrill

Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, University of the Pacific, 3601 Pacific Avenue, Stockton CA 95211

In the days of shrinking book budgets and increasing book prices institutions must make careful decisions for purchasing. In this paper, we show how collaboration between a librarian and teaching faculty works to define the library’s needs and makes purchases that both reflect the changes in curriculum and update an aging collection while remaining within a budget. We compared the existing collection to standard book lists such as the Brandon Hill List of Books for the Small Medical Library and the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy Basic Resources List. Through collaboration we then decided on books to purchase, and compared the collection again. The findings showed that our collaboration was successful and our book collection had improved. Collaboration between librarian and teaching faculty is a reliable way to update an aging collection as well as to assure new purchases are in line with the curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Faculty collaboration is an important part of the overall structure of a university working system. While collaboration within similar disciplines is commonplace, interdisciplinary collaboration can be rare. Library/academic unit collaboration is necessary to purchase the appropriate library books on a limited budget(1-3). With the academic book budget shrinking at many institutions, or at best remaining static, and the price of books escalating rapidly with inflation, it is necessary to make accurate decisions regarding book purchases. There are many ways to accomplish this, allowing either faculty or librarians to make decisions alone, using standardized lists to guide acquisitions, or to use all three techniques in concert with one another to obtain the best possible collection scenario. The driving force for this project was the concept of faculty-librarian collaboration to update and add to the pharmacy book collection at the Health Science and Chemistry Branch Library in an effort to monitor and match curricular changes.

BACKGROUND

In the 1992 Reference and Adult Services Division (RASD) of the American Library Association Guidelines for Liaison Work, liaison work is defined as “...the relationships, formal and informal, that librarians develop with the library’s clientele for the specific purpose of seeking input regarding the selection of materials”(4). Suresh et al., in a 1995 paper gives many of these definitions and states that a liaison program is an “…activity in which professional library staff systematically meet with teaching faculty to discuss strategies for directly supporting their instructional needs and those of their students.” According to Suresh et al., a library liaison is assigned to an academic unit as the contact person for faculty and works with representatives regarding issues of collection development, research and teaching in the liaison area. A library representative is a faculty member of a particular unit who acts as the communicator between the library and the academic unit. The library representative and the liaison work closely to reach various set goals for the library and its programs. It is further asserted that a liaison program is designed to improve communication between faculty and the library, provide public relations and facilitate in collection development(5). In the case at University of the Pacific, the librarian (liaison) works with the Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences Library Committee (library representatives) rather than just one individual.

The environment for our ongoing collaboration is the...
Table I. Brandon Hill selected list of books and journals for the small medical library 1998-1999 comparison (n=589)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of books in 1998 UOP collection</th>
<th># of books in 1999 UOP collection</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
<th># of old books in 1998 UOP collection</th>
<th># of old books in 1999 UOP collection</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. AACP 1998 basic suggested booklist for libraries serving pharmacy colleges/schools comparison (n=843)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of books in 1998 UOP collection</th>
<th># of books in 1999 UOP collection</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
<th># of old books in 1998 UOP collection</th>
<th># of old books in 1999 UOP collection</th>
<th>Percent change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. UOP holding from the Brandon Hill selected list of books and journals for the small medical library 1999-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of books in 1999-2000 list</th>
<th># of books in UOP collection</th>
<th>% of list books in UOP collection</th>
<th># of old books in 1999-2000</th>
<th>Percent of old books in UOP collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>627</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

University of the Pacific’s Health Sciences and Chemistry Branch (HSCB) Library and the Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. University of the Pacific is a small liberal arts university with a large school of pharmacy. The HSCB is a branch library of the main campus’ Holt-Atherton Memorial Library. The major emphasis of the HSCB collection is pharmacy and health sciences, and the primary users of the HSCB are the pharmacy students, with approximately 410 students on campus and 205 off campus, completing their rotations. The curriculum in the school of pharmacy is currently undergoing a major revision, many courses are being added, new subjects are being taught, and some are no longer being offered. The library’s collection must be able to continually meet the needs of the curriculum. Collection review through collaboration is one way to accomplish that task. We systematically reviewed and updated the pharmacy book collection of the HSCB through the comparison of the collection to published standard lists and faculty and librarian input on purchasing decisions, and through collaboration we achieved a well-balanced book collection.

METHODS

The library committee within the school of pharmacy, comprised of representatives from each pharmacy department and the sciences librarian, discuss library issues including those relating to pharmacy curricular reform. One of the current concerns of the library and the library committee was that the book collection needed updating and should match the revised pharmacy curriculum. The current holdings and needs of the library were assessed by the librarian based on the Brandon Hill List of Books and Journals for the Small Medical Library (Years 1997-1998 and 1999-2000)(6,7) and the AACP Suggested Book List for Libraries Serving Pharmacy Colleges/Schools (Years 1998 and 1999)(8,9). The use of standard lists or bibliographies is probably used often in practice, however this method only appears in the literature in a few instances(3,10). These types of lists exist in many disciplines and act as benchmarks on which to guide one’s collection development activities. The library committee received copies of the results of the book list assessment and subsequent potential new acquisitions. The lists were initially discussed at a library committee meeting. The discussion topics and a short list of old book editions were distributed to the faculty. At this point in time the librarian was also appointed to the pharmacy school’s curriculum committee to be able to include the library in curricular changes to ensure cohesiveness between the library collection and the new pharmacy curriculum. The librarian considered the information from the library committee and individual faculty input, and discussion from the curriculum committee, to make decisions on new book purchases, and choices for updated editions while remaining within the existing book budget. Multiple copies of certain books were also considered for purchase based on student enrollment in courses and extensive use. After the end of the fiscal year, the collection was assessed again using the same measures. The purpose of this was to use quantitative measures to see if the collaboration resulted in an improved and updated collection.

