Concepts and Terms

Regardless of the type of clientele they serve, the primary purpose of all libraries and information centers is to assist in the transfer of information and the development of knowledge. Figure 1.1, page 17, illustrates the process involved, using nine circles to represent the transfer cycle. There is the *identification* stage, during which the organization segregates appropriate from inappropriate information. In most instances, there is more appropriate information available than the organization can handle. Thus, there is a need to *select* the most appropriate or important information to *acquire*. After acquisition, the organization *organizes* the information in some manner. Upon completion of the organizing action comes the *preparation* of the information for *storage*, which should ensure the information is easily retrievable. Users often need assistance to describe their needs in a manner that leads to locating and retrieving the desired information (*interpretation*). Finally, users draw upon the secured information to aid them in their activities/work (*utilization*) and disseminate the outcome of the work to the internal or external environment or both. If the transfer process is to function properly, there must be procedures, policies, and people in place to carry out the necessary *operational* steps. As always, there must be coordination and money for the operations to do what they were set up to do; this is the administrative and managerial aspect of information work.

The foregoing discussion helps set the stage for this book, which focuses on the process of building information collections for long- and short-term storage. Collection development, or information acquisition, is one
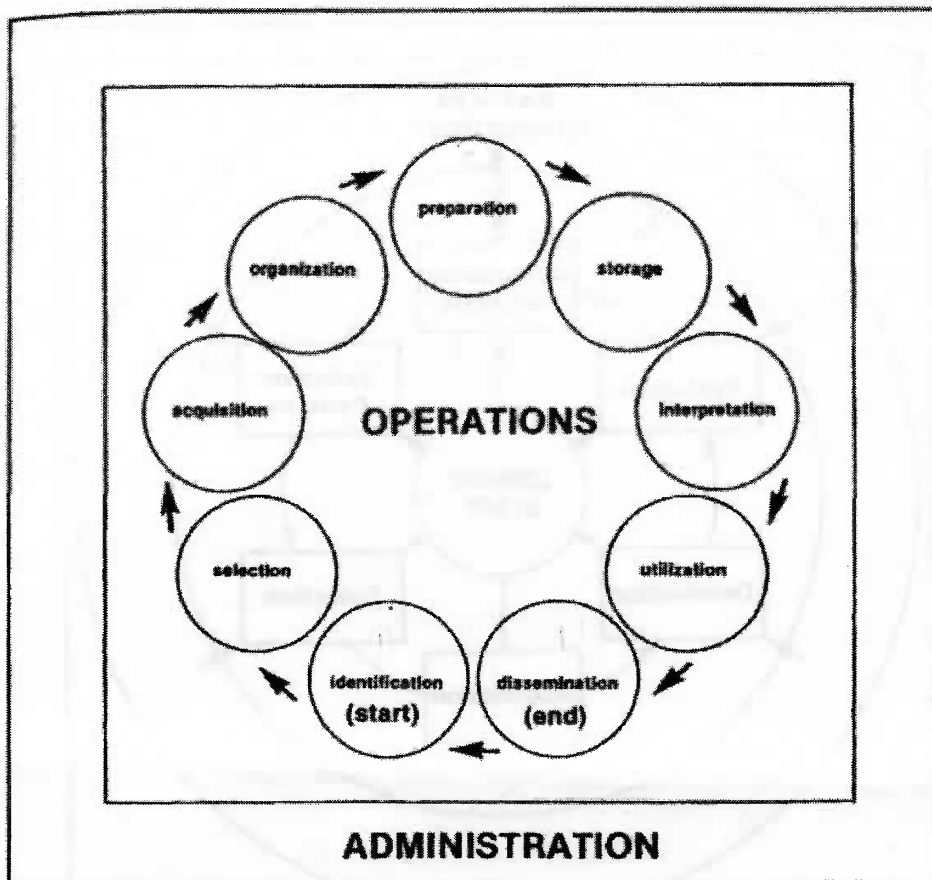
Fig. 1.1. Information transfer work.

area common to both librarianship and information resource management. As in prior editions, we define collection development as "the process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of a library's materials collection in terms of patron needs and community resources, and attempting to correct existing weaknesses, if any." With only minor modifications, this definition can apply to both libraries and information centers in any organization collecting materials in any format. Thus, collection development is the process of meeting the information needs of the people (a service population) in a timely and economical manner using information resources locally held, as well as from other organizations. This new definition is broader in scope and places emphasis on thoughtful (timely and economical) collection building and on seeking out both internal and external information resources. It is worth noting that Ross Atkinson suggested that the phrases *collection development* and *collection management* are being used interchangeably and that there is no consensus on which term is more comprehensive in scope.[18]

