These guidelines were prepared by members of the ACRL Guidelines for Media Resources in Academic Libraries Task Force. They have been revised and supersede the guidelines developed and published by the ACRL Media Resources Committee in 1999 and 2006.

**Foreword**

Technology used in teaching, learning, and research has created new challenges and opportunities for managers of college and university library media resource collections and services.

Moving images, sounds, and still images have become increasingly important in teaching, learning and research, and academic librarians are working closely with other agencies on campus to support faculty and student information needs. In some institutions, librarians have become true partners in the delivery of instruction, working with faculty, technologists, and instructional developers to create “new learning communities.”

Most academic libraries collect media, and these materials are as vital and diverse as any print collection in an academic library. An academic library media operation may encompass a variety of activities, such as scheduling and managing the delivery of audiovisual equipment to classrooms, operating distance education television studios, offering instructional development and the production of audiovisual materials, and supporting multimedia production. However, this document will address only the core issues related to collecting and maintaining media resources and their attendant services.

The earlier versions of the guidelines could not have anticipated the rapid growth and the prevalence of digital media today. The previous versions (1999, 2006) were written in language that has admirably withstood the test of time, and much of the introductory information and many of the assumptions of the present document draw heavily from the 1999 document. However, there are new areas and variations that need to be addressed. In recent years, rapid changes in scholarly communication have taken place. While electronic publications have increased in number, publications on paper and in other media formats have continued, making it a continuing necessity for librarians to store, provide, and interpret information in multiple formats.

Media resources can now be delivered via the Web, within online social networks, and through streaming media servers, digital satellite systems, and a host of rapidly developing technologies. In the past, media librarians were able to focus on a narrow array of formats. Today we must widen the scope of our collection development activities, considering digital formats and multimedia along with analog formats.

The media marketplace is complex and evolving rapidly. Media librarians should be advocates for viable new media technologies, expanding their knowledge base to include copyright concerns, licensing issues, and a wide array of digital delivery formats and...
options. While supporting existing formats, media librarians must assess rapidly evolving new formats and be ready to adopt them when they stabilize and when it has been determined that they meet content and programmatic needs within the institution. We must move more quickly than in the past to incorporate them into our collections. Libraries must plan for format adoption and service adaptions to meet new instructional and informational needs.

Networked information is a reality, and many new digital library initiatives are offering media resources. At the same time, we must be sensitive to the needs of our users and to the pace of institutional change. This change can only be done within a context of collaborative relationship involving media personnel, library administrators, computing service personnel, and the users of our media resource collections.

The goal of these “Guidelines for Media Resources in Academic Libraries” is to assist librarians and library administrators who are developing media collections and services. Although the guidelines are not a practitioner’s manual, we hope that they will be helpful to librarians and media personnel at all levels of the organization who want to improve media resource collections and services.

Assumptions

A set of assumptions first prefaced the guidelines in the 1999 edition. We agree that this is a good way to address the similarities between print and media collections. Rather than dwelling on the similarities between print and media collections, we have covered those points in the assumptions. In the guidelines themselves, we have focused on the differences. Furthermore, research and experience over the past 30 years have taught us that some practices are more effective than others in building useful collections and meeting our users’ needs for media-related services. The guidelines reflect this knowledge. The recommended guidelines represent best practices for an academic library media program. Collectively, they describe a model media resources program. In this document, media resources program refers to all aspects of media resource collections and services in the library.

Assumptions of a Model Media Resources Program

Assumption 1: All academic librarians...
ies will collect media resources. Some academic libraries exclude some or all media formats from their collections. However, ACRL standards for academic libraries specify that the library shall select and acquire materials in all formats. If only one media collection exists on a college or university campus, that collection and its attendant services should be part of the library. The library staff is uniquely qualified to provide the best access to that collection, both physical and bibliographic. The library is also the most qualified to build planned collections, responsive to both immediate and anticipated programmatic needs. If another administrative unit on campus also collects media, it is assumed that the library will coordinate its efforts with that unit.

Assumption 2: **All media resources will be cataloged in accordance with current national standards and practices, including full subject access and classification.** Some academic libraries exclude media resources from the online catalog or provide only minimal-level cataloging. Many academic libraries do not classify media resources. These practices could contribute to inadequate access to media collections, especially those in open stacks. Some media materials require more timely cataloging and, thus, should be eligible for rush cataloging and processing.

