

Alabama Academic Library Collections: What We Learned from the Survey

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About the survey:

- Project of the Projects Committee of College, University, and Special Libraries Division of the Alabama Library Association
- Aim was to collect information about the collection development policies of academic libraries in Alabama, in the hopes of fostering future collaboration between libraries to benefit all users in Alabama

About the survey:

- Received IRB approval from those of our institutions that required it
- Survey delivered online using the Class Climate survey software hosted by the University of South Alabama

About the survey:

- Survey ran from March through July of 2016
- Advertised survey over three Alabama library listservs (AACRL, ALLA, and CUS)
- Sent one follow up email to institutions that didn't respond
- Received 32 responses, which included several partial responses

Sections 1 and 2: Survey Information and Institution Information:

1. Survey Information

Participation is voluntary. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. No personally identifying information will appear in the final report. If you have any questions, please contact Jaroslaw Szurek, chair of the CUS Projects Committee, at jszurek@samford.edu or (205) 726-4136.

2. Institution Information

2.1 Name of your institution:

2.2 Please check all categories that describe your institution:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2-year college | <input type="checkbox"/> 4-year college offering only undergraduate degrees | <input type="checkbox"/> 4-year college offering undergraduate and master's degrees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4-year college offering undergraduate and graduate degrees, including doctoral degrees | <input type="checkbox"/> public institution | <input type="checkbox"/> private institution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> for-profit | <input type="checkbox"/> not-for-profit | <input type="checkbox"/> other (please explain in section 1.3) |

2.3 If you checked "other" in section 2.2, please explain your answer here.

2.4 What is the FTE at your institution?

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 2499 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2500 - 4999 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5000 - 9999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10000 or more | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know | |

Sections 3 and 4: Collection Information

3. Collection Strengths

3.1 What are strengths and unique aspects of your collection when compared to other library collections in Alabama?

4. Collection Development Policy

4.1 When did you last update your collection development policy? How often is it updated?

4.2 Is your collection development policy outlined in one document or multiple documents (e.g. one for each department or major)?

4.3 What is the format/location of your policy (e.g. online, printed in a binder, etc.)?

Section 4: Collection Policies

4.4 What is the audience of your policy (e.g. internal only, external intended for the broader institutional community, both in one version, or both in different versions)?

4.5 Please briefly explain your collection development policies, as they relate to:
- your selection decisions (e.g. faculty input/requests, excluded types of materials for donations and new purchases)
- your retention and deselection decisions (e.g. criteria you use to make your withdrawal decisions)

4.6 When choosing to deselect a title, do you take into account other Alabama academic library holdings? Yes No

4.7 If you answered yes to question 4.6, what libraries do you typically check?

4.8 When choosing to deselect a title, do you take into account the availability of a title via ILL for your patrons? Yes No

Survey demographics

- Four-year colleges: **19** (16 offering both undergraduate and graduate degrees, including 10 with doctoral degrees; 3 with undergraduate degrees only); two-year colleges: **7**
- Public: **18** and private: **12** (including 1 for-profit)
- Enrollment: less than 2,500 students (**17**); 2,500-4,999 (**5**); 5,000-9,999 (**4**); more than 10,000 (**3**)

Collection strengths

- Age (historical collections): **4**; support for mission and curriculum: **3**; faculty publications: **1**
- Subject areas: Religion, theology, and church history (**10**); archival materials (**8**); Alabama history and literature (**6**); history (**5**); literature and literary criticism (**5**); health sciences (**4**); law, education, and social sciences (**3**); African-American resources and government documents (**2**)

Collection development policy documents

Format:

- Single document (**23**) vs. multiple documents (**3**)
- Online (**10**); Printed (**14**); Both (**5**)
- Internal (**12**); public (**16**)

Update frequency:

- Last updated: in the past 2 years (**13**); 3-5 years ago (**9**); earlier (**7**)
- Updated regularly: **10** (every 4-5 years: **6**; 2-3 years: **2**; annually: **2**)

Selection and deselection policies

- Faculty input (**21** out of **30**)
- No textbook purchases (**8**)
- Factors considered when making deselection decisions:
 - ✓ other AL libraries' holdings (**14** out of **30**), especially University of Alabama, Auburn University, and NAAL libraries
 - ✓ interlibrary loan availability (**19** out of **30**)

Summary of Trends

- Alabama has a wide variety of colleges; especially smaller institutions.
 - 76% below 5,000 students. 58% below 2,500 students.
- 18 public institutions participating, 12 private.
- Despite institutional variety, Alabama institutions demonstrate significant similarities.



- Emphasis on historical, theological, and Alabama subject collections.
- Several institutions identify the **age** and **curriculum support** of their collection as a strength.
- Special Collections and archives are also mentioned prominently.
- Over half of respondents offer public-facing collection development policies.
 - 27% avoid textbooks
 - 70% consider ILL options before weeding

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