Collection development is a universal process for libraries and information centers. Figure 1.2, page 8, illustrates the six major components of the process. One can see a relationship between figures 1.1 and 1.2 in that collection development involves three of the nine information transfer ele-
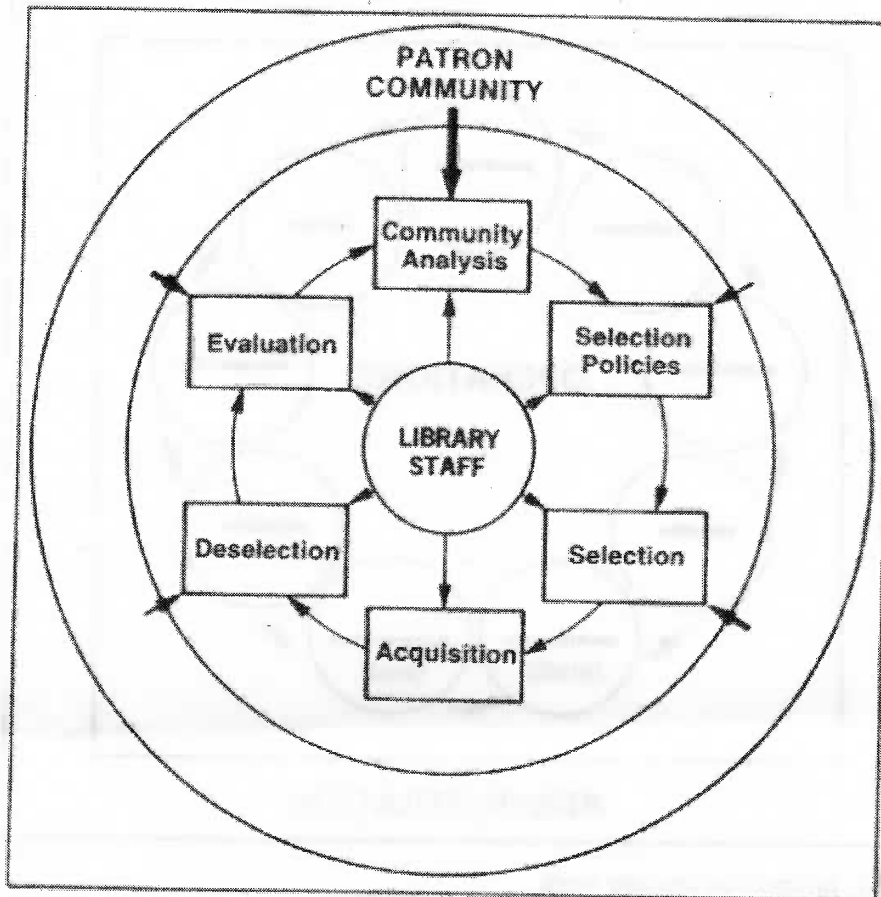
Fig. 1.2. Collection development process.

ments (identification, selection, acquisition). As implied by the circle, collection development is a constant cycle that continues as long as the library or information center exists. All of the elements in the cycle are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Because of our philosophy of collection development, which has a focus on meeting the information needs of the community the collection serves, we begin the discussion of collection development with the needs assessment (community analysis) element. The terms *needs assessment, community analysis,* or *user community,* as used throughout this book, mean the group of persons that the library exists to serve. They do *not* refer only to the active users but include everyone within the library's or information center's defined service limits. Thus, a community might be an entire political unit (i.e., a nation, region, state, province, county, city, or town). Alternatively, a community may be a more specialized grouping or association (i.e., a university, college, school, government agency, or private organization). Also, the number of people that the library is to serve may range from a very few to millions. As discussed in chapter 2, data for the analysis comes

from a variety of sources, not just staff-generated material. For collection development personnel, the assessment process provides data on what information the clientele needs. It also establishes a valuable mechanism for user input into the process of collection development. (Note the size of the arrow in figure 1.2 from the community to collection development; the size indicates the level of "community" input appropriate for each element.)

One use for the data collected in a needs assessment is as part of the preparation for collection development policy. Clearly delineated policies on both collection development and selection (covered in chapter 3) provide collection development staff with guidelines for choosing items for inclusion in the collection. (Note that collection policies cover a wider range of topics than just selection policies. For example, *selection* policies normally provide only information useful in deciding which items to purchase, whereas *collection* policies cover that topic in addition to such related issues as gifts, weeding, and cooperation.) Most libraries have some of the required information available for their collection development personnel, although they do not always label it "policy." Some libraries call it an *acquisitions* policy, some a *selection* policy, some a *collection development* policy, and others simply a *statement*. Whatever the local label, the intent is the same: to define the library's goals for its collection(s) and to help staff members select and acquire the most appropriate materials.

