Building a Collection from the Ground Up

» Notes from a first attempt at developing a collection for a new master's degree.

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In 2011, California Baptist University (CBU) began planning a new five-year Master of Architecture (M.Arch) program. As part of that plan, the Annie Gabriel Library was tasked with building a 5,000 volume monograph collection to meet National Architectural Accrediting Board criteria by 2018.

This was my first experience building a print and electronic subject collection from very little, approximately 1,000 books and ebooks, with a modest budget, $11,000, and a deadline. This is the story of our progress so far: how we got here, what we've learned, and our plans for the future.

WHERE WE WERE

In the fall of 2011, the library's monograph holdings in architecture and related subjects were limited **(see Figure 1 on page 8)**, and what was held had been added primarily in support of the fine arts programs. The 2014 Conditions for Accreditation from the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) require only "convenient, equitable access to literature and information...that support professional education in architecture."[1] NAAB accreditors stated that the traditional, if unofficial, recommendation was a collection of 5,000 volumes. In response to these recommendations, a plan was made to set aside a significant portion of the materials budget each year in an attempt to reach 5,000 volumes by 2018.

The total architecture budget for the 2011-2012 fiscal year was $11,300, followed by $11,400 in 2012-2013, $22,490 in 2013-2014, $18,000 in 2014-2015, and $15,000 in 2015-2016. According to local acquisitions statistics, between 2011 and 2015 the price for a range of architecture books follows:

- New architecture books, $65.68;
- Retrospective architecture books, $59.37;
- Architecture ebooks not part of a collection, $210.73.

As the budget numbers indicate, by the 2013-2014 fiscal year it was clear that reaching our goal on schedule would require a significant increase in the architecture acquisitions budget.

Unfortunately, an unexpected cut forced the library to reduce the budget for subsequent fiscal years. Additionally, in an attempt to develop a well-rounded, multi-format collection representative of both classic and new publications, the budget was divided into three categories: new (publication date of current or previous year), retrospective (publication date of two years prior or earlier), and e-books. In most years these budget categories were initially allocated as 20 percent for ebooks and 40 percent for both retrospective and new books; however, money was freely transferred between budget categories throughout the year depending on what was wanted. No significant planning beyond the budget categories was put into what the final collection should look like, and we certainly did not anticipate how heavily we would need to rely on ebooks to reach our volume goal.

We decided the collection would be built in two ways:

- First, by the Collection Development Librarian, who would make title-by-title monograph selections in architecture and related fields **(see Figure 2 on page 9)**, primarily in print with occasional individual ebook purchases;
- Second, via the library's two primary e-book databases: ebrary Academic Complete, a subscription-based database that adds (and occasionally subtracts) ebook titles on a monthly basis, and SpringerLink, which houses the annual ebook collections published by Springer and purchased outright by the library.

These two databases add large numbers of titles to the collection, using subscription and purchase models, at a significantly lower cost than individual title print or ebook purchases. Because both databases contain a variety of subject content, the

exact number of architecture titles added to them each year is difficult to anticipate. During the last five years, however, an average of 511 ebrary and Springer e-books on architecture and related fields have been added to the catalog annually, significantly more than the Collection Development budget could afford.

It should be noted that although quantity is a major strength and selling point of ebook databases, the quality and intended audience of both products were taken into account. Our library faculty considers both ebrary and Springer to be dependably high-quality academic content providers whose products consistently meet our students' research needs.

The cost of these e-book databases are shared between two departments: Collection Development, which is responsible for the purchase of Springer ebook collections, and Digital Services, which pays the annual ebrary subscription costs and fees. This collaboration has contributed greatly to the success of this undertaking, for without the more affordable cost-per-title in ebrary and Springer, it would have been necessary to commit a larger portion of the materials budget to the architecture collection, and we would have been much farther behind in reaching our goal.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT TOOLS
Building a collection with little practical knowledge of the subject matter is a core challenge within collection development. Fortunately, there are numerous tools available to ensure that selections are as informed and thoughtful as possible, and the development of the architecture collection at the Annie Gabriel Library (AGL) relied on several.

Library of Congress Classification Outline: As a natural first step, we turned to the LC Outline, which breaks a topic down in great detail and provides a template for acquisitions to ensure that all facets of a subject are represented. I began by running reports in the integrated library system (ILS) to determine current holdings and identify gaps. Familiarizing oneself with relevant call number ranges is also an excellent way to develop a thorough theoretical understanding of a topic and ensure that even frequently overlooked aspects are represented in a collection.

