

## 6. Information Resources

### Introduction

The information resources of the documentation service are the basis for products and services that meet users' needs. The identification, selection, acquisition and withdrawal of documents have to be carried out systematically if the service is to develop effective collections. Management and staff need to invest time, effort and money in developing and maintaining resources, including physical documents and arrangements for access to external information sources.

### Information resources policy

The development and maintenance of the service's information resources should be carried out in accordance with a written statement of policy with regard to the development and maintenance of the document collections and the provision of access to external information resources and services. This statement should be:

- prepared by staff in consultation with service users and staff from co-operating institutions
- endorsed by the advisory committee and the management of the parent institution
- evaluated and revised at intervals

The information resources policy should be based on:

- the general policies for the development and operation of the service, e.g. with regard to the kinds of users to be served
- the results of the process of sorting the existing collections

The policy statement should indicate the kinds of information resources which the service should aim to provide in terms of:

- subjects to be covered
- levels of treatment
- languages
- physical formats
- cost

The policy should also indicate:

- from where different kinds of documents should be obtained, and under what conditions (e.g. other local documentation services, local and foreign commercial publishers, online sources, etc.)
- how and where different kinds of documents should be stored or displayed (e.g. on open shelves, in secure storage, etc.)
- for how long the different kinds of documents should be retained before being considered for disposal

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

- 4 Developing the collection
- 4.1 Developing a collection policy

## Existing information resources

Before the service begins to identify and acquire more documents, existing collections will need to be sorted and recorded, discarding unsuitable, worn-out or obsolete materials. Any existing arrangements for access to external information sources should be reviewed and evaluated. It is better to do this after:

- potential users of the service have been identified and their information needs assessed
- some knowledge of existing information sources -- particularly those already available in the locality -- has been obtained
- This makes it easier to:
- identify gaps in the existing collection -- i.e. topics or types of material required by users but not at present available
- assess the extent to which the service should aim to complement or duplicate other local collections

Examination of the existing document collections forms part of the diagnosis of the existing situation which in turn provides the basis for the development of the information resources policy.

### *Sorting existing collections*

Sorting existing document collections is the essential first step in establishing an effective local documentation service. It should be done before any attempt is made to begin acquiring numbers of new documents.

The main steps to be taken in sorting the documents in the existing collections are:

1. Sort the documents by physical format (books, reports, periodicals, etc.)
2. Set aside for discarding any documents which are:
  - obviously outside the scope of the collection (e.g. novels)
  - seriously out-of-date
  - in such bad physical condition (incomplete, badly torn, stained, dirty, etc.) that they cannot be repaired
3. Sort the remaining documents in each group in a simple but appropriate way, e.g.:
  - periodicals by title, volume and issue number
  - reports by issuing body and serial number
  - books by publisher and date, subject, etc.
  - maps by location, scale, etc.
4. Identify and set aside any unwanted duplicates. Do not keep duplicates just to fill up the shelves

5. Identify any gaps in the main sequences into which the various groups of document have been sorted, e.g.:
  - missing periodical issues
  - missing titles from report series, etc.
6. Make a note of the missing items so that attempts can be made to acquire them at a later stage

The documents which remain after this sorting process constitute the initial collection of the documentation service, and should be recorded and processed as described in Chapter 7, before collecting more documents.

#### *Review access to external sources*

Arrangements for access to external information sources, particularly any involving payment of any kind, should be reviewed to assess

- their relevance to the needs of users
- the amount of use which has been made of them so far
- their cost

Any such arrangements which do not provide relevant information, are little used or are expensive in relation to their relevance and use should be terminated.

#### *After sorting*

After sorting, it is useful to check how many documents of each type there are in the initial collection and make sure that there are enough shelves and other storage facilities to contain them. If not, steps should be taken to acquire suitable storage equipment so that the initial collection can be properly housed from the outset. Try to ensure that there is spare storage capacity to house documents which will be acquired in the future, although it may be difficult, at this stage, to foresee how quickly the collections of different types of documents are likely to grow.

