Stock editing:
creating guidelines for
University of the Arts London

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Editing stock is a challenge for all libraries but this is particularly true in the area of art, design and communication. The authors describe a project in a London-based art, design and communication university, University of the Arts London, to agree on guidelines which would keep stock current and relevant, but at the same time safeguard valuable material for present and future use.

Introduction

At University of the Arts London (formerly The London Institute), stock editing was regularly carried out in some parts of the collection, but other parts had never been edited. No set of written guidelines existed, rather the process relied on the experience of librarians who had detailed knowledge of the collection they were responsible for and had been working with for many years. So in order to provide guidance for newer staff, a consistent approach and confidence to tackle difficult areas, we decided to create a series of practical guidelines for subject librarians to use when editing stock.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to describe the process of writing and getting approved a set of guidelines for books, periodicals, videos, cds, dvds and tapes, and hence provide a case study of stock editing in a large art, design and communication library service within the UK.

University of the Arts London

University of the Arts London brings together in a single federated structure five internationally renowned colleges of art, design and communication: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design,

Chelsea College of Art and Design, London College of Communication (formerly London College of Printing) and London College of Fashion. It was launched as a university in May 2004: before that it was the London Institute, a higher education corporation. For ease of reading we will use the term 'University' throughout this article.

The University provides courses at all levels, from further education (FE) through to post-graduate. The total student population in 2003/4 was 15,641 full-time equivalent (FTE) of which 11,319 FTE were higher education and 4,207 FTE were further education. During recent years the University has placed a significant emphasis on developing its research activities, both in terms of increasing the number of PhD registrations and research-active staff and the University's involvement in major research projects. The University gained a 5 in the Research Assessment Exercise of 2001[1] and in 2002 was given research degree-awarding powers. It continues to give research a high priority: one of its current key priorities is to establish the University as an internationally recognised centre of excellence for research. This has meant the library collections, hitherto mainly geared towards taught courses (with the exception of the special collections), have needed to reflect and respond to the University's expanding research agenda.

Library & Learning Resources

Until 1999, each College ran its own library service
and the head of the library reported to the head of
college. From 1999 onwards, following a review of
library services, a new centralised department was
formed, called Library and Learning Resources
(LLR), under the leadership of a Director of Library
and Learning Resources. The new department
sought to retain local responsiveness by providing
library services at the colleges whilst seeking to add
value from co-ordinated LLR-wide developments.

Collection Development Policy

One of the areas where co-ordination has taken
place is in collection development. A department-
wide working group was established to write a LLR
collection development policy in 2002/2003. This
work was completed in February 2003. The Policy[2]
includes a section on stock editing, outlining the
LLR's approach in this area. The main points are
* to keep the collections current, with the proviso
  that art materials do not date in the same way
  as other subject areas
* to recognise space constraints within the
  organisation
* to rationalise stock when mergers of site
  libraries take place
* to respond to usage and demand for stock
* to recognise future potential of stock
* to remove damaged stock where possible
* to consult academic staff where relevant
* to use the ARLIS/UK & Ireland *Guidelines on
  stock disposal* produced in 2000.[3]

The Stock Editing Guidelines Project

As a supplement to this Policy it soon became
apparent that stock-editing guidelines were
necessary so that we could provide guidance to our
staff and seek to co-ordinate our activities across
LLR in line with the principles quoted above.

This work was led by a team of librarians at
London College of Communication. Initially the
project was a local initiative.

The first task we set ourselves was to research the
subject, consulting professional literature including
the ARLIS *Guidelines on stock disposal*, to look at the

stock editing policies of CURL libraries[4] and to
canvas the ARLIS/UK & Ireland mailing list to see
what other art libraries did. We also had access to a
draft copy of the Collection Development Policy
and the points quoted above.

When we analysed the results of our research, the
group realised that we had plenty of theory but not
so much of practice. The Collection Development
Policy, the ARLIS *Guidelines on stock disposal* and the
professional literature gave us the principles we
needed, but we also needed guidelines to put these
principles into practice in a way that was specific to
our collections. In this respect, the most useful
advice we had was from Kingston University
Library, who had created documentation which
consisted of an assessment flowchart, shelf survey
guidelines, low-use criteria for specific classmarks,
and directions for actual withdrawal. We agreed that
something along the lines of the Kingston
documentation, suitably adapted, would be
appropriate to our needs.

