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# Merge Everything It Makes Sense to Merge: The History and Philosophy of the Merged Reference Collection at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San Jose, California

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**“Merge Everything It Makes Sense to Merge”: The History and Philosophy of the Merged Reference Collection at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San Jose, California**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San Jose, California is a unique dual-use library serving the students of San Jose State University and the community of San Jose, California. The reference collections of the two libraries are merged and interfiled to promote ease of access for both populations served. Economies of scale were realized through collaborative collection development activities for major reference purchases between the two institutions. This article describes the planning and creation of the King Library’s merged reference collection and reviews the literature of collaborative collection development and merged or interfiled collections.

Collaborative collection development

Cooperative collection development

Dual-use libraries

Interfiled collections

Joint libraries

Merged collections

Merged libraries

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**Introduction**

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, which opened its doors in August 2003, is a unique collaboration between San Jose State University (SJSU) and the San Jose Public Library (SJPL). Within the building, some departments are merged while others are not. The same is true of the collections. Although each library maintains its own separate circulating collection, the original vision for the library included only one reference desk, one catalog, and one reference collection. This paper details how the merged reference collection was originally created, how each library attempts to reduce costs through avoidance of duplication in ordering reference materials, and how the collection is currently maintained.

**Planning & Structure**

Cost savings through economies of scale was the main rationale for the creation of the King Library. On an early planning team, representatives of both libraries supported the principle that “...services would be integrated, unless doing so would not make sense from a user or functional point of view (Conaway 2000, 42).” It was expected that a substantial portion of these savings could be realized through collaborative collection

development. Prior to the library's opening, five teams (Administrative Services, Policies and Procedures, Collection Management/Technical Services, Online Systems and Technology, and User Services) were formed to create operating policies and procedures for the King Library. These five teams were split further into "sub-teams". Each sub-team made policy recommendations to one of the five main teams. After necessary revisions, the proposed policies were in turn passed along to the Core Team (composed of administrators and project managers from the SJSU and SJPL libraries) for acceptance or revision.

The Collection Management/Technical Services Team was created in spring 2000 with a mission to provide a framework for systematic and comprehensive planning for selection, acquisition, cataloging and management of library resources in all formats. The team included two co-chairs, one from each institution, and eight additional members. The Core Team approved six goals for the Collection Management/Technical Services Team. They were:

- Develop plans for analyzing the overlap of the reference and periodicals collections of the partner libraries.
- Develop plans for the coordination of collection development.
- Within guidelines provided in the Joint Library Operational Agreement, determine how buying power can be enhanced, with special emphasis on electronic resources.
- Develop a framework for analysis of subject collections, including selection, management, and evaluation of usefulness.

- In conjunction with the Policies and Procedures team, identify and develop relevant policies and procedures.
- Determine how acquisitions and cataloging functions can best be integrated for efficiencies and effectiveness of services.

The Collection Management/Technical Services Sub-team began meeting about every two weeks between June 2000 and May 2002. The project managers created a Strategic Operational Plan and a Relational Timeline. Team members were given project management training and were encouraged to take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality inventory. While initial meetings were devoted to reviewing and revising the operational plan and relational timeline, subsequent ones dealt with creating and reporting the progress of eleven collection (e.g. reference, music, electronic resources, children, government publications) and four technical services (e.g. receiving, cataloging) sub-teams. Each sub-team progressed from data gathering through analysis and development to the implementation phase. The Collection Management/Technical Services Team monitored progress, reviewed recommendations from each sub-team, and approved policies and procedures before they were sent to The Core Team for final approval.

The Reference Collections sub-team, composed of two librarians from San Jose State University and two librarians from San Jose Public Library, began its work. Initial recommendations were submitted in October 1999 and included creating a single reference collection, using the Library of Congress Classification System used by SJSU

rather than the Dewey Decimal system used by SJPL to classify reference materials, and eliminating duplication as much as possible.

A title-by-title collection analysis report from OCLC was used to analyze overlap between the two collections. Two members of the sub-team examined the OCLC analysis to identify duplicates. SJPL librarian Barbara Evans annotated the report with library holdings and transferred the data to an Excel spreadsheet. Titles were matched first, followed by further examination to match editions. The Excel report was completed in November of 2001, with each library checking holdings and adding that information to the spreadsheet for duplicates not included in the original OCLC report. The committee members annotated the 70-page spreadsheet, recommending disposition of items into three categories: (1) Do not reclassify, (2) Keep and reclassify, and (3) Keep, reclassify, and review later. The first category contained SJPL reference books that were weeded prior to the move into the King Library. Materials in the second category were destined to be reclassified from Dewey to Library of Congress classification schemes. The third category reflected reference resources composed of multiple volumes. Identical items in this category were handled differently by the two libraries, and it was decided to postpone the decision on what to do with them until after the King Library was open. The university library had had a policy of retaining the most recent edition of a reference work in the reference collection (e.g. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*) with older volumes shelved in the circulating collection, while the public library retained all editions in reference. The sub-team developed two reports from the OCLC study. The first listed SJPL items to be reclassified, and the second items to be weeded.

