REFERENCE COLLECTION: SELECTION POLICY

7.4.1 Reference Collection Development Policy

I. Purpose of the reference collection development policy statement

The Reference Collection Development Policy Statement and its selection criteria are intended to aid in communication with the students, faculty, and staff of the Minnesota State University Moorhead community. This document is intended to be a planning and working tool to insure consistent and balanced growth of the Livingston Lord Library's Reference Collection.

II. Description of the collection and clientele served

The Reference Collection of the Livingston Lord Library supports the instruction, study, and research goals of the curriculum offered by the University. The collection serves the reference needs of a broad spectrum of users including the University community and the community at large. It brings together a variety of reference materials that are most often needed by both librarians and library users. In general, reference materials are selected to support the curriculum of the university. However, since library users represent a wide variety of information needs, resources not specifically related to the curriculum are provided.

The legal reference collection, acquired with the participation of, and partial funding from, the Clay County Law Library serves the university community, area lawyers and the public at large. (See separate collection development policy for the legal reference collection.)

As a general rule, items in the Reference Collection do not circulate but can at the discretion of librarians.

III. Goals of the reference collection development policy

The Reference Collection Development Policy is designed to:

a. Provide the guidelines needed to build and maintain a Reference Collection of consistent quality and usefulness.
b. Clarify responsibility for developing and maintaining the Reference Collection.
c. Set parameters for the scope of the Reference Collection.
d. Provide rationales for selection and retention decisions.
IV. **Organizational responsibility**

All librarians are expected to contribute suggestions for new reference materials, primarily through *Choice Reviews Online*. The Collection Management Librarian has primary responsibility for selection of reference materials and for rationalizing the process of selection.

V. **General reference collection guidelines**

a. *Chronological*: In general, the most current materials available in a subject area are selected for the collection. Retrospective materials may be selected and/or retained as needed to serve the community of users. The aim, however, is to acquire and retain works that are currently the most authoritative in their fields. Superseded or out-of-date editions may be transferred to the general collection, to storage, or withdrawn.

b. *Digital*: Many reference sources are preferable in an online format. There may be cases where multiple modes of access to a resource are desirable.

c. *Linguistic*: To a great extent the collection is in English and Western European languages, but there are no language restrictions and the emphasis is on appropriate material in any language that supports the subjects and languages taught at the University and meets users’ needs.

d. *Treatment of subject*: Scholarly and authoritatively informational works, appropriate for use at undergraduate and graduate research levels, are selected.

VI. **Types of materials in the Reference Collection**

a. *Abbreviations and acronyms* – Current lists of abbreviations, acronyms, and journal abbreviations may be kept in the Reference Collection.

b. *Almanacs, annuals, and yearbooks* – The latest editions of almanacs from the United States and selected other countries may be included in the Reference Collection. The presence of these materials reflects and supports the teaching and research needs of the University.

c. *Biographical materials* – Biographical materials which may be present include indexes to biographies, retrospective dictionaries, encyclopedias, and a limited selection of *Who’s Who*-type materials.
d. *Career materials* – The Reference Collection may house a modest collection of general employment-related materials such as career encyclopedias and resume writing tools.

e. *Dictionaries and thesauri, language* – The objective is to acquire the most recent general-use dictionaries. Juvenile and pocket dictionaries are generally excluded.

f. *English language dictionaries* – General, etymological, and specialized dictionaries of dialects, slang, synonyms, acronyms, abbreviations, and subject-related dictionaries are collected.

g. *Foreign language dictionaries* – Foreign language dictionaries are not collected.

h. *Dictionaries, specialized* – General and subject-specific dictionaries are collected if they reflect the programs of the University.

i. *Encyclopedias* – Encyclopedias, including both general and broad subject area encyclopedias, are collected, with the preferred format being digital.

j. *Geographical sources and atlases* – A limited number of basic materials including gazetteers are acquired. Atlases collected include historical atlases, road atlases, and plat books for Clay County, and counties immediately adjacent to Clay. General travel guides are not collected in reference.

k. *Indexes and abstracts* – The preferred format for indexes and abstracts, if any are required by the curriculum, is electronic.

l. *Legal materials* – Collection development in this area is done in cooperation with the Clay County Law Library, and with the advice of the University’s paralegal department and the collaboration of the Government Documents Librarian. (See separate collection development policy for the legal reference collection.)

m. *Medical materials* – Current general medical reference works such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and medical information finding aids may be held in the Reference Collection.

n. *Standing orders* – The Reference Collection may contain a number of sets received as standing orders. Reviews of these standing orders are conducted periodically by the library faculty.
o. **Statistical information** – The Reference Collection includes selected current sources of national, international, state, and broad specialized subject area statistics, and major sources of historical statistics. The preferred format for these items is digital.

p. **Style manuals** – The Reference Collection includes at least two copies of each of the major style manuals. One copy will be located in the reference collection with a second copy in the ready reference shelf at the reference desk.

VII. **Criteria for selection, updating, and weeding**

Given the nature of reference materials, it is vital that the Reference Collection be constantly maintained and updated. This maintenance involves both identifying new resources and the removal of those that are no longer appropriate for providing reference service. As new information becomes available, it often replaces, supersedes, or contradicts information that existed previously.

The Collection Management Librarian is responsible for updating the Reference Collection with current reference works and removing outdated materials. Unique or new reference titles costing over $800 will be reviewed by the library faculty for a decision on purchase. The librarians should take it upon themselves to ensure that, based on their knowledge in various areas, the Reference Collection is up to date.

The Collection Management Librarian will collaborate on a comprehensive weeding of the Reference Collection at least every five years. Materials selected for withdrawal during these comprehensive weeding projects will be made available to be reviewed by all of the librarians before materials are removed from the reference collection.

VIII. **General Guidelines** - When choosing new materials, or examining material for retention in the collection, the following questions may help to determine if a source is suitable for the Reference Collection. Not all questions need to be answered for every reference source.

a. **Authority**

   i. Provides authoritative coverage of its subject.
   ii. Identified by others as authoritative, i.e., won awards, been included in “books of the year” lists, positive reviews, etc.
   iii. Listed in standard library collection development resources
b. Complementary and unique resources

   i. Provides a viewpoint that complements other materials already in the collection.
   ii. Provides a unique perspective on its subject.
   iii. Unique aspect of the resource, which makes inclusion in the Reference Collection desirable.

c. Cost

   i. Cost of the resource is appropriate for its content.
   ii. Resource is a good value.

d. Currency of information

   i. Provides current information or perspectives about a topic.
   ii. Most current source for the information.
   iii. Updates material already owned (e.g., new edition).

e. Format – The preferred format of reference items is digital.

f. Language – Written in a language that addresses either (a) curriculum needs (the language is taught at MSUM) or (b) University community needs (the language is widely used at MSUM).

g. Relevance to the curriculum and clientele

   i. Provides information that supports programmatic needs or research initiatives of the University.
   ii. Provides information that supports the library user needs that are outside the scope of the curriculum.

IX. Retention

   a. Items withdrawn from the Reference Collection may be retained in either the general collection or a storage collection.
   b. The most recent edition of a reference work will be located in the Reference Collection with previous editions housed in the storage collection.
   c. Multiple editions of works or serials may be retained in the Reference Collection if use or convenience warrants.
d. Selection of a product in a digital format should not automatically result in weeding of a duplicate paper product.

X. **Retrospective coverage** – Contains material with historical value (in terms of content) that makes inclusion in the Reference Collection desirable.

XI. **Storage** – The Collection Development Librarian and library faculty will review reference materials housed in storage at least every five years.