Information about the different kinds of storage equipment needed for different kinds of documents is given in Appendix B.

When any existing collections and arrangements for access have been sorted and evaluated as described above, staff can begin to develop the information resources of the service further by identifying, selecting, acquiring or obtaining access to more documents and external information sources and services. This should be a continuing process, carried out in accordance with the service's information resources policy.

#### Discovering information resources

The main sources of information about relevant documents and external information sources and services are:

- individuals or institutions who create, produce or distribute documents
- bibliographical sources that list documents created, produced or distributed by individuals or institutions
- existing documents and document collections, including existing collections of the service itself and those of other libraries and documentation services
- members of the advisory committee
- other librarians and documentalists
- users and subject specialists
- the Internet

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

4.3 Sources of materials

*Information producers and distributors*

The service needs to identify and establish contact with as many institutions as possible, whether local, national, international or foreign, which produce or distribute documents or provide information services likely to be relevant to the needs of its users.

These are some of the main kinds of producers and distributors:

- academic institutions
- commercial publishers
- consulting firms
- equipment manufacturers
- government departments
- individual specialists
- international agencies
- non-governmental organisations
- other libraries and documentation services
- professional associations
- research institutions
- subscription agents
- training institutions
- water supply and sanitation projects

Details of the main international and regional document producers and distributors in the water and sanitation sector are provided on the IRC web site (see Box 6A)

**Box 6A: InterWATER organisations**

The InterWATER section of the IRC web site offers information about more than 650 organisations and networks in the water supply and sanitation sector, in 85 countries worldwide. You can search for an organisation on name, acronym, location or description, or by selecting a region. Each organisation has a short description, contact details, e-mail and web site address, and related sites where applicable.

<http://www.irc.nl/content/view/full/126>

Sources can also be identified by studying the existing document collections of the service and those of other libraries and documentation services to see who published or distributed useful documents already in the collections.

When suitable document producers and distributors have been identified, their names and addresses should be recorded and a circular letter prepared and distributed asking for lists of the documents they produce. The service should also ask to be put on the mailing lists of such institutions to receive regular information about new materials.

These lists of documents can then be used, together with bibliographical sources, to identify individual documents or sets of documents to be acquired by the service.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

4.3.1 Producers and distributors

4.9 List of distributors

*Bibliographical sources*

Institutions which are active document producers and distributors often produce bibliographical sources listing their own publications and those of other institutions.

These are some of the main kinds of bibliographical sources:

- abstracts and indexes
- acquisitions bulletins
- bibliographies and bibliographical databases
- book reviews
- electronic document search and delivery services
- library catalogues
- lists of references in books and periodical articles
- publishers' catalogues

These are often available in printed or electronic format, or both. Many are available free of charge, and many are accessible online through the Internet.

Many of the organisations listed in the InterWATER section of the IRC web site (see Box 6A), including IRC itself, provide access through their web sites to extensive bibliographical databases on water supply and sanitation (see Box 6B for some examples).

### **Box 6B: Examples of online bibliographical sources**

#### **IRCDOC**

IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre

<http://www.irc.nl/content/view/full/7342> [online search: <http://www.irc.nl/ircdoc/>]

The IRCDOC database is updated daily and 1,000 new references are added each year. It provides 16,000 references to documents, including books, reports, journal articles and conference papers, training manuals, reference works, videos and slide series, and links to documents and Web pages on the Internet.

Information can be retrieved by subject, author, title, publisher, date and type of publication. IRC can provide copies of non-copyright documents.

#### **Virtual Library on Health and Environment**

Pan American Center for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS)

<http://www.cepis.ops-oms.org/indexeng.html>

The Virtual Library on Health and Environment, (Biblioteca Virtual de Salud Ambiental: BVSA), provides a structured set of information sources on the evaluation and control of environmental risk factors affecting public health.