At this point, the staff begins the procedures for selecting materials (covered in chapters 4 through 9), using whatever written policies or statements the library has prepared. For many people, this is the most interesting element in the collection development process. One constant factor in collection development is that there is never enough money available to buy everything that might be of value to the service community. Naturally, this means that someone, usually one or more professional staff members, must decide which items to buy. *Selection* is this process of deciding which materials to acquire for a library collection. It may involve deciding among items that provide information about the same subject; deciding whether the information contained in an item is worth the price; or determining whether an item could stand up to the use it would receive. In essence, it is a matter of systematically determining quality and value. Selection is a form of decision making. Most of the time it is not just a matter of identifying appropriate materials but of deciding among items that are essential, important, needed, marginal, nice, or luxurious. Where to place any item in the sequence from essential to luxurious depends, of course, on the individual selector's point of view. It is just a matter of perception. So it is with library materials.

Individuals buying an item for themselves normally do not have to justify the expenditure to anyone. However, when it is a question of spending the library community's money, whether derived from taxes or an organization's budget, the problem becomes more complex. The question of whose perception of value to use is one of the challenges in collection development. Needs assessments and policies help determine the answer, but there is a long-standing question in the field: How much emphasis should selectors place on clientele demand and how much on content quality? Often the question of perception comes up when someone objects to the presence of an item in the collection (see chapter 18).

Once the selectors make their decisions, the acquisition work begins (see chapters 10, 11, and 12). *Acquisition work* is the process of securing materials for the library's collection, whether by purchase, as gifts, or

through exchange programs. This is the only point in the collection development process that involves little or no community input; it is a fairly straightforward business operation. Once the staff decides to purchase an item, the acquisition department proceeds with the preparation of an order form and the selection of a vendor, eventually recording the receipt of the item and finally paying the bill (invoice). Though details vary, the basic routines remain the same around the world, just as they do in either a manual or automated work environment. (Note that the *acquisition* process does not always mean buying an item. Gift and exchange programs can also be useful means of acquiring needed material.)

After receipt, an item goes through a series of internal library operations (beyond the scope of this book), such as cataloging, and is eventually made available to the patron community. Over time, nearly every item outlives its original usefulness in the collection. Often the decision is to remove these items from the main collection. The activity of examining items in the library and determining their current value to that library's collection (and to the service community) has several labels, the oldest being *weeding* (see chapter 13). Another term for this process is *deselection* (the opposite of selection). In the United Kingdom, the term used is *stock relegation*. Regardless of the label used for this activity, the end result is the same. When a library decides that a given item is no longer of value, it will dispose of the item (by selling it, giving it away, or even throwing it away). If the item still has some value for the library, the decision may be to transfer the item to a less accessible and usually less expensive storage location.

Evaluation (see chapter 14) is the last element in the collection development process. To some extent, weeding is an evaluation activity, but weeding is also more of an internal library operation. Evaluation of a collection may serve many different purposes, both inside and outside the library. For example, it may help to increase funding for the library. It may aid in the library's gaining some form of recognition, such as high standing in a comparative survey. Additionally, it may help to determine the quality of the work done by the collection development staff. For effective evaluation to occur, the service community's needs must be considered, which leads back to community analysis.

There is little reason to define library materials other than to emphasize that this volume covers various formats, not just books. Different authors writing about library collections use a number of related terms: *print, nonprint, visual materials, audiovisuals, AV, other media,* and so on. There is no single term encompassing all forms that has gained universal acceptance among librarians. *Library materials* (or simply, *materials*) is a nonspecific term with respect to format that is otherwise inclusive. Thus, we use it throughout this text. Library materials may include books, periodicals, pamphlets, reports, manuscripts, microformats, motion pictures, videotapes or audiotapes, DVDs, CDs, sound recordings, realia, and so forth. In effect, almost any physical object that conveys information, thoughts, or feelings potentially can be part of an information collection.

Before we go further, several other commonly used terms must also be defined: *collection management, information resource management, knowledge management, content management,* and *records management.* The terms cover similar activities and differ primarily in organizational context. *Collection management* is a broad-based activity encompassing all the aspects of collection development discussed above, as well as other issues related to the collection such as preservation, legal concerns, access, and

resource sharing. The process usually places emphasis on collecting materials produced by other organizations. *Information resource management*, as used today, relates to any organizational context, often without any centralized collection of materials, in which the information resource manager is responsible for identifying and making available both internal and external sources of information. Practitioners in computer science and information systems generally define *knowledge management* as the "management of objects that can be identified and handled in information systems."[19] Martin White defined *content management* as software that "provides a platform for managing the creation, review, filing, updating, distribution, and storage of structured and unstructured content."[20] *Records management* is the process of handling the working records of an organization with an emphasis on retention, retrieval, and access issues. No matter which term is most familiar to you, the resulting goal of each of the activities defined by these terms is to provide accurate information in a timely and cost-effective manner to all members of the service community.

Fuente: Evans, G. Eduard and Margaret Saponaro (2005).
Concepts and terms. pp. 6-11. En: Developing
library and information center collections. Westport,
Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited.