

Nicole Pagowsky -- IRLS 560
Collection Development Tool Assessment
September 18, 2007

Subject Bibliographies

Alternative Medicine Foundation, Inc. (2006). *Homeopathy Resource Guide*. Retrieved September 6, 2007, from <http://amfoundation.org/homeopathinfo.htm>.

I chose to do my collection on homeopathy, therefore, decided to use the Alternative Medicine Foundation's subject bibliography for this collection tool. It is current, selective, annotated, and indexed.

A strength I have found with using a subject bibliography is that it is easy to sift through since the list is already on a specific topic: it's not necessary to have to search for books on a particular topic, because they are already compiled. This is very useful for a topic that is a little more obscure, because less time can be spent on digging, and more on comparing and selecting. In contrast, if one were trying to simply build up a collection in general, without a specific topic in mind, this method could become very time consuming. Another positive aspect of subject bibliographies is that they are reviewed by a subject specialist, usually. Because this is not always the case, checking the credentials of the author is important. For creating a specific collection, if the person doing the selecting is not an expert, having a reviewed list by someone who is helps to narrow down the material a great deal, as well as helps to make better-informed decisions. When exploring a compilation from someone who does have greater knowledge, one might find something connected to the topic in question that might have not been considered before, to add more depth to the collection.

On the other hand, there are some aspects of subject bibliographies as collection tools that could be problematic. The list is generally not exhaustive. This is beneficial in that it helps narrow down the information for the person selecting, however, information could be missing due to the reviewer accidentally skipping over something, or due to bias. This, again, is a reason why checking on the author and his or her credentials is important.

For a collection on homeopathy, subject bibliographies would be very useful. This is because the topic is fairly specific, so having a list generated, when suggested information might be otherwise difficult to find, improves selection ability. I personally am not an expert on this topic, so having some guidance is helpful. Because homeopathy is related to science, it could be difficult to create the best collection possible if current information is lacking. Homeopathy does generally stay true to its original ideas and applications, which is why older sources could be useful as well, but sciences should be kept current due to possible new advancements. This particular page was updated less than a year ago, so that could satisfy issues of currency. In relation to bias, I checked on the credentials of the organization that compiled the list, and they seem to be well known in alternative medicine as a non-profit providing current information. The sources are indexed and have annotation, also. This subject bibliography will be extremely useful for me in developing my collection.

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Collection Development Tool Assessment
September 18, 2007

Current Review Sources

Library Journal (n.d.). *Book Reviews (Homeopathy)*. Retrieved September 14, 2007, from <http://reviews.libraryjournal.com/BookReview.aspx?bookTitle=homeopathy>.

This particular review source is from *Library Journal*, where I did a search in the reviews for “homeopathy”. This example certainly isn’t exhaustive, because there could be reviews categorized under synonyms or other forms of the word “homeopathy”.

Current review sources have positive and negative attributes, but with either, knowing the background of the reviewer(s) is important because it could be anywhere from a subject expert to a layperson with very little knowledge on the topic writing the review. The layperson’s review could have merit in certain collections, such as a general collection in a public library created to inform or educate beginners or novices, but when looking to have a small and specific collection on a niche topic, reading expert reviews might be more useful. The *Library Journal* reviews are done by qualified librarians, which is why there is so much helpful information in the reviews, such as breaking down the subject into the components the book covers, noting the age group, price, and even mentioning what kinds of collections the material would be suitable for and why. There are even other similar or better books suggested within the review, and reviewers might discuss how the book in question fits into its subject with the other books mentioned.

Depending on the source and the materials reviewed, the current review source could be too basic for a subject specialist; this one in particular, seems to have books geared more towards the novice. Another issue with reviews is bias. Checking sources is, again, important because the reviewer could have ties with certain organizations or personal bias. As Amazon is known for, friends of the author or the author might post a biased review to shed a favorable light on the product. Fortunately, the reviews from *Library Journal* seem to be objective and fair.

In regards to the subject of homeopathy, this source is quite helpful in determining which kinds of libraries the books would be suited for. The reviews are specific and comparative to provide a good understanding of what the book is about and what kind of information it provides. However, most of the reviews provided are from the 1990’s, being ten to fifteen years old. This makes one doing selection wonder then if there just has not been much published on homeopathy in recent years, if *Library Journal* has chosen not to make as many reviews on homeopathy available, or if current publications are not worth reviewing. Also, with current review sources, if a specific topic is being selected for, doing searches for reviews is necessary, which is time consuming. A more general collection would be easier to use this tool for, but homeopathy might be more few and far between, especially when looking for reviews by librarians for library use. These reviews are in depth and helpful, and I will use some review sources like this one to develop my collection, but it seems I might want to rely most heavily on subject bibliographies for my topic.

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Collection Development Tool Assessment
September 18, 2007

National Bibliographies

German National Library (n.d.). *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek*. Retrieved September 14, 2007, from <http://www.ddb.de/eng/index.htm>.

The German physicist, Samuel Hahnemann, invented homeopathy in the late eighteenth century, therefore I chose to assess Germany's national bibliography to relate to my topic for selection.

Through the German National Library, there is a link to their national bibliography. The problem with national bibliographies is that if one does not speak the native language, it could be impossible to locate and obtain many, if not all resources. It is even difficult to do a search on the bibliography page if not somewhat knowledgeable of the German language, just for understanding all fields to search under. Parts of the pages are in English, but most is all in German. If the national bibliography, or the web site in general is in a language the searcher understands, usefulness of this as a collection development tool depends heavily on the topic of the collection. Specific people, places, or events in history of a specific origin or country would be well suited to use this as a tool, however, subjects not specific to one area would not benefit as much. A national bibliography might have a better collection or rare items on particular topics. An example of this was discussed in lecture, that the Library of Congress requires a donation of two copies of a publication to achieve copyright status in the United States; this is not the case in all national libraries, though. A national bibliography could also cater to bias: selective memory to make the country appear in a better light. Certain materials could be weeded out or just not collected in order to shape events in history. So on one hand, a country could have the most in-depth collection pertaining to a certain topic that might be lacking everywhere else, but at the same time, it could have a more selective and biased collection depending on the image desired and who shaped the collection (as well as what kind of government played a part in selection and de-selection). National bibliographies could be extremely political in nature, effecting the collections they contain.

This collection tool is not very relevant to my subject of homeopathy. Homeopathy is not specific to Germany, although a German invented it there. There could be interesting materials regarding the invention that could be important for my collection, as a historical component, but even still I would probably only use one or two items, if even that. The chances that there are English translations are also not extremely high. Homeopathy is all over the grid, in that it was invented in Germany, popularized in America, and then is now practiced everywhere, with India appearing to have the most homeopathic schools and research. It would be extremely time consuming, and most likely not very fruitful, to search the national bibliographies of Germany, America, and India for homeopathy. With a specific, yet geographically general topic like homeopathy, national bibliographies would not be helpful as a tool for collection development.

Nicole Pagowsky – IRLS 560
Collection Development Tool Assessment
October 9, 2007

Library Catalogues

National College of Natural Medicine (n.d.). *NCNM Library Catalog*. Retrieved September 28, 2007 from <http://ohsucr11.ohsu.edu/search~S3> at <http://www.ncnm.edu/library/>

The National College of Natural Medicine is a school for naturopathy; the school's library has a specialized collection catering to the associated topics covered. I chose this library catalog to use because it has a good selection of materials covering the subject of homeopathy.

Depending on the type of library, library catalogues could be very useful depending on the type of collection being selected for. If selecting for a specific subject, finding a special library with a good collection could be fruitful in finding materials. In general, library catalogs are good collection development tools because someone has already gone through the trouble of reviewing resources before putting them in the collection. Understanding the scope, mission, and goals of the library whose catalog one might be examining can help to determine if the selection of materials would also be appropriate for the scope, mission, and goals of the collection being selected for. Library catalogs also tend to have multiple formats for resources. Some libraries include realia, maps, or audio and audio-visual materials besides books and serials. Digital libraries only have digital materials, so if looking for that specific format for a collection, using a digital library catalog would be a helpful resource.

Library catalogues may also not be very helpful as a collection development tool. Sometimes, reviews of materials could be misleading or if someone was not particularly qualified to be selecting materials, items could wind up in the collection that are not as good of quality that might be desired. Also, if the purpose of the collection is to inform beginners on a topic, and a person doing selection is looking to educate experts, it would be irrelevant to choose items to use from that catalogue.

This particular collection development tool will be useful for me because there seems to be a number of schools of natural medicine with impressive holdings for homeopathy. The National College of Natural Medicine has almost two thousand items relating to homeopathy when searched as a subject keyword. The benefit to having almost too many items to choose from in a catalog is that the search can be narrowed simply by improving search methods, whereas in other collection development tools, one might need to read through all the material and weed out what is not needed without the aid of the technology available in electronic library catalogues. Because this catalog is so specialized and in-tune with what I will be selecting, I would be able to be creative with how I search for materials, because it appears this library has a variety of formats, as well as a variety of subjects within homeopathy (history of or veterinary homeopathy, for example). I plan to use this, and other schools' of naturopathy library catalogues to help me select for my collection.

Nicole Pagowsky – IRLS 560
Collection Development Tool Assessment
October 9, 2007

Publishers' Catalogues

Beaconsfield Publishers (n.d.). *Beaconsfield Publishers Catalogue*. Retrieved September 28, 2007 from http://beaconsfield-publishers.co.uk/list_of_titles.htm

Beaconsfield Publishers has approximately twenty-three titles on homeopathy in their catalogue. They specialize in two categories: homeopathy, and then medicine, nursing, and patient care. I chose to evaluate this collection development tool because it directly applies to the subject for my opening day collection.

Publishers' catalogues can be useful if the material that regularly gets published is considered good quality, as well as if the publisher ever works with the topic being selected for. Some publishers specialize and some are more general, so knowing what topics are covered, and how extensively, would better aid in searching for publishers' catalogues to use. Beaconsfield, as well as another publisher I looked at, Bjain, lists the price, number of pages, and the size of the book; all publishers tend to do this. Knowing this information is helpful for monetary and spatial constraints. Sometimes, publishers also have summaries of what the book covers, so if the title is not specific enough, reading a blurb about the material can be useful. Beaconsfield provides detailed descriptions of each book, and even includes a list of the table of contents. They also even provide background of the author, so one can understand credentials and authority. Beaconsfield is extremely thorough in providing information on their materials.

A negative aspect of using publishers' catalogues as collection development tools mostly rests in bias. Obviously, a publisher is going to want the materials they have for sale to appear in a favorable light. If there even are reviews, which Beaconsfield has in-depth, but Bjain seldom provides, they could very well be edited to make each book appear to be better quality than it might actually be. It is very unlikely that a publisher would print a negative review of an item in the catalogue, to dissuade readers from purchasing it. Also, a good number of publishers will only publish the same format of material; in the example of Beaconsfield, they only publish books.

I'm unsure how useful this tool could be for one who is not an expert in the subject he or she is collecting for, because since all publishers write their reviews in a favorable light, it would be hard to tell which publishers are better sources for particular topics. Because I do not know which publishers are the most credible for the subject of homeopathy, I wouldn't know which catalogue would be the best to consult. If I looked at Beaconsfield, I could at least get an idea of if the book would educate or inform, and to what level of reader; however, if I were to use Bjain or another publisher, I might have no other point of reference besides the title. If I noticed a more reliable tool for my subject, such as the library catalogue from the National College of Natural Medicine, listed books by a particular publisher consistently, I might then look to a specific publishers' catalog, but simply searching for publishers' catalogues on homeopathy might not be as reliable as what I would need for selecting for a collection.

Nicole Pagowsky – IRLS 560
Collection Development Tool Assessment
October 9, 2007

World Wide Web Search Engines

For this collection development tool, I used Google's search engine, accessed on October 3, 2007. I did searches on "homeopath*" and "homeopath* resources". Getting varied results, I will discuss mostly finding books digitized and indexed on Google Book Search, and general websites covering related information with some having suggestions for homeopathic resources.

A search engine can be a useful collection development tool to find an incredible amount of information on a topic. If one has an obscure subject to select for, a search engine can open it up, possibly finding more options through this tool than any other. Variations on subjects can be easy to find as well, because when using a search engine, there are results for just about anything imaginable. It's possible to even find entire books, digitized, and available through Google Book Search, as some of my results turned up just using the standard Google search engine. I was also directed to schools of homeopathy, websites of Naturopaths and Medical doctors, and various resource pages.

However, although there are many results obtained from search engines, the quality and credibility can be highly questionable. Because anyone can publish anything on the Internet, caution must be taken when assessing statements and suggestions made. Such a high number of results, even when narrowed down, can also become a hassle to deal with when deciding how to weed out dead ends and sites not of interest. The only information one is able to make assumptions on is the title of the website or words contained in the URL; therefore, aside from judging which sites to visit based on little to no information (especially when acronyms are used in the URL), it would be incredibly time consuming not only to visit each site of potential interest, but to also evaluate the material well enough to determine if it was valuable or not. Search engines are good for opening up more material, but if there are more than a few pages of hits retrieved, it might be more trouble than it's worth. With virtual resources, there is also the risk of longevity, where a site could change or disappear quickly, leading to either dead links or new, misinformation, where one might not even notice this change for some time.

In regards to homeopathy, search engines are questionable. Because the information is sensitive due to pertaining to science and health, information found on the Internet must be credible and valid. Homeopathy is gaining popularity, yet is still a somewhat narrow topic. Using Boolean terms to narrow the search further could help weed out unnecessary sites, if I decided ahead of time which extremely specific topics within homeopathy I wanted materials about. Then still, however, I would need to check the credibility of the websites I considered using. I think I would use search engines for additional information, or to do further research on sources I might find elsewhere, but I don't think I would use it as a primary collection development tool.