



Collection development in SN

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One of the cornerstones of any library is the book stock and other materials the librarian has at his/her disposal to deliver a quality service. If this is not up to scratch he or she might as well close the library doors, for willingness alone will definitely not do the trick - it will only result in frustration for those users who trusted their librarian to find them the information they required!

No library can claim, however, to have all the resources and information required to fall back on, or even the financial backing to buy all they want. But don't despair: that is exactly what the Provincial Library Service is there for. With specialists in the book selection, cataloguing and central reference departments to depend on, you can always give your user the reassuring news that you are referring the request to head office, and then you can, so to speak, run for Mother! Mother, in this case, being CentralCollection (SN).

Let's have a look at what SN can do for you from the collection we have built up over the years. I am going to let you in on the secrets of the philosophy and principles we have used to guide us in the decisions we have made in building the collection.

The service we render from SN has two pillars as its foundation:

- our service responsibility, and
- the principle of freedom of information: *Information for all.*

Our service philosophy or *raison d'être*: *to provide the right book to the right reader at the right time.*

Purpose of the SN collection

Our collection has been built up over many years and is continually being 'renovated', so to speak. It is available to all the citizens of the Western Cape, whether or not they are library patrons. Here I must mention that we always encourage patrons who approach us directly to rather contact their own local public libraries first.

We have acknowledged our role as disseminators of information, and thus our collection is developed to cover all subject areas on different levels of specialisation. The authority of authors, the accuracy of facts, the validity of the information and the presentation of the items are all factors that are considered when selecting our stock.

We also try to collect material that is not readily available in libraries for a variety of reasons - usually financial ones, for instance, if a title is too expensive for multiple copies to be bought. We also include the normal range of reference works as well as ordinary non-fiction titles in the more expensive and specialised classes.

Some other criteria or factors we keep in mind when selecting titles for SN are:

- the scope of the subject coverage: we try to obtain information on as many relevant subjects as possible, even if only for use in the distant future
- intellectual and informational content, where we check the authority of the author in that field; look at the level of specialisation and technical content as well as the originality of the information
- the physical appearance of the item: will it take some rough handling? (For example, our motor car manuals.) Over-large books might be difficult to get to libraries.

Types of material

It should be remembered that our stock does not consist only of books, but that it also includes the following:

- CDs, records, cassette tapes
- videos and films
- language courses in CD and cassette tape format
- audio books (as yet only fiction titles, which are the only fiction in SNs collection)
- periodicals
- rare books (Africana: a smallish collection)
- a pamphlet collection to supplement the book stock
- last, but by no means least - modern technology, the Internet.

Subjects

We permanently keep an eye open to cover as many subjects as possible. Subject gaps are traced when requests are received from libraries, and when it then becomes clear that we do not have any information on that subject, these gaps are regularly passed on to the book selectors, so that they can find material on those subjects.

Replacement of stock

Items in SN are replaced for several reasons:

- when they have become out-dated. In those subject areas where it is of paramount importance to keep up to date (for example, travel guides, gazetteers, atlases, et cetera. These older items are regularly replaced by the newer editions (however, I must emphasise that, especially in the case of travel guides, the older editions are not immediately written off, but are passed on to regions or libraries that can still use them)
- when they are worn, dirty or missing pages or broken spines
- when a subject has become superfluous or is of little interest to borrowers.

Weeding of stock

This is an important component of stock building and is done in SN on a regular basis to ensure that the collection will remain active, usable and up-to-date. We take care, however, not to discard as obsolete those titles that are deemed to be standard and classics in their field. Some examples are CG Jung's **Collected works**, written in the 1950-1970s, or Carl von Clausewitz' **On war**, of which we have the 1962 edition.

Some criteria we use for weeding are:

- appearance: antiquated appearance, badly bound items, or items with small, poor print or illustrations
- duplication: where duplicate titles are unnecessary
- content: when information is dated or incorrect
- age: books over 20 years old. This rule, it should be stressed, does not apply in the case of the so-called classics or standards.

It is important to stress that obsolescence does not always imply that older material is not useful any more, it might just not have been used for a considerable time.

There are two main reasons for discarding older stock:

- the effective utilisation of available space
- the potential harmfulness of outdated information.

In this way we try to ensure the preservation of irreplaceable and invaluable items for informational, research and historical reasons.

General guidelines

- An extensive knowledge of your stock
- Do regular checks for subject coverage (while weeding?)
- Build up a good relationship with your regional librarian and the staff of HQ (also the SN staff!)
- Always keep an eye open (in bookshops and elsewhere) for new books on all subjects that might be useful
- Keep abreast of developments and happenings in your community and elsewhere
- Read your library journals; also their book reviews contained in them
- Attend selection meetings if possible, even if only once a year.