Assumption 3: **All academic libraries will provide adequate funding for media services and collections; “adequate funding” is determined by the library’s goals and objectives for media services and collections.** ACRL standards provide evaluative measures for the adequacy of the budget. These measures should be applied to funding for media collections and services.

Assumption 4: **The principles of collection management that apply to print and other library collections also apply to media resources.** Media collections require policies and procedures for purchase, leasing, renting, deselection, resource sharing, and licensing.

Assumption 5: **The principles of collection preservation that apply to print and other library collections also apply to media resources.** The library program for conservation and preservation should encompass both archival and access media collections.

Assumption 6: The principles of library service that apply to other library services also apply to media services. Reference and instruction programs should include locating and using appropriate media resources for instruction and research.

Assumption 7: Media formats, delivery, and access mechanisms will continue to evolve and shift at a pace that exceeds print resources. Such shifts necessitate evolving material and equipment budgets, and may be best served by developing partnerships with other information technology units within libraries and across campuses.

**Guidelines**

Given the stated assumptions, the specific guidelines for media resource collections and services will assist academic libraries in strengthening their media resources programs. The ACRL Guide to Policies and Procedures states:

“Guidelines consist of procedures that will prove useful in meeting the standards. In order for a document to be classified as a guideline it must:

1. be specific to programs, service, or staffing.
2. identify a framework for developing services policies and procedures.
3. define qualitative criteria; generally exclude quantitative criteria.
4. identify factors contributing to program effectiveness.
5. incorporate benchmarks by which a particular library and information service, resource, or material may be judged.”

**Objectives**

1.0 Librarians should develop a mission statement for the media resources program based upon the mission statement of the library.

Commentary: A clear, unambiguous statement of the role of the media resources program is essential for planning and evaluation
regardless of the organizational structure of the library. Whether or not there is a separate media department within the library, a mission statement is essential to an effective media program. This statement should account for emerging media resources like social media and Web-based resources, and the statement should be periodically revised to reflect changing resources.

Organization/administration

2.0 The responsibilities and functions of the media resources program should be clearly defined within the organizational structure of the library. The administration of the library should assign responsibility for the media resources program to a librarian.

Commentary: To develop an effective media resources program, a librarian should be responsible for planning collections and services, with sufficient additional staff to support the program. The librarian assigned these responsibilities should have adequate knowledge of the unique history of film and video and all the associated genres and forms. They should also be able to clearly articulate the unique and varied uses of film in teaching, learning, and research.

2.1 The person responsible for the media resources program should take a proactive role within the institution, beyond the library, working cooperatively and collaboratively with personnel in other media-related units on campus.

Commentary: Most colleges and universities have more than one unit delivering media services. The media resources librarian should actively promote the library’s collections and services among these personnel and plan cooperative ventures with them as appropriate. These relationships might also include computing center personnel, particularly those involved with multimedia.

Staff

3.0 The chief staff member responsible for the media resources program should have a graduate degree from an ALA-accredited program in library/information science or equivalent degree or experience.

Commentary: Chief staff should demonstrate experience and knowledge of technology and expertise in media content and use. A comprehensive understanding of copyright law, fair-use, the TEACH Act, and recent developments regarding copyright and circumvention technology (17 U.S.C. § 1201) is essential for providing library patrons with guidance in the use of media resources.

3.1 Staff responsible for the media resources program should belong to and participate in media-related professional associations and other professional development activities. The library should fund continuing education and conference attendance.

Commentary: Because of the issues inherent to collecting and delivering media resources, participation in professional organizations and professional development activities is essential. Participation in conferences affords important opportunities to share ideas with other media librarians and attend relevant meetings.

3.2 Staff for the media resources program should have specialized media training and technical expertise.

Commentary: The necessary support staff and their expertise will vary according to the program at each library. However, the skills and responsibilities of the staff should be defined clearly and be updated regularly. The total number of librarians and other staff will vary according to the program at each library.

Budget

4.0 The media resources mission statement should form the basis for the program budget and be part of the library planning process.

Commentary: The media resources mission statement and annual objectives form the basis for the program budget. Stable and
consistent funding for acquisitions based on an approved collection development policy is necessary for effective service.

4.1 An ample and stable budget for the acquisition of media resources should be based either on a percentage of the total library acquisitions budget or on a formula related to collection use as measured by circulation statistics.