The reference sub-team members turned their attention to completion of pre-move tasks, began exchanging information on special parts of their collections (e.g. automotive manuals, ready reference materials, periodical indexes), and shared lists of reference materials ordered by each library.

In 2002, the Collection Management Coordination Sub-team investigated how materials were purchased and handled in each library. The sub-team, composed of six members, three from each library, considered five points: (1) characteristics and reading levels of each institution's patrons, (2) the points of collection overlap, (3) suggestions for communication and committees to facilitate cooperative activities, (4) librarian concerns about coordination, and (5) suggestions for evaluation. Results detailing differences in selection practices are shown in Table 1. Five recommendations were made on areas of potential cooperation; mechanisms for one-to-one cooperation, regular meetings, an in-house listserv, integration of new books into public collections, and joint subject web pages. None of these recommendations have come to pass in the versions originally suggested. A single collection development policy for the King reference collection was developed:

<http://staff.sjlibrary.org/programs/policies.htm?pID=265&t=1&cid=3>

SJPL lead collection development librarians and SJSU departmental liaison librarians also began cooperating on reference purchases. The collection analysis made it clear that there was a substantial amount of duplication between the two libraries' reference

collections, including many expensive multi-volume sets such as the U.S. Code and other legal resources.

### **The literature of cooperative collection development**

Although examples of interlibrary cooperation have existed for as long as there have been libraries, the modern era of cooperative collection development is usually thought to begin with the Farmington Plan in 1948. Since then, the track record of cooperative collection development has been decidedly mixed. John Haar (2003) found that very little had changed in the 15 years since Hewitt and Shipman concluded that “progress beyond the most elementary levels of cooperative collection development has been slow (1987, 191)” and that most activity has been directed at “establishing cooperative collection development *relationships*, rather than specific program activities (1987, 225)”. Joseph Branin (1991, 87) found that “only modest successes can be identified” when one examines the history of cooperative collection development efforts in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The King Library situation is rather unique in that many past cooperative collection development efforts have involved geographically separated libraries. In 2003, Haar observed that only about one-third of the nearly 90 collaborative collection development he studied involved the cooperative purchase or storage of print materials (188). The difficulties of providing access to print materials for patrons of several geographically distributed libraries may partially explain why this is the case. As Branin writes, “I think there are greater advantages for cooperation between libraries that are in close proximity,

because you tend to do things like reciprocal borrower's cards and people can physically use the library (1986, 6).”

The King Library experience shares some key elements with previous cooperative collection development endeavors, notably non-duplication agreements (Seaman 2005, 23) and a shared purchasing mechanism (Kohl and Sanville 2006, 397). As Shreeves observes, “Certainly, ready access to the catalogs of consortial partners – especially when those catalogs include acquisitions as well as fully cataloged records – supplies one of the missing ingredients in older cooperative activities: information about partners’ decisions at the title level (1997, 381).” Many of the problems the King Library has faced in cooperative collection development, for example, weeding decisions and identification of duplicates, have been experienced by other libraries as well (Seaman 2005, 23).

### **The literature of merged collections**

Unlike the long history of cooperative collection development, two separate libraries merging or interfiling their collections appears to be a rare situation, judging by the limited amount of available literature. As Ken Haycock notes, “There are many examples of successful cooperation. There are fewer examples of successful co-location viewed through the lens of rigorous assessment (2006, 489).” The partnership between the Hanford Technical Library of the Pacific Northwest and the Max E. Benitz Memorial Library of the Washington State University Tri-Cities Branch Campus shares several characteristics with the King Library. The two libraries have integrated their reference collections into a single arrangement. Patrons have circulation privileges at both libraries

and walk-in users can access the e-journals and databases of both libraries while they are in the building. Duplicate subscriptions and standing orders have also enabled the realization of cost savings through cancellations (Buxton 2003, 258).

As in cooperative collection development, one of the key aspects of a successful merged collection is a shared library catalog. For example, although the three libraries of the Tri-College Consortium in Pennsylvania (comprising three liberal arts colleges: Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore) are physically separated from each other by about 10 miles and the collections are not interfiled as in the King Library, Seiden, Pumroy, and Medeiros observe that “Tripod [the unified catalog] has dramatically changed the ways we think about both our collections and our work, and has provided most of the potential for integrating the libraries’ operations (2002, 192).”