Through the bibliographic search service, access is offered to the database compiling 128,500 references, with abstracts, from REPIDISCA Co-operating Centers and CEPIS library. Links to 6,500 full texts are provided. Information is input daily.

The documentation service should aim to acquire or obtain access to as many relevant bibliographical sources as possible.

#### **See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

4.3.2 Bibliographic sources

#### *Local information sources*

A local documentation service should pay special attention to identifying local sources of information, including:

- other departments of its own parent institution
- other document collections in the locality
- key local institutions and individuals
- local research and development activities and projects
- local training programmes and training material.

If there are a large number of local sources, it may be necessary to carry out a formal survey to obtain information about them. The information collected in such a survey could be published as a guide to local information sources which would help to promote the dissemination and use of information in the locality. Appendix A provides guidance on how to carry out an information survey.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

4.3.3 Local information sources

*Finding information on the Internet*

A vast amount of information on every conceivable subject is available through the Internet. To be able to find information which is relevant and reliable, the staff of the documentation service need to learn:

- how to use different kinds of search tools and techniques
- how to evaluate the information they find

These skills are needed for

- finding out about information resources
- finding and evaluating specific sources of information on the Internet
- providing information services to users of the documentation service

The ItrainOnline web site includes a section on finding information on the Internet with annotated links to a variety of sources to help develop such skills (Box 6C).

**Box 6C: ItrainOnline: finding information on the Internet**

Tools and resources to help you become familiar with the search tools and resources available, understand search strategies and language, and evaluate the quality of information you find online.

- Introduction
- Search engine basics
- NGO and subject-specific gateways
- Evaluating online materials
- General

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/searching.shtml>

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

4.3.4 The Internet

6.7 The World Wide Web

6.7.1 How to find information on the Web

*Getting advice on information sources*

The staff of the documentation service should also seek advice and suggestions as to suitable information sources from:

- members of the advisory committee
- other librarians and documentalists
- users and subject specialists

Users of the service and other subject specialists can be a useful source of information about documents which should be added to collections. They are often themselves involved in creating, producing and distributing documents, and often know of other important sources of relevant information, particularly local information.

### Identifying suitable information resources

The identification of suitable information resources should be carried out systematically to ensure that document collections and external sources give the best possible service to users. Suitable resources may be identified by:

- examining the documents themselves
- consulting descriptions of them contained in bibliographical sources
- recommendations from users and subject specialists

To find out whether documents identified as potentially suitable for acquisition are already in stock, being prepared for the collection or on order, the service will need:

- an accurate, comprehensive and accessible catalogue, database or other record of its existing collections
- a similar record of documents which have already been ordered or have already been received and are being processed

### *Examining the documents*

The best way of finding out whether or not a document is suitable is to examine a copy. It may be possible to do this:

- in a bookshop or on the premises of the publisher
- in another library or documentation service in the water and sanitation sector
- in the documentation service itself, through an approval scheme
- online, through the Internet

Staff and members of the advisory committee should visit bookshops, publishers and other libraries and documentation services to get to know what is available. Under an approval scheme, a bookseller or publisher sends copies of documents to the documentation service to allow staff and users to examine them before deciding whether to buy or subscribe to them. Approval schemes are usually confined to commercial publications, and are likely to be of limited usefulness in a small local documentation service with a limited acquisitions budget

Many documents may be consulted on the Internet, downloaded for storage on the service's computer or printed and delivered to the user.

### *Consulting bibliographical sources*

Bibliographical sources listing documents, authors and publishers, are useful for identifying documents and for answering enquiries from users and compiling reading lists on request.

Computerised bibliographical databases may be accessible online, via the Internet, or be available on computer disk or CD-ROM. Training is needed to use these resources. Access to computerised databases may sometimes be available through the national documentation service or other institution, or from commercial organisations.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

- 6.4 CD-ROMs
- 6.7.3 Internet databases

The service should also try to develop a good collection of current periodicals and newsletters, which often include reviews or notices of new publications which may be suitable for acquisition. Users may also be asked to allow the staff of the documentation service to study the review columns of their personal periodicals.

