Proposal for a Retrospective Reference Collection for Main Stacks

Proposal: The Stacks Reconfiguration Taskforce Report recommends designating part of the Main Stacks (front of current Deck 5) as a building-use only Retrospective Reference collection. The purpose of this collection is to house reference works that have research/referral value, but are distinct from an up-to-date working collection. One of the main characteristics of reference books is that they are frequently updated. While we strive to maintain currency in the Main Reference collection and in departmental libraries, as a research library we find that we still need to consult these ‘dated’ works. A good example is older editions of *American Men and Women of Science*, which include unique biographical sketches. The nature of these titles argues against sending them to off-site shelving. Moving them together in the Main Stacks, however, frees valuable space in the Reference Room and in departmental libraries, while increasing convenience for users and reference staff by locating them in a central, easily accessible location.

Definition of a reference work: The classic definition of a reference book is a work that is consulted to find a specific item of information (an address, definition, bibliographic citation, etc). Reference works typically include dictionaries; encyclopedias; directories; almanacs, handbooks, and yearbooks; collected biographies; and indexes. They may be single volume (e.g., dictionary); multi-volume set (encyclopedias), or contin (periodical index).

Criteria: Though it may be difficult to articulate hard and fast criteria for this collection, the overarching consideration is that the items still retain research value and would be consulted frequently enough to warrant remaining in the Main Library. The following guidelines for what constitutes a ‘retrospective reference’ include:

1. Classic encyclopedia sets (note: the Reference Room alone has over 20 sets of national encyclopedias in native languages, as well as classic subject-specific encyclopedias, which are occupy prime real estate but are rarely consulted).
2. Retrospective bibliography (e.g., National Union Catalog; G.K. Hall catalogs; British Library Catalog; Bibliothèque Nationale, and other national bibliographies) and book trade information (e.g., *Cumulative Book Index*)
3. Reference titles which retain unique information (quotation books, previous editions of collective biography)
4. Superceded directories that have research value (e.g., *Europa Yearbook, World of Learning, American Library Directory*).
5. Yearbook sets (*Facts on File, Keesings, Gallup index*)
6. Print counterparts of titles not totally duplicated online (e.g., *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is online in text only, while the print copy has photos, reproductions of manuscripts, etc.).
7. University of Illinois resources (e.g, Yearbooks, salary books, course catalogs, etc).
8. Infrequently consulted indexes that are not available online (e.g., early years of citation indexes) or have superior browsing value in print format.
9. Periodical indexes duplicated online that offer alternate (and occasionally superior) searching capability (e.g., New York Times Index)
10. The collection can include resources in all languages.

Reference works that would NOT be included:
1. Most superceded editions of general and subject encyclopedias (e.g., Encyclopedia of the Middle East, 1st ed).
2. Directories that don’t have substantial research value (e.g., Directory of Scholarships and Financial Aid)
3. Chronologies, lists (e.g., prizes), etc., that are available in more recent editions
4. Government documents
5. Duplicate copies (i.e., not having two copies in retro ref, or a copy in a dept lib and retro ref)

Procedure: Following the guidelines described above, all libraries are urged to identify titles for this collection, both from their libraries and from their subject areas within the Stacks. In order to anticipate how much room is necessary, libraries should give an estimate of the number of linear feet they anticipate moving into this collection, both from the stacks and from their departmental collections. More specific procedures and timeframe will be provided before the transfers begin.

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