The College Hill Library is a dual-use project of the city of Westminster, Colorado, and the Westminster campus of Front Range Community College. Like the King Library, they decided to treat their circulating and reference collections differently. While the circulating collections of each library remain separate, the reference collections of both libraries have been merged and interfiled using the Library of Congress classification system (Sullivan et al. 2006, 573). In most dual-use libraries it appears that if any part of the two collections are merged and interfiled on the shelves, it is most likely to be the reference collection. This makes sense when one considers patron usage patterns of reference versus circulating materials.

## **The King Library Merged Reference Collection Development Committee**

In the fall of 2002, the King Library Merged Reference Collection Development Committee (<http://staff.sjlibrary.org/programs/policies.htm?otherID=89&t=3&cid=1>) began their meetings. One of the group's first actions was to create a list of five recommendations, some of which were carried out successfully while others were not. They were:

1. SJPL librarians will need to become familiar with SJSU librarians' subject specialties.

RESULT: SJPL and SJSU librarians have definitely become more familiar with each other's collections and the unique needs of each institution's patrons.

Although there is no substitute for the accumulated knowledge of academic and public librarians within their specialties, it is worth noting that when the libraries were separate, the SJSU library, as a state institution, was always open to the public (although they did not have checkout privileges), while the former SJPL main branch was located in downtown San Jose about six blocks from the SJSU campus, so SJPL librarians already had plenty of experience helping university students.

2. SJSU librarians will, in turn, need to become familiar with SJPL librarians' subject specialties and will also need to carefully consider the differing characteristics of academic versus popular materials when ordering.

RESULT: The reference ordering preferences of the two institutions have not been substantially changed by the merged library situation. The normal distinction between academic and popular materials tends to minimize the number of duplicate orders. There are occasional exceptions to this, as when the University considers purchasing a popular title that they may have bought when the library was not merged, or when the public library considers an academic press title. In these cases, the purchasing librarian may wait, or proactively check, hoping and/or expecting that the partner institution will purchase the item instead. It is then up to the librarian as to whether the title justifies an additional copy belonging to their own library, or whether patron access to the title through the other library's collection is sufficient. Our physical proximity to each other in the same building makes this decision easier. Some reference materials that tend to "cross over" between academic and public use – for example, many Congressional Quarterly reference titles, can present more of a problem. See also #3.

3. A standard reference "order day" should be established so that librarians at both institutions will know exactly when orders are submitted and when to check for duplication in ordering.

RESULT: Due to different purchasing structures, and the distributed nature of SJSU reference collection development, this suggestion proved to be impractical

and was not implemented. At SJSU, if the liaisons order an item that is already in the collection, Acquisitions staff will contact them to verify that they did indeed want to purchase an additional copy of said item. Checking for duplicates between the two libraries is a bit more problematic, for if an order has been placed by one library but not yet received and cataloged, duplicate orders are still possible, as neither institution is able to cross-check each and every order against the orders of the other library.

4. Lists of academic and non-academic "types" of materials should be created. For example:

ACADEMIC (usually)	NON-ACADEMIC
textbooks	self-help law books
essay collections	self-help health materials
books from university presses	auto repair manuals
conference proceedings	city directories (or Criss-Cross)
bibliographies	
citation indexes	

RESULT: The list was created in fall 2002.

5. Lists of SJSU/SJPL selectors should be created.

RESULT: Full information for SJPL selectors and SJSU liaisons, including subject and format specialties, are available on the King Library's intranet.

The committee then examined a list of current duplicate reference subscriptions. At a series of meetings, SJPL and SJSU librarians went through the list and agreed, in most cases, that one library would drop its subscription to a particular source if the other library would keep theirs. As Dornseif writes, "The purchase of basic, yet expensive reference materials can be divided between the partners (2001, 111)." As both institutions have suffered from severe budget reductions in the last five years, this was a good example of the economies of scale possible in the King Library. Committee members kept careful track of the cost of each title in order to equalize the savings as much as possible. It was estimated that each library was thus able to reduce the cost of its reference subscriptions by about \$5000.00 annually. Eliminating unnecessary duplication has been a primary objective for many cooperative collection development programs. Hewitt and Shipman reported that 28% of their survey respondents viewed "avoidance of duplication as the principal goal of the (their) programs (1987, 208)." But such decisions are always difficult: "Local collection development maintenance decisions are difficult enough to make, and inter-institutional programs immediately raise serious questions of locality, loyalty, and identity as the partners try to decide who keeps the new title acquired or retains the copy not weeded (Seiden, Pumroy, and Medeiros 2002, 193)." The problem of what to do when one library wants to drop a periodical subscription or standing order that it had agreed to keep at an earlier date is addressed by the library's Cooperation in Periodicals Subscriptions Policy:

<http://www.sjlibrary.org/legal/policies.htm?pID=271>

Notes within the periodical records in the library catalog designate which library has agreed to maintain a particular subscription or standing order. The policy does not contractually obligate either library to maintain “their” subscriptions – an impossibility given cuts in collection funding at both libraries – but it does specify agreement of both libraries’ heads of Collection Management should one library wish to cancel a subscription that it had previously agreed to maintain. Tucker, Bullian, and Torrence state concisely the pitfalls of two libraries sharing resource costs: “When sharing the cost for resources, librarians and academic departments must deal with the issue of commitment. Will the agreement be permanent, every few years or annual? There are potential problems with trust and economic factors that may cause the library or department to back out of a deal (2003, 234).”

SJSU and SJPL librarians quickly realized that “true” coordinated reference collection development was not practical with our two systems. SJPL buys reference items through a highly centralized process while SJSU collection development is distributed amongst more than 20 librarians, any of whom might order reference materials. They can also be ordered by the SJSU Reference Collection Development Committee. Hence, there is no cooperative list of SJSU reference orders. For a time, SJPL regularly sent lists of recently ordered reference titles to the Head of the Reference Collection Development Committee. However, since there was no practical way to guarantee that all SJSU

librarians who might order reference material would see it, the lists were eventually abandoned.

Both institutions use the same OPAC and the same Innovative Interfaces ordering system. However, each library has its own part of the system with unique passwords and separate budgets. In practical terms, this means that SJSU acquisitions staff members do not always check for duplicate SJPL orders unless the item has been received, cataloged, and assigned an item number. The public library orders many copies of current bestsellers for their 20 branches and it is too labor-intensive for SJSU to check each and every title ordered by SJPL. Thus, while duplication can occur between SJSU librarians' orders, it happens rarely. Theoretically, it could happen more frequently with SJSU/SJPL orders if the item has not yet been received, but SJSU acquisitions staff believes, and anecdotal evidence indicates, that duplication of new reference titles between the two libraries has not been a serious problem.

### **Merged reference collection development or just avoidance of duplication?**

Did the coordinated efforts to eliminate duplicate reference subscriptions constitute "true" cooperative collection development? It depends on whose definition one uses. Mosher and Pankake define cooperative collection development as "Cooperation, coordination, or sharing in the development and management of collections by two or more libraries entering into an agreement for this purpose (1983, 420)," which at first glance looks as if it could apply to the King Library situation. However, although an agreement exists between the two libraries, it could be argued that they are cooperating in

the management of the reference collection but not so much in its development. In the literature, coordinated collection development is usually taken to mean an activity “characterized by formal, distributed assignment of areas of concentration (Haar 2003, 190).”

Hewitt and Shipman (1987, 210) identify four activities that characterize most cooperative collection development programs:

1. Sharing information about expensive purchases.
2. Making joint purchases.
3. Coordinating serials selection.
4. Establishing backfile responsibilities for serials.

SJSU and SJPL do share information about major reference purchases, but only in an informal manner. Although the reference collection management librarians for SJSU and SJPL communicate regularly, lists of new reference orders are no longer issued on a regular basis. It is up to SJSU and SJPL librarians to check the OPAC and with their colleagues in the partner library to stay informed about each other’s reference purchases. The Acquisitions department serves as the last line of defense against duplicate orders, although as previously noted, duplicate purchases between the two libraries may sometimes slip through the cracks. Joint purchases have proven to be impossible for several reasons, among them separate funding sources and exclusive database contracts. Serials selection, or more accurately, de-selection, has been coordinated to some degree

in reference but not elsewhere in the King Library. Finally, since the public library keeps very few older serial titles, establishing backfile responsibilities has not been an issue. Characteristics number three and four are more relevant to libraries with similar collections than to the public/academic mix of the King Library. Hewitt and Shipman (1987, 221) also identify several common problems with cooperative collection development programs. “Communication between cooperative partners” and “Lack of comparable collection development structure” have proven to be problems at the King Library, but “Physical access” has not.