It was at this point that we were asked to broaden
the project to include the whole of the University
rather than just produce local guidelines. The
focus inevitably became wider and the needs of
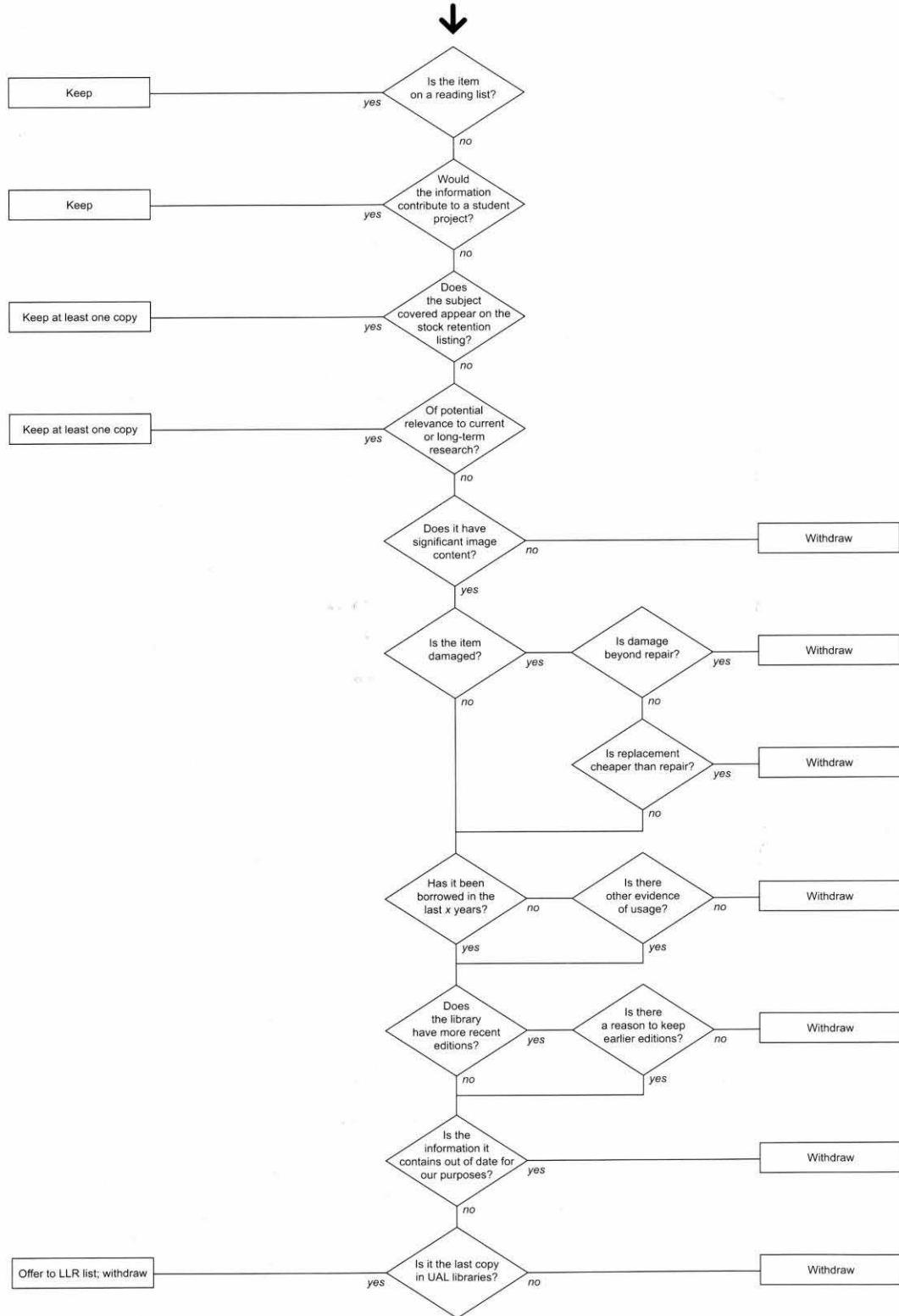all five colleges then had to be taken into
consideration.

We decided that the best approach to adopt was
to continue work at London College of
Communication as a college-based group, creating
documentation based on our research and local
discussions, but then submit this as a draft to the
rest of the University for consultation and review.
The basis of the documentation would be

* a flowchart using prompt questions
* a list of stock retention responsibilities for each
  college.

The point of the stock retention responsibilities was
to make sure that, in the subject areas in which we
specialise, at least one copy would be retained by
the University for present or future research. This
was a major step forward in collaborative collection
development.

These two documents remained the focus of the
guidelines, though they went through many minor
amendments throughout the consultation period.
How they finally looked is shown overleaf.