*Recommendations by users and specialists*

Users and subject specialists are important sources of information on new documents which might be suitable for addition to the collections. Their suggestions and recommendations should be noted and acted upon, where appropriate.

*Grey literature*

Many of the documents in a local documentation service's collections are likely to fall into the category of 'grey literature' - technical reports and similar materials which are not commercially published, but are issued by government departments, academic institutions, non-governmental organisations, aid agencies, international organisations and similar bodies. Grey literature is often produced in small numbers for limited circulation and not generally included in regular lists of new publications.

It is difficult to find out what documents exist, yet they often contain important relevant information. This is often particularly true of documents produced in the locality or at local level elsewhere.

The best way to identify relevant grey literature is to ensure that major organisations in the sector inform the documentation service when they issue new documents of this kind or send a sample copy.

One way to identify local grey literature is to arrange for an appropriate senior official -- for example, the District Water Engineer -- to issue a memorandum requiring or requesting every local organisation concerned with water supply and sanitation to supply the documentation service with monthly lists of documents in specific categories (for example, annual reports or technical reports). Organisations may supply copies by adding the documentation service to their regular distribution lists.

Staff of the documentation service should check at regular intervals to ensure that the procedure is working properly, and report any problems to the official responsible for issuing the directive or request.

Donor agencies, consultants and contractors involved in local water supply and sanitation projects can be asked or required, through appropriate clauses in their contracts, to supply copies of suitable documents to the documentation service.

Members of the advisory committee can also help to identify and evaluate documents.

### Selecting information resources

Many information resources may be identified as being of potential interest to users of the documentation service, but lack of time, money or storage space may make it impossible for them all to be acquired. The staff will therefore need to select those resources which are most relevant to the needs of the users of the service. The staff should therefore have a good knowledge of

- the needs of the actual and potential users of the service
- the subject fields in which the users are interested
- the available literature in these subject fields

It is important to maintain the document collection

- up-to-date
- in good physical condition
- relevant to the changing needs of users

Documents which do not meet these criteria should be discarded.

Even in a very small documentation service, the staff cannot be expected to know everything about users' needs and the available literature. It is therefore advisable to involve the advisory committee and other users in the process of selecting documents. The advice of the committee may be particularly helpful when the acquisition or discarding of expensive documents is being considered. Its decisions in such cases should be recorded as a means of providing support for the person in charge if the action is ever questioned in the future.

The most important criterion in selecting documents is the extent to which they meet the needs of users. Other criteria are the amount of storage space and kinds of storage equipment available, the price of the document, and the importance of maintaining a balance between the interests of individual users and the general objectives of the service, and among the various topics covered by the service.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

4.4 Selecting materials

4.4.1 How to select materials

## Acquiring information resources

Documents are normally acquired by one of five methods:

- purchase
- gift
- exchange
- document delivery services
- downloading from the Internet

Documents received by the service may be divided into:

- those selected in advance and ordered or requested from suitable suppliers
- those received as gifts or in exchange without being requested

Both categories may include:

- monographs
  - individual items which are complete in themselves, such as books or reports (in one or more volumes)
- serials
  - items which appear in parts at regular intervals, such as current periodicals or newspapers
- monographic series
  - monographs which are complete in themselves but which appear at usually irregular intervals as parts of a larger series, such as hydrological or hydrogeological studies of different areas of a country

Even a small documentation service should establish a proper acquisitions system which will accommodate all these possibilities. The system should include proper accounting controls.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

- 4.5 Obtaining materials
- 4.5.1 How to obtain materials
- 4.5.2 Procedure for obtaining materials
- 4.5.3 How to place an order

### *Purchases*

The system for acquiring documents by purchase should fit in with the financial and accounting regulations of the parent institution. The management and staff of the documentation service should co-operate with the accounting and audit authorities to devise a suitable system for local conditions. It should allow for the fact that purchasing documents is not the same as purchasing supplies such as stationery or vehicle spares, which may be bulk ordered. Documents are often ordered in single copies from publishers in many countries.