Billman and Owens propose a six-level scheme of cooperative collection development. The King Library fits the definition of level four most closely – formal communication and cooperation takes place but resource sharing generally does not and both libraries remain distinct, separate entities (1986, 186-87). Dornseif’s integration model has just three levels: *Minimal*, *selective*, and *full* (2001, 107-8). Based on this model, the King Library would most accurately be classified as somewhere between minimal and selective integration; i.e., some of the two libraries’ service points and collections are merely sharing a building, while other functions are handled by one library or the other depending on that library’s strengths (e.g., children’s story times, current bestsellers, and public programs are administered by the public library while information literacy classes, most special collections, and research collections are part of the purview of the university library). A small number of collections and services are interfiled or merged to some extent, most notably reference.

Holley (1998, 24) sees formal cooperative collection development activities as falling into three main categories:

1. Coordinating purchases of expensive items.
2. Assigning primary subject collecting responsibility among the cooperating libraries.
3. Providing funds for a central agency to purchase materials.

None of these have happened at the King Library, with the possible exception of #1, but even then only on an informal, haphazard basis. Hence, although the cooperation between the two libraries might be commonly referred to as “coordinated collection development”, such a phrase implies a proactive and collaborative process for ordering new reference materials. What has actually happened at the King Library might be more accurately termed “avoidance of duplication”.

Holley is skeptical of the value of formal agreements and tends to see informal agreements as perhaps even more effective. In his words, “The finding that collections overlap among libraries is less than could be expected indicates that the natural system of collection growth and specialization among libraries may work quite well... In fact, many formal agreements may only codify and make explicit what is already happening informally. A few telephone calls about major purchases do not require an elaborate agreement (1998, 29).” Other librarians see coordinated collection development as an issue of access and delivery, not of selection. In an online discussion, Susan Rabe sees

the most important elements of cooperative collection development as “sharing information about what is in each collection and sharing physical access to those collections (Wolf 1998, 81).” The King Library meets both of these standards because of our single, shared public catalog and single, shared building.

After agreeing on the initial list of reference subscriptions to be dropped by one library or the other, the committee tackled the problem of what to do about duplicate materials already in the reference collection. The following paragraphs detail the challenges both libraries faced in this undertaking. The King Library Merged Reference Collection Development Committee was originally envisioned as an ongoing group, but after completing its work in creating an informal agreement to drop duplicate subscriptions, weeding the reference collection, and deciding how to treat already existing duplicate reference titles, the committee disbanded in early 2005. Work with the merged reference collection has continued since then, administered by the reference departments of both libraries. Since the realization that truly coordinated collection development was not practical, both libraries have been maintaining their own committees and structures for ordering reference materials and depending on Acquisitions staff to notify them of potential duplicate purchases.

### **Online databases**

The Electronic Resources sub-team was formed to review and compare electronic resources owned or subscribed to by both libraries. Their research showed that SJSU

subscribed to 189 databases of which 45 were in CD-ROM format, and 2 were staff use only (Dialog, FirstSearch). A number of web-based databases were subscribed to as part of the California State University electronic resources consortium. SJPL subscribed to 33 databases, 2 were in CD-ROM format, 5 were intended for staff use only, and 2 were available only in the business section of the public library. By August 2001, the team had identified ten resources that were duplicates. Both libraries regularly accessed and referred to free databases on the web.

King Library patrons have access to a wide array of online databases belonging to SJSU and SJPL. The original vision for the King Library included cooperative database purchases between both libraries. However, this soon proved impossible due to SJPL and SJSU's participation in different Bay Area and statewide consortiums. Although the "incidental use clause" contained in many IP-authenticated academic database contracts allows database use by patrons not affiliated with SJSU while they are in the King Library, off-campus use is restricted to members of the SJSU community, and the academic databases are not promoted to public patrons. SJSU students' introduction to subscription databases happens most frequently in classrooms, at the reference desk, or in SJSU King Library information literacy classes.

### **Pre-Planning – San Jose State University Library**

Many tasks had to be completed before the move into the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library in summer 2003. In summer 2002, the two participating libraries created a list of some 40 such tasks, including weeding the academic reference collection, reclassifying

juvenile reference books to Dewey, and re-labeling older indexes as periodicals. The list, which was constantly updated, was sorted into high, medium and low priority items. For example, high priority was assigned to tasks such as weeding and updating the academic reference collection and identifying and re-labeling books for the Cultural Heritage Center collections (African, Asian-American, and Chicano collections). Medium priority was assigned to tasks that needed to be accomplished by staff in other units - for example, older indexes in the Library's off-campus storage area that needed to be re-labeled as periodicals. This was done to keep the reference paper index area as "lean and mean" as possible, given the current low rates of usage for paper indexes. Lowest priority was given to projects such as the retrospective conversion of federal publications that had to wait for vendor action.