Commentary: Basing the media resources materials budget on a percentage of the acquisitions budget assures that large academic libraries allocate a reasonable amount of funding to building media resources collections. Using circulation statistics to determine funding levels for the purchase of media resources assures that a high-use collection will be able to meet the demand for new titles, additional copies of popular titles, and replacement of worn materials. Materials budgets should also be large and flexible enough to support the exploration of new media formats along with physical formats. Material and equipment budgets for media support may need to fluctuate more frequently than standard print budgets given the ever-evolving availability of formats and access mechanisms.

4.2 Media equipment is essential to providing access to media resources. The library should establish an ample and stable budget for the maintenance and purchase of media equipment. The addition and replacement of equipment should be based upon a written plan.

Commentary: Libraries cannot provide access to media resources without sufficient and well-maintained equipment. The level of funding should be based upon the life expectancy for equipment and in-house use of the collection. A budget plan for media equipment should include the repair and replacement of worn equipment, the need to provide upgrades to existing equipment, and the purchase of additional equipment as user demand increases. The plan should also anticipate the adoption of new technologies and the need to expand support for new kinds of equipment. Equipment maintenance and replacement have a major impact on the longevity of collections.

User services

5.0 The media resources program should provide a variety of services that support and expand the media resources collection.

Commentary: It is expected that libraries will provide circulation and other typical collection services for media collections. Access to media resources may also require a distribution system, group viewing facilities, bookings/reserve capabilities, video streaming and computers or other electronic devices for listening and editing.

5.1 Media resources should be accessible through resource sharing in accordance with the ALA Video Round Table Guidelines for the Interlibrary Loan of Audiovisual Formats.

Commentary: Many libraries treat media resources as special collections and prohibit their interlibrary loan or consortial borrowing. However, library users benefit when media collections are included in resource-sharing programs. There should be sensible consideration for preservation of media resources. Optical disc formats such as CD and DVD, for instance, are susceptible to physical damage and may be cost prohibitive to replace based on higher education institutional pricing structures. Some collections are consistently needed in-house for curricular support, and many analog formats are out of print. Streaming media is by definition an unlikely candidate for interlibrary loan, and therefore licenses dealing with streaming media often preclude the ability to loan that content. Libraries must use reasonable discretion when deciding whether to participate in interlibrary lending and set policies that will promote a preserved, accessible, and well-balanced collection.
5.2 Specialized media-related reference services, supported by appropriate print and electronic reference sources, should be available to assist the students, faculty, and staff in meeting their instructional, informational, and research needs.

Commentary: Users may need assistance in identifying relevant media resources to use in instruction and research. Instructors may need assistance in developing instruction using media resources. Library staff often do not have the necessary training to provide these information services.

5.3 The necessary equipment to access media resources should be available and maintained to provide ready access to collections.

Commentary: Media collections cannot be used without the necessary playback equipment. While some media collections circulate outside the library, many do not or portions of the collection do not. Some users do not own or have other access to playback equipment. Therefore, every effort must be made to provide and maintain playback equipment to support all collected formats, or at least those formats still actively collected.

5.4 Authentication of users should be easy and seamless, with help available if there are problems.

Commentary: Many resources are available digitally, and license agreements make them available only to users from a certain institution. Remote authentication of these users should not be so difficult that it deters use of the items. Library staff should either know how to help or know where to refer users for help.

5.5 Library instruction programs should include the use of media resources for research, along with relevant copyright considerations for education.

Commentary: Locating and using media resources is a critical component of library instruction. Library instruction should include visual literacy and media literacy. If relevant to the instructional program, library instruction should include the effective use of social media literacy skills. Understanding of copyright laws pertaining to the proper use and citation of media resources should be an integral part of media literacy. Appropriate use of copyright circumvention software for acquiring and assembling media resources is an important distinction both in terms of institutional liability and responsible education of students, staff, and faculty.

5.6 The person in charge of media resources should offer assistance to educators who want to integrate the use of media resources into their courses, either as a part of classroom instruction or as supplemental study in the library.

Commentary: The person in charge of media resources should actively promote use of the collection in teaching by offering services to faculty in locating local media resources for a new or revised course, suggesting ways in which these materials might be used, locating resources available at other libraries or for purchase, and generally assisting in the use of these materials. Media personnel should be included on collaborative teams developing new courses, as many faculty are unfamiliar with the tools needed to locate and evaluate media resources.

