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LIS 610: Collection Management

Kirkwood's article addresses collection development in its entirety. She describes a project conducted in the library at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom. The aim of the project was to test and observe new techniques for collection development, specifically techniques that are automated and data-driven rather than subject-based. Kirkwood seems to identify the problem with collection development being that it is extremely time-consuming, and that collections may not always accurately represent a user population. By pushing data-driven automation services, librarians hope to eliminate some of the guessing and leg work to build a more practical and useful collection.

Overall, this article is very well-written and honestly quite interesting. Prior to the project implementation, researchers hypothesized that with data exploitation through increasing functionality in library management systems, they should be able to automate decisions about new purchases, current subscriptions, and material regulation (276). The project proposes that various profiles be created programmatically, then sent to vendors, who are then in charge of meeting the different requirements. For example, participants planned to extract keywords from publications and web pages, then sort and rank the keywords, then form a suggested list of titles based on the keywords. They tested several different approaches, the most successful being a “blended” approach that utilized both semi-automated and human interaction to “apply academic expertise” (278). Some of the tools used for this project include COPAC’s Collaborative Collection Management (CCM) tool and Alma analytics.

As does any credible research article, Kirkwood notes the limitations discovered during this study. However, it was alarming to read her mention several times the lack of librarian interest and willingness to explore the data analysis portion of the project. She also referenced staff members' lack of basic skills, such as database use and Excel graphs. Not only did participants not know how to execute various tasks, but they did not seem interested in learning how to. Perhaps a solution to this problem is to hire more qualified staff or even to provide training to those who are not up to speed. Willingness, innovation, and flexibility are redeeming qualities that all library staff should possess.

## **Sources**

Kirkwood, R. J. (2016). Collection development or data-driven content curation? An exploratory project in Manchester. *Library Management*, 37(4/5), 275-284. doi:10.1108/lm-05-2016-0044