By February 2003, the list of tasks had changed from High, Low, and Medium priority to "At Move" and "Post Move" activities. Collections that had to be co-located upon the move into the new library included two separate children's research collections that were not going to be merged but were to be housed in the same room. Breakout collections were created (e.g., Caldecott, Newbery, and other award winners). In other cases, breakout collections were eliminated, such as the SJSU folklore and fairytale collections, which were interfiled (using Dewey) with other children's books. Weeding the atlas collection began in January 2006, with a review of the map collection still in process. The size of the academic reference collection demanded that it be weeded. The opportunity was also ripe for updating the academic reference collection with new editions. 1990 was chosen as a somewhat arbitrary cutoff point, and two lists of

reference books were created using the online public access catalog (OPAC) - those published before, and those published in or after 1990. Many years had passed since the SJSU library had done an inventory. Given the nature of an academic library collection, it was expected that the pre-1990 list would contain a substantial number of missing items as well as reference works that may have been superseded by newer editions.

The lists were checked for newer editions, first in the SJSU and SJPL catalogs, then in the Link Plus (a California-based library consortium) catalog, and finally in World Cat. Outdated material was removed from the reference collection and book orders prepared. Reference collection development funding for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 was used to purchase new editions. In other cases, cataloging inconsistencies resulted in one copy of a reference work in the Reference section, while a newer copy was already shelved in the circulating stacks. Examining the lists enabled librarians to correct this situation so that the latest editions were always kept in Reference.

The collection was then reviewed book-by-book. In one case it was discovered that 15 books (e.g. *Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia*, *Lincoln Encyclopedia*, *Atlas of the Roman World*) were missing from the SJSU reference collection but were duplicated by SJPL holdings. Armed with this information, librarians were able to ensure that these items were retained and reclassified in the SJPL reference collection. The original plan had been for both pre 1990 and 1990 and after lists to be checked prior to the move into the King Library, but the process took longer than expected and the review of 1990 and after reference materials took place after the move.

SJSU subject specialist librarians were invited to place red dots on all reference works from the pre-1990 list that, in the judgment of the librarian, needed to remain in reference. All other pre-1990 materials were removed from the reference section, re-cataloged and re-labeled, and sent to the circulating stacks.

### **Pre-Planning – San Jose Public Library**

The merger of two reference collections presented an opportunity for San Jose Public Library's reference department. There had been no department-wide assessment of the reference collection since wide-scale use of the Internet began in 1996 at SJPL. One of the first tasks undertaken was to have all librarians assess their subject areas and subsequently weed those reference materials no longer being used. Beyond the obvious weeding criteria - "Is the material out of date?" – librarians were also asked to consider if similar material existed either on the open Web or in a database that the library subscribed to. In this way a large portion of the SJPL reference collection was "pre-weeded" before the two reference collections were merged.

### **The move into the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library**

Part of the pre-planning included measuring the size of the existing reference collections in linear feet. In February 2002, the SJSU reference collection, before any weeding, measured 6140 linear feet for reference, census, and government publications and an additional 2404 linear feet of printed indexes. Each of the planning sub-teams for collections had to calculate the linear feet that would be needed, with room for expansion,

before the move. Moving consultant Judy Johns provided a guide to the type of shelving that would be in the new library and data on the linear feet they could contain. Estimates of total capacity for the second floor of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, where the reference collection would be located, totaled 15,579 linear feet.

Each library measured the linear feet of their reference collection by call number area. A chart was created, mapping the subject areas for Library of Congress and Dewey classification systems. In May 2002, the merged reference collection was estimated at 9,237 linear feet of subject material. These calculations did not include printed indexes or government publications intended for the reference area. Table 2 shows that, while the collections were comparably sized in business and related areas, the SJSU collection was significantly larger in political science, law, and some areas of science (e.g. chemistry, mathematics, physics), while the SJPL collection was significantly larger in religion, genealogy, and technology.

The recommendation, accepted by the Core Team, that the reference collection be merged and that it should be classified using the Library of Congress scheme presented an obvious challenge to the public library, whose collection was then classified in the Dewey system. A further challenge was the two-month time frame between closing the old public library and the projected August 2003 opening date for the King Library. This did not allow reclassification to LC to occur while SJPL was closed. Months were spent planning how to reclassify the reference collection while the library remained open. A consultant was called in to help develop a software program that would create Library of

Congress labels printed in Dewey order. In April of 2003, two months before the closing of the SJPL Main Branch, reference book re-labeling began. The library remained open during this time and the re-classification was completed in three weeks, a week ahead of schedule. Books were re-shelved on large wooden moving trucks in LC order, making them ready for the move and for interfiling with the SJSU reference collection. For about a month, most of the SJPL reference collection was only accessible on large wooden moving carts, which only librarians were allowed to access in an effort to keep the books in order as much as possible prior to the move. After the move to the new King library SJPL reference books were interfiled with the SJSU collection already on the shelf.