Stock editing flowchart books, videos, cds, dvds, tapes

↓

Keep	← yes — **Is the item on a reading list?**
	no ↓
Keep	← yes — **Would the information contribute to a student project?**
	no ↓
Keep at least one copy	← yes — **Does the subject covered appear on the stock retention listing?**
	no ↓
Keep at least one copy	← yes — **Of potential relevance to current or long-term research?**
	no ↓

Does it have significant image content? — no → Withdraw

yes ↓

Is the item damaged? — yes → **Is damage beyond repair?** — yes → Withdraw

no ↓ / **Is damage beyond repair?** no ↓

Is replacement cheaper than repair? — yes → Withdraw

no ↓

Has it been borrowed in the last x years? — no → **Is there other evidence of usage?** — no → Withdraw

yes ↓ / **Is there other evidence of usage?** yes ↓

Does the library have more recent editions? — yes → **Is there a reason to keep earlier editions?** — no → Withdraw

no ↓ / **Is there a reason to keep earlier editions?** yes ↓

Is the information it contains out of date for our purposes? — yes → Withdraw

no ↓

Offer to LLR list; withdraw ← yes — **Is it the last copy in UAL libraries?** — no → Withdraw

Stock retention responsibilities

Camberwell College of Arts

Chief retention responsibility for UAL	potential national importance
conservation	
paper crafts	
metalwork	
silversmithing	

Chelsea College of Art and Design

Chief retention responsibility for UAL	potential national importance
architecture	
arts administration and curatorship	
book arts	
fine art (1850 to present day)	fine art (1850 to present day)
green textiles	green textiles
interior and spatial design	
lighting design	
public art	public art
sustainable design	sustainable design

Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design

Chief retention responsibility for UAL	potential national importance
ceramic design	
furniture design	
history of design	
industrial design	
jewellery design	
performing arts	
product design	
textile design	
theatre design and scenography	

London College of Fashion

Chief retention responsibility for UAL	potential national importance
clothing management and technology	clothing management and technology
costume history	costume history
fashion design	fashion design
footwear, leathergoods and accessories	footwear, leathergoods and accessories
hair and beauty therapy	hair and beauty therapy
tailoring and pattern cutting	tailoring and pattern cutting

London College of Communication

Chief retention responsibility for UAL	potential national importance
animation	
book design	
computer graphics	
design management	
enterprise management	
film and video	
graphic arts	
graphic design	
graphic novel	
illustration	
interactive media	
journalism	history of journalism as it relates to printing
marketing	
mass media	
photography	
printing	printing
prints and printmaking	
publishing	
retail design	
surface design	
travel and tourism	
typography	typography

The consultation process

The first draft of the guidelines was ready by December 2002 and the consultation process, which was to continue until July 2004, began.

The University has a collegiate structure, and consultation necessarily involves many people. Library and Learning Resources, as explained above, is a centralised service but is physically based in the colleges, and provides a subject librarian service that is rooted in the colleges, the courses they teach and the research they carry out. We wanted all LLR staff to contribute to the documentation, but we also wanted teaching and research staff to have the opportunity to comment.

The guidelines were first reviewed by subject librarians and then went to the LLR Senior Managers for approval. Once approved the guidelines were submitted to the Library & Learning Resources Committee for endorsement. This committee is a University committee of the Academic Board charged with overviewing library and learning resource services in support of academic activities, with reference to their impact upon academic quality and standards. The

committee endorsed the document but also asked for it to be referred back to the colleges for both information and comment.

At every stage of the consultation process we had fresh feedback which needed to be incorporated. Key decisions that were taken as a result of the feedback were

- the exclusion of slides from the project, to be considered in a separate, future project
- the exclusion of all special collections from the project (this was agreed from the beginning)
- the creation of a separate flowchart for periodical publications
- the agreement to review the college retention responsibilities annually in the light of changing courses and areas of research
- the division of college retention responsibilities into two categories: chief retention responsibility for the University and potential national importance. This was necessary because some colleges have a national role, which has been recognized by external funding, in collecting materials in certain subject areas. A good example of this is printing for the LCC.

Teaching and research staff took a strong interest in the retention responsibilities and welcomed the chance to comment. It is too early yet to tell, but we hope that the extensive consultation and review will mean that academic staff understand and support the process.

Conclusion

Creating practical and detailed guidelines for stock

editing is not easy: both librarians and academic staff tend to have strong, and sometimes opposing, views on how it should be done so getting agreement can be challenging. But in our case it was well worth it. It helps us have confidence in our procedures and means we can justify our decisions against agreed criteria.

The next step will be to undertake the annual review of the college retention responsibilities. This will take into consideration courses in new subject areas and current University research projects. We will also have a year's experience of using the guidelines, and will be able to identify any changes needed. Finally, we would like to continue publicising the guidelines, within Library and Learning Resources, within the University of the Arts London, and in the wider community.

References

1. The system used in the UK to enable the higher education funding bodies to distribute public funds for research selectively on the basis of quality (http://www.hero.ac.uk/rae/).
2. Collection Development Policy: http://www.arts.ac.uk/library/150.htm
3. ARLIS/UK & Ireland Guidelines on stock disposal (http://www.arlis.org.uk/publ/stoc.html).
4. The UK Consortium of Research Libraries (http://www.curl.ac.uk).

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