### *Gifts*

Many of the documents needed by a local documentation service will be supplied free of charge, either on request or as unsolicited gifts from donor agencies, international organisations, NGOs, charities and private individuals. Gifts should be assessed in terms of their suitability for the collections in the same way as purchased items. It is important not to accept unsuitable materials simply in order to fill up the shelves. Unsuitable items should be rejected.

### *Exchanges*

Exchanges of publications may sometimes be arranged with institutions which produce useful material but are unwilling to give it away. This method of acquisition is particularly useful for periodicals and for publications issued in series. Exchanges are only feasible if the documentation service or its parent institution itself produces material which other institutions are interested in receiving. Materials acquired by exchange should be assessed in the same way as purchases and gifts.

### *Document delivery services*

Libraries and documentation services and some computerised information services may have document delivery services, including those for copies of documents which are no longer available in the original. These may include items of local interest, such as reports on local water and sanitation projects.

Document delivery services may provide

- original documents on interlibrary loan, which are not acquired permanently but must be returned to the lending institution after use
- photocopies or microform copies which may be retained by the service
- electronic copies on disk or CD-ROM, or via e-mail or on the Internet

Document delivery services may provide documents either free or for a fee.

There are many international programmes designed to provide access to scientific journals, including water journals, and other documents, either free of charge or at very low cost, to institutions in developing countries (see Box 6D).

### *Downloading from the Internet*

In addition to obtaining documents through the Internet from formal document delivery services, the full texts of many other documents are available on the Internet and may be downloaded free of charge on to local computers. Annotated links to some sources of information on downloading are provided in the Internet and e-mail basics section of the ItrainOnline basic skills web site (Box 5G).

#### **Box 6D: Free and low cost information online**

##### **Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI)**

<http://www.inasp.info/peri/intro.html>

PERI is a programme of the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) designed to support capacity building in the research sector in developing and transitional countries by strengthening the production, access and dissemination of information and knowledge.

##### Aims and objectives

- to provide researchers with access to international scholarly literature based on electronic delivery - unlimited access to journals, databases and articles across the widest range of disciplines
- to develop a network of libraries, national and international, to interface with researchers in developing and transitional countries to maximise access to and use of international scholarly literature

PERI already includes:

- over 7500 full text online journals
- many of the world's leading citation, bibliographic and reference databases
- document delivery from over 20,000 research journals
- CD-ROM (or DVD) format can be provided where they are available.

*Further information:* Sarah Durrant [sdurrant@inasp.info](mailto:sdurrant@inasp.info). International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications, PO Box 516, Oxford OX1 1WG, UK. Tel: +44 1865 249909. Fax: +44 1865 251060. E-mail: [inasp@inasp.info](mailto:inasp@inasp.info). Web: [www.inasp.info](http://www.inasp.info).

##### **Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI)**

<http://www.healthinternetwork.net/>

Led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), HINARI is an initiative to provide free or nearly free access to the major journals in biomedical and related social sciences, to public institutions in developing countries. It provides access to some 2000 journals.

*Further information:* World Health Organisation (WHO) Avenue Appia 20, 211 Geneva 27, Switzerland. Telephone: (+ 41 22) 791 21 11. Facsimile (fax): (+ 41 22) 791 3111. Telex: 415 416. Telegraph: UNISANTE GENEVA.

##### **Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA)**

<http://www.aginternetwork.org/>

AGORA is a new programme of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) which provides access to more than 400 key journals in food, nutrition, agriculture and related biological, environmental and social sciences, including a small number of water journals.

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FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy. Telephone: (+39) 06 57051.