### **Academic Senate**

Before the move into the King Library, the SJSU Academic Senate, fearing the dilution of the university's reference collection, passed a policy recommendation to place a moratorium on commingling of the university's collection with the public library's collection until a usage study was completed. Since the books were interfiled on the shelves as soon as the library opened, reference committee members were dismayed to realize that we might have been technically in violation of this policy, depending on one's definition of "commingling". It also meant that we could not embark on our project to eliminate duplicate reference subscriptions whenever possible, since the policy also stated that "The University shall not discontinue acquisitions of materials for its reference collection, except for electronic materials, on the basis of duplication with City materials during this period." In response, the library quickly conducted a usage study of the reference collection as required in the original policy recommendation. The

University Library Board, which advises the SJSU Academic Senate on library matters, then stepped in with a proposed modification to the policy, which stated that:

“The City and the University will share delivery of basic reference services through a common service area on the second floor. City and University materials shall be classified in the Library of Congress system and shall be co-located. All reference materials acquired by the University Library through purchase or donation shall be clearly identified as the property of the University by ownership marks.”

The modified text was approved by the SJSU Academic Senate in spring 2004. The minor semantic change from “commingling” to “co-located” was meant to express the idea that while the books may be interfiled on the shelves, ownership tags on all books, as well as catalog records, make it clear which library owns which book.

### **After the move/Identifying duplicates**

A review of the SJSU reference materials that were also owned by SJPL, and SJSU reference books published in and after 1990, began in mid-2004. 1997 was chosen as a cutoff date and all SJSU reference materials published prior to that date were to be removed from the reference collection unless the subject specialist for that area decided otherwise. Pre-1997 books designated to remain in reference, if desired by the subject specialist, were marked with red dots. Errors in calculating shelf space before the move had resulted in an impacted area (L-M classification) that would have meant a major shelf shift had the reference weeding project not been undertaken. The project was begun in

the JK-Z area, since that's where the shelf crowding problem was the most severe, rather than at the beginning of the reference collection. In this way the need for a major shift was avoided.

A list of all duplicate reference materials between the two libraries was requested but soon proved to be unworkable, since it counted all copies of reference materials and not just titles. For publications that have many copies, such as *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, the list would run to several pages for that title alone. Hence, it was decided to examine the collection manually, title-by-title. This method had distinct advantages over the list, since librarians could make the decision about what to do with an item and remove it from the shelf at the same time, rather than separating the process into two parts. This also enabled librarians to check condition of duplicate materials and retain copies that were in better condition.

The entire collection was reviewed between November 2004 and December 2005.

Duplicate copies were removed from the reference collection. Books belonging to SJSU were sent to the SJSU circulating collection on floors six through eight. SJPL duplicate reference materials were examined and either reclassified to Dewey and sent to the public library's circulating collection on the third floor, weeded, or, in some rare cases, sent to the academic stacks on floors six through eight if the volumes complemented SJSU holdings. This third option was usually only used if the SJPL material could fill a gap in the SJSU collection – for example, a missing volume in a series.

This presented a problem in that the SJSU circulating research collection was housed on the sixth through eighth floors and consisted strictly of books belonging to SJSU. By the same token, the public library's circulating collection was located on the third floor and consisted of only SJPL books. Except for the reference collection and some parts of the children's collection, this practice was followed throughout the King Library to avoid interfiling materials from both libraries. Hence, if SJPL sent duplicate copies of missing volumes of older reference material to the SJSU circulating stacks as a courtesy, it would mean that floors six through eight no longer contained just SJSU material. This necessitated a change in written policy, allowing SJPL to donate the books to SJSU so that they became SJSU materials and preserved the ownership consistency of the books located on those floors. This had the added benefit of allowing SJPL to donate materials to other departments on the SJSU campus as well – for example, the SJSU Environmental Studies Department expressed interest in a number of environmental impact reports that SJPL was weeding from their collection, and SJPL was able to donate them thanks to the policy change.

With the review of the collection completed, its size was calculated once more in linear feet. The original plan was for the entire Government Publications collection (SJSU is a regional depository library for U.S. government documents) to be shelved on the second (Reference) floor. Instead, government publications reference items, such as the U.S. Statutes and Codes, the Congressional Record, the Monthly Catalog, and the U.S. Census were retained in the reference collection while the rest of the collection was moved to the King Library's lower level.