For example, resources on the art, history, study, and practice of architecture are in the NA section; however, several other call

Figure 1: Holdings in Architecture at Annie Gabriel Library

	2011	2015	Increase
Print	369	1249	338%
Ebook	803	2819	351%
Total	1172	4068	347%

number ranges explore the social and practical topics and skills covered in an architecture program. Call number ranges in social science, political science, and technology **(see Figure 2)** cover topics such as historic preservation and city planning, architecture law and building codes, landscape architecture, and construction engineering. Although easy to overlook and more difficult to identify, these areas are as important to an architecture program as materials in the NA section, and their identification was an important step in our collection development process.

Other Libraries: Very few librarians are tasked with building a wholly new and unique collection; most often they follow the example of other libraries, and AGL was no different. One of the most useful and informative resources I discovered was the Association of Architecture School Librarians (AASL) Core Reference List, an open-access LibGuide established by architecture librarians from universities across the United States. Its purpose is "to identify the categories of core reference resources needed in libraries supporting accredited architecture degree programs in North America and the core resources needed in each category."[2] To improving our reference collection, this list provided a fantastic framework for the most important categories of architecture resources.

Additionally, WorldCat, LibGuides, and holdings comparisons through OCLC WorldShare offered useful lists of currently held titles at libraries with established architecture programs. These tools were especially helpful in developing the retrospective portion of our architecture collection. New books are abundant, and they and their reviews are easy to find. But identifying older, sometimes classic titles is more difficult without the guidance of librarians who have been collecting in a subject for years.

Professional Organizations: Learning about the organizations connected to our

growing collection was a worthwhile step that led to valuable information. For the architecture collection at our library, those organizations are the Association of Architecture School Librarians (AASL), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) and the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). The websites of these organizations have been sources of print and serial publication lists, contacts, conference information, and standards and requirements. The resources most important to our collection development project are the AASL Core Reference List and the NAAB criteria. As universities grow and programs expand, librarians may find it worthwhile to join one or more organizations to keep informed of changes in professional standards or accreditation requirements.

Bibliographies: When a collection needs to be built up fairly quickly, bibliographies are an especially useful tool. Finding a list of titles from a reputable online source, book, or article saves time and allows librarians to make selections with less title-by-title evaluation than usual. Reference books and anthologies such as *Architectural Theory*[3] were extremely helpful in our collection development process, and individual selections were often made based on the value of their bibliographies.

Additionally, once the M.Arch program was underway, course syllabi were consulted to ensure that the library held all the required and recommended course texts as well as any supplementary titles that students would need based on major projects and assignments.

Reviews: Reading reviews can be time consuming and accessing them can be difficult and expensive. The primary source of full-text academic publishing reviews at AGL is our subscription to Choice Reviews Online. This tool allowed us to read reviews when necessary, but mostly to trust that the Choice database would return results that met our search

Figure 2: Social and Practical Topics and Skills Covered in an Architecture Program

E 159	Historic preservation
GN 414	Historic housing customs and technology
GT 170-226	Housing - social aspects
HT 161-178	City planning & urban design
HT 330-384	Metropolitan areas, suburbs, urbanization
KF 902	Architecture and law
KF 5701-5704	International building codes
LB 3205-3325	School architecture and planning
NA	Architecture
NK 1700-2195	Interior and house decoration
RA 967	Hospital design
SB 469-480	Landscape architecture
T 369	Mechanical drawing, engineering graphics
TA 401-493	Construction materials
TD 169-195	Environmental protection, pollution, effects of industry
TE 279-298	Streets and pedestrian facilities
TH	Building construction

parameters. The ability to narrow a search to titles within a particular LC range that received high ratings from Choice reviewers has been extremely helpful.

In addition, Yankee Book Peddler's (YBP) online ordering platform, GOBI, allows for searching and sorting that enables users to perform LC range searches and sort them by YBP Select rating—a ranking system similar to Choice that indicates the audience level as well as the recommendation level. When Choice Reviews Online was exhausted or insufficient, searching in GOBI proved to be an excellent way to find highly-recommended titles evaluated and ranked by subject specialists. GOBI also provides monthly Spotlight Lists highlighting core titles, award winners, and subject collections that have occasionally featured architecture—a happy and helpful coincidence.

Knowledgeable Resources: At the beginning of our collection development project, the pool of potential purchases was large and overwhelming, and it quickly became clear that finding ways to break the pool down into manageable pieces was the best approach. Identifying important people, publishers, and series gave focus to a project with a broad scope and allowed us to begin building our collection with confidence.

For example, names of important architects, both as authors and subjects, were discovered in the list of Pritzker Architecture Prize winners. Publishers such as Princeton Architectural Press, Wiley, Yale University Press, Birkhèauser, MIT Press, and Laurence King were found to have excellent reputations and produce valuable titles that could be found either via online publisher lists or through vendor platform searching.