RESULTS

The 1998 UOP book collection was compared to both the Brandon Hill(6,7) and AACP lists(8,9) (see Tables I and II). After acquisitions were obtained at the end of the fiscal year, the collection was re-assessed. Based on the Brandon Hill and AACP lists, the UOP collection improved from 1998 to 1999 in both the percentage of books in the UOP collection, and the percentage of old books that were removed and replaced books in the collection. Due to space limitations, the fact that the field of medicine changes at such a rapid pace, and UOP is not a comprehensive research institution, older books are not retained.

It was hypothesized that by developing a plan for faculty involvement that had structure, faculty would participate, and that this process would bring about a positive change in the collection. The library committee visualized an updated collection that better adhered to both the standardized lists used in the project as well as the curriculum of the institution.

When the UOP collection was compared to the 1999-2000 Brandon Hill List (Table III) many outdated books were locat
DISCUSSION

The numbers from the collection comparison with both the 1997-1998 Brandon Hill and AACP lists demonstrates that the collaboration did bring about a positive change in both the numbers of new titles added as well as the number of old editions replaced in the collection. Through this process, we were able to add new titles that not only were on standardized lists, but were also in line with curricular changes. The numbers show that the collaboration was a success, as does the positive responses received from pharmacy faculty. As was mentioned in the introduction, many collaboration projects are unsuccessful due to a variety of reasons such as attitudes, time constraints and disagreements. The UOP collaboration worked, with little to no problems along the way.

Some literature pertaining to faculty-librarian collaboration attempts to show that librarians are better selectors than faculty(11) or vice versa(2), but generally neither of these is found to be true(10,12). Our research did not attempt to show that either the librarian or faculty member is any better at selecting books, rather it showed that working together in a harmonious fashion can improve a pharmacy book collection.

There are many examples of collaborations in which goals were reached successfully and all parties involved participated willingly(13-16). When a specific plan for involving teaching faculty in collection development is designed, the faculty tend to be more likely to participate despite pedagogical time constraints(17). This seems to be an important aspect of garnering support for collection building activities from the faculty. Not only does cooperation and collaboration work to attain a specific goal, but it can also foster a means of communication between academic units and the library(14,15).

In addition to fostering communication, collaboration of this type can also help to identify the knowledge of faculty’s subject expertise(12). Buis states that faculty are in such a position that they can understand both students’ and library needs to support a specific program(18). The RASD Guidelines for Liaison Work assert that faculty have much to offer in terms of subject expertise and tend to know of cutting edge developments in their respective fields. In addition to the librarian acknowledging faculty expertise, faculty should also recognize the role of the librarian. In the RASD Guidelines, it is recommended that librarians should be represented on faculty committees, specifically on curriculum review committees(4). The dean of the Thomas J. Long School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences appointed the librarian to the school of pharmacy’s curriculum committee in 1998 to be involved in the curriculum review process and to ensure that the library could support the addition of new courses and subjects. The pairing of faculty and librarian is an interesting prospect and in order for the pairing to be successful, the two groups must work collaborative-ly. Chu states that the “…library can be a proactive force if the faculty trust the librarians to make appropriate choices and the librarians trust the faculty to watch out for institutional well-being”(1).

The process of collaboration is not complex, but must be somewhat structured. Suresh and colleagues suggest a systematic approach that begins with planning, training for the liaisons as well as representatives, collection development pol-

Implications For Future Research. When this project was developed and implemented, electronic or “e” books were not yet purchased by the UOP Library. However, since then electronic books at most libraries are becoming more widely used and are becoming a major expense factor. Therefore librarians will need to work even more closely with faculty to ensure that only those electronic products that will be used in coursework or reference work will be purchased.
CONCLUSIONS
Updating the library holdings at UOP involved a systematic process that integrated faculty, the librarian, a library committee, curriculum committee, and standardized book lists to allow a successful improvement of the core book collection at a large school of pharmacy. In Health Sciences libraries, it is equally important to ensure currency of books as well as content of the collection. Therefore, when Health Sciences library collections are compared to standard lists, it is also important to examine old editions and determine if new editions should be obtained based on curricular changes. A continued review of the collection will need to be conducted to ensure that the collection remains up-to-date and will support further curricular changes.

By integrating the subject expertise of the pharmacy faculty and the Sciences Librarian, using standardized book lists, and the appointment of the Sciences Librarian to the curriculum committee, the collection at the school of pharmacy more closely reflects the needs for the new curriculum. Due to a limited budget in a small liberal arts University, with a large school of pharmacy, it is important to be able to systematically obtain the necessary information to make wise book purchasing decisions. An integrated approach has allowed book purchasing choices to be made that include subjects that are actively being taught and researched in the school of pharmacy while still maintaining a necessary core collection for the study of pharmacy.

References