I expect to work in an academic library in the future, and so chose the collection
development policy of Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts. The policy can be
found in pdf format at the following URL:

http://www1.assumption.edu/dept/library/policies/main.html

Assumption College is a small, Catholic, liberal arts college of approximately 2,100
undergrads, and 800 grad and continuing ed students. Located on the outskirts of Worcester,
New England’s second largest city, it was founded by the Augustinians of the Assumption, or
Assumptionists, a French order. It is one of many colleges or universities in Worcester, and
participates in resource sharing with nine of these libraries (Anna Maria College, Atlantic Union
College, Becker College, College of the Holy Cross, Nichols College, Quinsigamond
Community College, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts School of Pharmacology,
and Worcester State College). Students at Assumption may borrow books from these resource-
sharing libraries; two additional libraries do not participate in reciprocal borrowing privileges,
but will provide material through InterLibrary Loan. This paper will compare and contrast the
collection development policy for Assumption College D’Alzon Library with three major
elements of a successful collection development policy: overview, details of subject areas
and formats collect, and miscellaneous policies. (Evans and Saponaro 2005)
Element One: Overview

This element, the overview, “consists of a clear statement of overall institutional objectives for the library.” (Evans and Saponaro, 2005, p. 54) The D’Alzon Library collection development policy meets some of the criteria listed under this section with varying degrees of success. There is a statement of purpose, but it is a description of the purpose of the library’s collection. It does not summarize the College’s goals, and then show how the library helps to meet those. Instead, it discusses the goals the library has in relation to the students and faculty, and their curricular, instructional, and research needs. The statement of purpose does make it clear what the priorities of the collection are. The library “…strives to maintain a collection that enables students to fulfill academic assignments and that assists faculty members with research to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.” (Collection Development Policy, 2007). There is no description of the service community as suggested by Evans and Saponaro (2005), nor does it describe the service clientele in any more specific terms than students and faculty, with a brief nod to the recreational needs of the community and the institutional history of Assumption College as a Catholic and Assumptionist sponsored organization. Evans and Saponaro (2005) suggests that in both the area of the community and service policy a collection development policy overview should be more detailed, and take in to consideration not just descriptions of these populations and services, but the trends, forces, and changes projected about them that might affect policy in the future.

The D’Alzon Library collection development policy comes closer to the recommendations with regard to describing parameters of the collection and in the area of providing “A detailed description of the types of programs or patron needs that the collection
must meet. “ (Evans and Saponaro, 2005, p. 54) The D’Alzon policy clearly describes their mission to “maintain a collection that enables students to fulfill assignments and that assists faculty members with research to improve the effectiveness of their teaching”; the focus here is obviously classroom content and effective instruction.  (Collection Development Policy, 2007)

**Element Two: Details of subject areas and formats collected**

This collection development policy clearly defines the subject areas and formats collected. There is a section that defines each level of collection intensity, and D’Alzon Library uses the ALA model when defining the intensity levels they assigned to their collecting:

**Intensity of Collection Levels**

Definitions:

- **Comprehensive** – Inclusion of all significant works for a defined topic
- **Research** – A level that supports independent research and preparation of Doctoral dissertations
- **Advanced Instructional Support** – A level that supports course work and research for graduate and undergraduate courses, including a wide range of basic monographs and reference tools pertaining to the subject
- **Basic Instructional Support** – A level that supports course work and research for undergraduate courses, including a wide range of basic monographs and reference tools pertaining to the subject and targeted to undergraduate students.
- **Basic Information** – A level that introduces and defines the subject and that indicates the varieties of information available elsewhere
- **Minimal** – A level that consists mostly of very basic works

(Collection Development Policy, 2007)

A section where the library discusses which material will be collected at each of the intensity levels follows this itemization. For example, only materials pertaining to the college history, the founding order, materials by or about the college community are collected at the comprehensive level. This college library is aware of the limitations of its ability to collect and the levels it can reasonably support. The document also outlines the departments of the college and the intensity
level at which materials are acquired for each. Most departments are supported at the level of Basic Instructional Support; it is easy to see which departments support graduate students, as the intensity level assigned to those departments is that of Advanced Instructional Support. Recognizing that it cannot be all things to all areas, D’Alzon agrees to act as repository only for those few materials that it collects comprehensively.

The process of who participates in selection is also clearly laid out. Each college department is assigned a library liaison, who is charged with working with the department chair to select materials for that department; there is also a form by which acquisitions requests may be submitted, and flyers, bulletins, etc., are welcomed for submission. It is also the liaison’s job to assess the requests submitted through the form for any duplication of current holdings, and to insure that it has been held up to the guidelines for decision-making. The head librarian is responsible for allocating funds for the departments. Reference materials are selected by the Head of Reference with input from other reference staff members. There is an “escape clause” in all of these decisions trees, where it is made clear that under certain circumstances, exceptions can be made.

Element Three: Miscellaneous Issues

D’Alzon Library does an excellent job of providing guidelines for the additional collection considerations under this category. The document has a detailed section regarding how gift items will be handled. There is also a section on evaluation that is an explanation of the weeding/withdrawal decision-making process. I find it interesting that it is called evaluation, rather than weeding or some other term that might have a negative connotation; my own
experience has been that this is traditionally a touchy subject between libraries and constituents, the latter being loathe to throw any book away, even if it is no longer needed, has been superceded, is in poor condition, etc. It is essential to have this policy spelled out in the document. There is a procedure outlined for materials that may be challenged. In this policy, the material stays in the collection until the Library Director responds. The Director will reference the written collection policy and if needed, college administrative staff in rendering a decision.

What the policy does not seem to have is any evaluation mechanism, any agreement that indicates that periodically the policy will be reviewed and adapted as necessary. The current document is dated 2007; after three years it may be time to review, to insure that changes in other areas of campus, the budget process, the performance of endowments, formats available for purchase, etc., have not changed enough to warrant reconsideration of parts or all of policy.

Though it doesn’t meet every criteria posited by Evans and Saponaro (2005) the policies seem to meet most of the criteria of the three elements, with a few noted exceptions. While defining choices it also provides some “wiggle room” for exceptions; every thing is not carved in stone. I also liked the fact that parts of this policy were culled from other university and college library collection development policies, and credit was given for the use of these resources. Accessing the wisdom of others might encourage libraries to create their own policy documents. One of the other things that I thought was done well was that the document is clearly available to the public, listed right under circulation policies. Sharing the document in this way means the community is able to monitor, be involved in, and gain understanding of decisions made regarding the library’s collection.
References

http://www1.assumption.edu/dept/library/policies/main.html

Evans, G. Edward, & Saponaro, Margaret Zarnosky. (2005). Developing Library and
Information Center Collections. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.