Individual titles and series from these and other publishers established a base level of quality resources that are continually added to the collection. Additionally, important code and standards publications and test preparation materials are a significant part of our standing orders profile and add practical resources to our collection, creating a balance between the art/science duality of architecture.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Based on current holdings and the 2015-2016 materials budget, the library is on track to end this fiscal year with approximately 4,500 volumes, 500 volumes short of our goal. However, this estimate does not include ebrary Academic Complete and SpringerLink e-books that will be added over the next year, so with that in mind we hope to be within the 4,700-4,800 volume range by fall 2016. Although a collection of 5,000 volumes is not explicitly required by NAAB, it is still our hope to reach that number in time for the 2016 progress visit. But if we should fail, we are certain to reach it in time for the final accreditation visit in the fall of 2018.

LESSONS LEARNED

Although the library may not reach its collection goal by fall 2016, the project has still had great success. Ambitious goals were set for this project in an effort to assemble a sufficient collection for the first graduating cohort of M.Arch students. We are proud of the collection we have built and have learned a lot in the process.

Our architecture holdings have increased by over 300 percent in less than five years, and our small but growing M.Arch program has a collection of more than 4,000 titles to support its scholarship. Looking back, while we did do some things right the first time, there are some changes we would make if presented with similar project in the future.

One important improvement to future collection development projects at CBU would be to be more aggressive about the budget. We learned that new programs, especially those with monograph volume requirements, demand a great deal of money. At the outset of our collecting, we set aside what we considered a significant sum of money for architecture and asked for modest budget increases in future years. In reality, however, it always felt as if we were focusing on the architecture collection at the expense of everything else. New program collecting should not subtract

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from the existing budget, but rather should attract a budget increase; otherwise the continuous addition of programs will simply divide the budget more and more each year.

In the future, we will be more systematic and aggressive about requesting budget increases that will sufficiently support the collection needs of new programs. One possible solution to this problem may be to begin including budget requests in the planning documents for new programs. One element of new program planning at CBU is the Library Impact Statement, a document completed by the library that evaluates current monograph, journal, and database holdings and their ability to support the proposed program. Adding a section to this document where requests for additional funds could be made may be one way to attain Collection Development budget increases in support of new programs.

Throughout our collection project thus far, we have had limited communication with the faculty of the M.Arch program. This may not have hindered our progress to a great degree, but in the future we would make a more concerted effort to stay in touch with deans and professors. This change would create more opportunities for feedback and ensure that the library's collecting was meeting the unique needs of the program and interests of the faculty.

Near the midpoint of our collecting, the library was made aware of a small, un-catalogued book collection in the architecture department, resulting from independent collecting using department funds. It is still not clear if this collection is a response to insufficient content in the library or whether it is simply a convenient service for students. Regardless, more communication with the architecture department may have shed some light on the issue and created more opportunities for faculty to express needs and offer recommendations.

Finally, we have come close to reaching our goal with a fairly modest budget since approximately 70 percent of relevant titles having been added to the collection through our ebook subscriptions in ebrary Academic Complete and purchased collections in SpringerLink. Ebook databases are a fantastic asset to new program collecting as they make it possible to acquire large numbers of titles at costs far lower than print volumes. Any library at a rapidly growing university would benefit from such efforts. These resources are a built-in insurance policy for forthcoming programs that the library may otherwise struggle to support. Having these resources at the Annie Gabriel Library has been and continues to be a great help to collection development for all new programs at CBU.

NEXT STEPS

In the coming months, we'll spend down our 2015-2016 budget and end the year as close to 5,000 volumes as possible. We plan to allocate a larger than usual sum for the architecture program for one more year to ensure that we reach our goal, plus a little more. After that, the budget for architecture will be determined in the same way as all the other programs. Collecting will continue to ensure that core, retrospective titles are acquired, but greater focus will be given to new publications.

To date, no major new programs are in the works at CBU. Most new programs are small and supported by current collecting, so it is not often that a project such as the M.Arch comes along. It has been a unique challenge and an invaluable personal learning experience; I joined the Annie Gabriel Library staff in 2011 and have been working on this project ever since. Building a collection from the ground up teaches one to think critically about a discipline, learn what its core needs and principles are, and determine how to fulfill them in the best way possible—valuable skills for any collection development librarian. ∎

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FOOTNOTES:
[1] The National Architectural Accrediting Board (2014). 2014 Conditions for Accreditation. Retrieved October 8, 2015, from **www.naab.org/accreditation/2014_Conditions**.
[2] Association of Architecture School Librarians (2015). Core Reference List. Retrieved October 13, 2015, from **http://woodbury.libguides.com/content.php?pid=576715&sid=4754615**.
[3] Mallgrave, Harry Francis (Ed.). (2006). Architectural Theory, Volume 1: An Anthology from Vitruvius to 1870. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.