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## Elements of an acquisitions system

An acquisition system, whether manual or computerised, should include the following items of information:

- details of the document required
  - e.g. type of document (book, video, periodical, etc.); author, title, number of volumes, edition, publisher, price
- details of who requested the document or recommended that it be acquired
- the number of copies required
- the name and address of the supplier
  - e.g. a bookseller, document delivery service, other library
- date ordered or requested
- accounting information, if appropriate
  - e.g. budget code, date of payment, etc.
- progress-chasing information
  - e.g. dates of any reminders sent to supplier in cases of late delivery, etc.
- date of receipt of the item
- In the case of periodicals, a separate system is normally used for recording the receipt of subsequent issues, as described below.
- location information
  - The call number (see 7.3 for an explanation) or other indicator of where the item is to be located in the service; this information should be added to the acquisitions record after the document has been processed.

The detailed design will depend in part on local accounting and inventory regulations. Not all the elements listed above will need to be recorded for items acquired as gifts or on exchange. The system for purchasing documents must provide for:

- changes in the situation between the time when an order for a document is placed and the time when it is fulfilled
  - The document may be out of print or reprinting; the price may have been increased; not all the copies ordered may be supplied at the same time; some copies may be damaged or defective, etc.
- the need for payment to be made in advance in some cases, especially for current periodical subscriptions.

In some cases, donor agencies may ask the documentation service itself to select materials which the agencies will then acquire on its behalf. It is useful to maintain a list of wanted items (a desiderata list) for use on such occasions. Published lists of recommended publications may also be useful.

The various elements listed above should be recorded either in a ledger or on individual forms. If the service is acquiring many documents, individual forms will be more convenient, as they can be filed in sequence to provide an up-to-date record of items on order or recently received, but not yet included in the catalogue.

The acquisitions records and the catalogue of the collections should be checked before items are ordered or requested to make sure that they are not already in stock or on order. In some cases, even if a document is already in stock or on order, it may be decided to acquire additional copies.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

- 4.6 Receiving materials
- 4.6.1 How to receive materials
- 4.6.2 How to record books
- 4.6.3 How to record periodicals
- 4.8 Sample letters
- 4.8.1 Letter requesting free materials
- 4.8.2 Letter requesting exchange copy of periodical
- 4.8.3 Letter requesting sample copy of periodical
- 4.8.4 Order form for materials

*Acquiring current periodicals*

The receipt of the first issue of a current periodical may be recorded under the general acquisitions system for accounting purposes. The receipt of this and subsequent issues should also be recorded in a separate system designed to control the receipt of current issues, identify missing or delayed issues, and send any necessary reminders to the suppliers.

Withdrawing documents

The withdrawal of unsuitable documents from the collection is a function of equal importance with the acquisition of new ones, and the same care and attention should be applied to it. The effectiveness of a documentation service (and thus the amount of support it is likely to receive both from users and from the authorities) does not depend on how many documents it has in its collections, but in its relevance to users' needs, and how quickly it can supplying users with documents when they need them.

Unsuitable, irrelevant, out-of-date, worn-out, dirty or seriously damaged documents occupy valuable storage space and hinder the effective use of the collection and reduce the capacity of the service to meet its objectives. A small, highly relevant, well-cared for collection will always be better used than a larger, irrelevant and neglected one.

Documents which are to be withdrawn from the collections (including those which have been set aside for disposal at the time of sorting the initial collection), should be treated as follows:

- documents which are outside the scope of the collection or inappropriate to the needs of users
  - offer to other suitable libraries (e.g. local school libraries, the national documentation service, etc.) or offer for sale
- documents which are damaged beyond repair or out-of-date

- discard or sell as waste paper
- documents which are damaged or worn-out but still useful
  - replace through the normal acquisitions process, if still available

When documents are withdrawn from the collections, any catalogue entries relating to them should be deleted or amended accordingly, and the accessions register marked to indicate that the items have been withdrawn. Local accounting and audit regulations may also require compliance with other procedures.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

4.7 Updating the collection

4.7.1 How to review the collection