The reference collection now consists of 8419 linear feet divided into:

A-J Classification	2490	linear feet
JA-Z Classification	3810	linear feet
Ready Reference	480	linear feet
U.S. Census	315	linear feet
Printed indexes	1324	linear feet

### **Challenges**

One of the tasks remaining is the elimination of duplicate bibliographies. This may be more difficult than other tasks because in the 1980s SJSU reviewed all material classified under the Library of Congress call letter Z. Many of these items were bibliographies and were filed under Z as are other library science resources. However, the SJSU library decided to move subject-specific bibliographies into the areas of the collection that they related to, rather than keeping them in the Z section, to make them more accessible to students and faculty. Meanwhile, when SJPL re-cataloged their reference section, most bibliographies went to the Z section (LC classification rules allow two different call numbers for bibliographies and libraries can decide for themselves whether to shelve under Z or under the call number specific to the subject of the bibliography).

Consequently, SJPL bibliographies filed under Z will need to be checked for SJSU duplicates that may be filed under a different call number. The library will then have to decide where to shelve such bibliographies so that the same title is treated in a consistent manner (as much as possible) throughout the collection.

Another challenge in reconciling two different ways of treating the same material is what to do with older editions of reference works. The SJSU tradition had been to keep only the most recent edition of a work in the Reference section (unless there was a good reason to keep all volumes together), while sending older editions off to the circulating stacks where they could be checked out. Meanwhile, SJPL had three choices for what to do with older reference works: keep all volumes in reference, weed older editions, or send older editions to the circulating collection. However, unlike the SJSU library, the SJPL library has strict usage standards for all circulating materials, which older reference works could not meet, so the third option was rarely used. Hence, some older editions of reference works are duplicated in the collection, with the older SJSU copies in the circulating collection and the older SJPL copies still in reference. Examples of these titles include various *Who's Who* titles, statistical resources such as the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* and the *Commodity Yearbook*, business resources such as *Moody's Manuals*, *Walker's Manual*, and *California Manufacturers Register*, and some miscellaneous titles like the *International Motion Picture Almanac* and *Jane's All the World's Aircraft*. Decisions on how to reconcile these differences will require title-by-title examination and consultation with SJSU and SJPL librarians.

Different ways of treating the same material has also presented unique problems. For example, when moving into the building, both libraries subscribed to the *Value Line* investment research periodical. Later, after some patron complaints, it was discovered that both libraries had cancelled their subscriptions to the paper copies of *Value Line*,

which are used very heavily by public patrons. The SJSU business librarian had cancelled the paper subscription because the same information was available from our databases and statistics show that SJSU students use online sources for the vast majority of their research. However, unbeknownst to SJSU, SJPL had cancelled their paper subscription as well. As detailed previously, one copy of most duplicated reference sources was dropped by one library or the other based on an informal agreement between SJSU and SJPL, thus realizing substantial cost savings for both libraries. However, in this case *Value Line* “fell through the cracks” because SJSU treats all materials in the reference collection as reference materials, including serial publications, which are defined as standing orders, as distinct from periodicals. Meanwhile, SJPL treats serial publications as periodicals regardless of where they are shelved; consequently, *Value Line* was defined as a periodical by SJPL, meaning it didn’t show up on the list of duplicate reference sources that formed the basis of the informal agreement. The obvious lesson for future mergers is that both institutions must define their terms in similar ways or risk confusion.

### **Cost savings and new resources**

The unique nature of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library has presented some vexing problems such as the ones detailed previously. However, it has also led to some beneficial situations in which new resources can be added without necessarily losing old ones. Yet it is debatable how much cost savings are actually realized, especially between two libraries whose collections are so different. As Bennett writes, “The reality is that

librarians are pursuing cooperative collection management not to reduce costs but to improve services (1984, 260).”

Given the funding crises faced by many libraries, further experiments in merged and/or dual-use libraries seem inevitable. As Tucker et al observe: “Libraries must find ways to adapt in order to survive in an environment of ever-increasing materials costs and budget constraints...Perhaps more so than in the past, libraries will have to look beyond themselves and forge collaborative relationships with other entities in order to meet these challenges (Tucker, Bullian, and Torrence 2003, 220-21).”

While the King Library’s Merged Reference Collection has certainly presented its share of complications and difficulties detailed in this paper, the reference collection is easier for our patrons to deal with than other King library collections, simply because it’s all in one place and it’s all classified using the same system. We hope our experiences will provide helpful information for other merged library projects that may be considering interfiling two separate collections, or for libraries that may be considering some sort of cooperative collection development program, whether formal or informal.

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