Earl K. Long Library
Reference Collection -- Collection Development Policy

Purpose

The reference collection supports the information and research needs of a diverse clientele -- undergraduates, graduate students, teaching faculty, librarians, and to a lesser extent alumni and community users. Accordingly, most of the materials acquired support the instructional programs of the university; however, a limited number of materials related to nonacademic subjects, such as career information, college catalogs, etc. are acquired.

Traditionally, a reference work is defined as a work designed by its arrangement, treatment, or content to be consulted for bibliographic or factual information rather than read in its entirety. Most of the books acquired for reference meet this definition, but occasionally books that do not meet this definition are shelved in reference when they are thought to be useful in meeting reference needs. Conversely, materials that conform to these broad definitions are often sent to the circulating stacks because of expectations of use. Collecting levels vary from subject to subject and are based on the course offerings and level of student/faculty interest. See the collection development policies for individual subjects for an indication of collecting levels.

Location of Collection/Access

Print. The print materials in the Reference Collection are located on the first floor, near the Reference Desk. This material includes ready reference, encyclopedias, and indexes. The bulk of the collection is located in the book stacks, in call number order. The Reference Collection is a non-circulating collection.

Electronic. Electronic reference sources in most cases are made available by remote access through the Internet. Those sources which are licensed to the library for remote access are IP-address protected for UNO users only. The Library avoids purchasing titles that are for single-users. CDs with accompanying print material are shelved together. UNO students can check out a library laptop to use this material. The reference staff will make every effort to make available electronic information in CD format to the non-UNO community, but we cannot guarantee that access to non-students will always be possible.

Other Reference Collections.

The Louisiana Collection maintains a reference collection of basic sources on the state of Louisiana. Special Collections and Microfilm contain informal reference collections with materials that may not be formally catalogued as such. These sources do not circulate.

Federal Documents maintains a collection of indexes within its stacks to assist in locating hearings and older government publications.

Types of Reference Materials

Almanacs and Yearbooks, Atlases, Bibliographies of a general nature, Dictionaries, Directories, Encyclopedias, Handbooks, Indexes, Legal and Medical Resources, Plot Summaries, Sacred Books, Style Manuals and State and Federal Documents which fulfill a Reference function.
Almanacs and Yearbooks. The most current editions will reside in Reference.

Atlases. Some general sources will reside in ready reference, while a representative selection of world atlases will reside in the general Reference collection.

Bibliographies. Some archival guides and standard lists of manuscripts are located in Reference as are subject bibliographies and guides to the Literature. Bibliographies of individual authors are located in the general stacks. For the most part Union Catalogs (e.g., NUC pre-1956 Imprints) are not located in Reference.

Dictionaries. Dictionaries representing languages taught in the curricula as well as representative selections from other languages are located in Reference, as are etymological dictionaries, dictionaries of terms in various subject areas, and specialized dictionaries (e.g., slang and regional or ethnic dialect dictionaries).

Encyclopedias. General encyclopedias (e.g., Britannica, World Book) as well as subject-based encyclopedias are located in Reference.

Handbooks. Handbooks and guides in various areas (e.g., Literature and Field Identification of Birds) are located in Reference.

Indexes. Duplication of print and electronic subject indexes does occur in Reference. In general the movement is toward electronic access to subject indexes through consortial arrangements (LOUIS) or through local purchase.

Legal and Medical Resources. Major legal reporters (e.g., Southern Reporter and Supreme Court Reporter) are located in Reference. A representative selection of basic medical sources is located in the general Reference collection.

Sacred Books. Versions of the Bible and examples of the sacred texts of religions other than Christianity may be included in the Reference collection to meet curricular needs. General religious resources (e.g., dictionaries, encyclopedias) are also collected.
Scope of Coverage/Breadth of Collection

Language(s). English language materials are collected more extensively than foreign language materials. Dictionaries, Encyclopedias as well as general reference materials are collected in Foreign languages to meet curricular and general Reference needs.

Geographical Area. Heavy emphasis on the United States. Other geographical areas are covered as required by curricular or general Reference needs.

Chronological Periods. Historical materials in all subject areas are collected with no limits on chronological periods. In most cases the most up-to-date materials are collected.

Size. Size is not considered in the collection of Reference materials.

Format of Materials Collected

Print

Books

A highly selective number of reference books, including oversize books, are kept in the Core Reference Stacks. The remainder of the reference collection is interfiled with the Book Stacks.

Serials

If the primary purpose of a serial title is to provide current information (e.g., directories, almanacs) and the title is regularly updated, only the most current volume(s) are kept in the Reference Stacks (usually the latest three years of an annual publication). Older copies are sent to the stacks. Certain other serial publications are maintained in their entirety in Reference because they function as an integrated set (e.g., court reporters) or because they provide frequently-used historical data covering a number of years (e.g., stock reports). Decisions about the location of particular serial reference publications are made by the appropriate subject bibliographer.

Microforms. At present the only microform sources in Reference are the Federal Register and the older ASI publications. This format is useful for Reference as long as readers are available in close proximity to the actual source. In general, online access is preferred over microfilm for Reference sources.

Electronic Formats. Reference sources in electronic formats, such as CD-ROMs, Internet-accessible databases, and web pages, are selected for both content and ease of use/access. (See the Electronic Resources section of this policy for a more detailed description of the guidelines for selecting electronic resources). Consortial relationships play a major role in the selection of Internet-accessible electronic reference sources. In addition, the library's subject bibliographers are responsible for the selection and provision of freely-available reference sources on their individual subject pages. All reference sources
subscribed to by the UNO library which are made available over the Internet are linked to from the library’s web pages. Access to electronic journals and other full-text publications, which may function as reference sources because of the fact that they are searchable by keyword, may also be featured as reference sources on the library’s web pages.

Library Unit Responsible for Reference Collection

The Chair of the Research and Technology Support Department is ultimately responsible for the development and maintenance of the reference collection. The Chair works with the Collection Management Librarian and the other reference/bibliographers to select books for the reference collection. It is the responsibility of each bibliographer to suggest acquisitions, transfers and withdrawals of reference materials in his/her subject fields.

Consortial Relationships

LALINC (Louisiana Academic Library Information Network Consortium)

This consortium, which coordinates cooperative efforts among the state’s academic libraries in a number of areas, is responsible for the establishment of the LOUIS (Louisiana Online University Information System) network, which provides access to a wide variety of subject indexes online which serve as key reference sources for our users. The consortium also subscribes to other indexes and full-text resources made available through other forms of electronic access. All of these resources are cooperatively purchased by the member libraries with additional funding from the state of Louisiana. The LALINC Database Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from the consortium's libraries, coordinates efforts to solicit input from all member libraries on the selection and evaluation of reference databases and makes recommendations for sources to be included via the LOUIS network. The Chair of Reference Services works with the Database Committee to communicate the needs and interests of our users to the rest of the consortium.

LLN (Louisiana Library Network)

This statewide consortium, which includes members from academic, public and school libraries, works together, with state funding, to cooperatively purchase and provide access to a variety of online sources, including indexes and other general reference sources. The LLN Database Advisory Committee coordinates efforts to solicit input from all member libraries on the selection and evaluation of cooperatively purchased sources. The Chair of Reference Services works with the Database Committee to communicate the needs and interests of our users to the rest of the consortium.

Criteria for Selection

The needs of the students, faculty and staff of UNO are primary in directing selection of Reference materials. Whenever possible the needs of the public sector are considered. Reviewing sources are used for selection, as well as word of mouth from other Library professionals. The known authority of an author or a publishing source weighs heavily in selection decisions.