2603 Report On: What Is a Collection, by Hur Li-Lee
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Introduction

The article I read was called "What is a collection?" It was written by Hur-Li-Lee, and that is exactly what it is about. It talks about not only the different meanings of the word collection but also mainly looks at library collections and how the recent developments in technology have affected them. It concentrates on four the traditional conceptions of "collection", Challenges posed by media, a proposal for an expanded concept and finally the implantations of further research.

The term collection has many meanings depending on the context of its use. However the dictionary definition defines all of these different meanings. The dictionary definition of a collection is "a group of objects". But each field has its own specific definition, in other words depending on what field you come from depends on what is been collected thus the term collection varies. You can have a collection of documents or a collection of works. (Li-Lee H, 2000)

The article however focuses on neither of these two definitions but rather on the issues that surround the development of a collection in information services. Therefore rather than thinking of the word "collection" by itself, think about it as a "library collection". (Li-Lee H, 2000)
Traditional conceptions of collection:
This part of the article looked at four main conceptions that have aroused within the various definitions of a library collection. These are:

- **Tangibility**
- **Ownership**
- **A user community**
- **A unified Retrieval mechanism**

**Tangibility:**
When it comes to tangibility in most definitions a library collection is thought about as a physical building or warehouse where it stores ONLY tangible documents, however this is not the case, most researchers actually believe that community libraries will be a thing of the past (reference). When people think of libraries as only physical warehouses they then therefore make it difficult for themselves to imagine virtual collections. (Li-Lee H, 2000)

**Ownership:**
This focuses on the concept of who owns the documents within the collection. For example if a library collection has within it remote resources (which are not owned by the library) it may be argued that those resources are not actually part of the library collection. This part of the article uses the American based Interlibrary Loan (ILL) system. This system raises question on ownership as a user in a Chicago can borrow a book from a library in New York. The question of ownership has all raised the fact that there is no such thing as just owned or not owned, as publishers are now making information packages in a variety of ways, for example sale, lease, on-demand material delivery, and remote access. (Li-Lee H, 2000)

**A User Community:**
When a library starts to think about what it is going to put in its collection it needs to think of the potential users of the collection. If this does not occur the library wastes unnecessary money on resources that will not be used. When it comes to developing a collection the library also has to take into consideration that the quality of the resources is not key, if the collection is full of high quality resources and doesn't meet the users needs it has minimal if any use. The library must consider all factors but most importantly the community that will be using the resources. (Li-Lee H, 2000)

**A Unified Retrieval Mechanism:**
As described a collection and its resources isn't just limited to the one library building, as it can be retrieved in a variety of ways. A good example is Monash Universities library system it's one big collection but within it there are sub-collections such as science, medicine, technology. And under all these there are sub collections. As there are so many resources within the collection there needs to be a unified. In the case of Monash there is a database that can be accessed from different areas whether it be via the Internet at home or in the library itself. It is important that all these sub-collections are linked and are able to be retrieved from the same place. (Li-Lee H, 2000)
Challenges Posed by Media

50 years ago libraries didn’t consider having media documents held within their collections however as technology advances and different formats of media have evolved. As the Internet has developed and DVD’s have become more popular the need for original library collections to change has become more demanding. The internet opens up a whole different section of collections, if the library collection is linked to one site and that site has another hyperlink to another site... this all therefore affects the integrity of the collection. This is because if a collector puts into their collection a site with hyperlinks do those hyperlinked sites become part of the collection? The developments in the field of media have complicated the creation of collections and are made it harder to define them. As technology advances it becomes harder for collectors to differentiate between what is a collection and what is a document, there are many views as if a search is conducted some view that a whole new document is been created where as others believe that a temporary collection has been created. (Li-Lee H, 2000)

A Proposal for an Expanded Concept:

As discussed there is much confusion on what is a collection and thus the concept of one needs to be expanded to fit all this confusion under the umbrella. The proposed expansion has in it two major sections the Developers side of the concept and the users. The developers side states that when a collection is to be created and researched the definition should include:

- User Community
- Collection Scope
- Format
- Depth

The developer is to not only manage the collection that they are creating but also all the sub-collections that come with it. This is very important as many collections have interrelationships. However this is not the only thing a developer must do, the developer must also do further research with other information services for mutual collections. The developer must ensure that all resources in the immediate collections must be available for retrieval via an one integrated retrieval system. The user’s collection view on the other hand is that the collection mustn’t exist in isolation and should allow users to expand there search to outside the immediate collection. (Li-Lee H, 2000)
Conclusion

In conclusion when a collection is been created the developer must first and foremost concentrate on the user community rather than the quality of the collection. The collection must be flexible and allow for further searches. Once a collection is created it must be easy to access and thus must be able to be retrieved from one integrated system. Although technology grows and potentially causes confusion in such areas as collections, but if you look at it in great detail it just forced collectors and developers to review what in-fact they are collecting or developing.
References