Collections

6.0 The media resources program should make available an organized collection of materials in accessible formats, both in terms of availability and in terms of accessibility for patrons with visual and/or auditory impairments.

Commentary: Libraries should make available media content in formats accessible to the broadest possible spectrum of end users. Libraries should also pursue formats and licensing options that allow patrons to remotely access materials when possible. Access to online resources through library catalog records provides patrons with an easier search path for subscription-based services.
Libraries should negotiate licensing options, keeping in mind that a license contract supersedes fair use. Libraries should consider whether a video is captioned as a selection criteria when pursuing purchase.

6.1 The library should have a written collection development policy statement to serve as the basis for selection and acquisition of media resources.

Commentary: The library’s overall collection development policy may include media resources, but a specific policy is needed to establish priorities and guide selections. Selection decisions are different from format to format. These differences must be described in the collection development and selection policies.

6.2 The selection of media resources materials should be the shared responsibility of librarians specifically charged with building the media resources collection, the subject selectors, and those responsible for university archival collections.

Commentary: The selection of media resources is different from the selection of print materials. Media selection requires the use of specialized review sources and may include previewing of materials under consideration or purchasing on approval. Media selectors need special training and skills. However, subject selectors provide necessary content expertise when considering more specialized media resources. Close collaboration between subject and format specialists is key in developing appropriate selection criteria and budgets for media acquisitions.

6.3 Consortial acquisitions policies should be considered when selecting media items.

Commentary: Many institutions are now part of consortia that make recommendations concerning purchases of all items. These consortial policies should include media and ways to share media, including licensing and copyright issues, in the consortium. Media should not be treated differently than print items in regards to sharing.

6.4 Media should receive thoughtful attention regarding selection, acquisition, and access regardless of what format the content is in.

Commentary: With capabilities for streaming audio and video, the use of digital media increases due to bandwidth and technological infrastructure. Institutions should provide all the necessary equipment and connectivity to ensure access to multiple media formats. Personnel should also be trained to troubleshoot and use these formats.

6.5 The media resources reference collection should include a wide selection of standard works and specialized reference tools in all formats.

Commentary: Print tools are inadequate to address all informational and technical resource needs of media personnel. Adequate funding is necessary to provide access to these resources.

6.6 Locally produced media should be subject to the same collection guidelines as commercially produced resources.

Commentary: Locally produced media materials constitute the intellectual output of an academic institution or region and should be included in collection development guidelines.

Facilities

7.0 The media resources program should provide adequate space and security for housing collections and the technical infrastructure to allow for materials use.

Commentary: Due to their size and lack of theft-deterrent device options, media resources present challenges to security causing many libraries to house the collection in closed stacks, often resulting in less flexibility for growth. Therefore, space allocation planning is essential in ensuring room for future acquisitions. For materials use, libraries must provide playback systems for multiple formats.
and worldwide standards. Computer access to online collections should be available both on and off campus.

7.1 Media resources should be available in a variety of playback situations, including a mixture of individual, small group, and large group viewing facilities.

Commentary: While most other information sources are designed to be used by individual users, many media resources are designed to be used in groups. Others are designed to be used by individuals. Libraries must accommodate all types of users in a variety of settings.

Bibliographic access and cataloging

8.0 Bibliographic and holdings information about media resources should be made accessible through the same retrieval mechanisms available for other library materials.

Commentary: Library catalogs should represent the complete holdings of the library regardless of format. Media resources may be unique information sources—oral/visual histories, classroom observations, simulations, clinical diagnostic techniques. These materials could be overlooked without proper bibliographic access in library catalogs and/or other means of discovery as used for the rest of the library collections.

8.1 Media resources should be cataloged in accordance with current national standards and practices, including full subject access, description, system requirements, and classification to provide maximum information to the user of the library catalog.

Commentary: Following national standards for cataloging media resources will uphold the quality of library catalogs, enhance bibliographic retrieval, and provide necessary information to users about subject content and equipment requirements. Bibliographic access points should incorporate subjects, alternate titles, subtitles, translations of titles, series, and persons or bodies responsible for the performance or the primary content of the media resource. Full cataloging provides the user with optimum retrieval opportunities. Classification is less important for collections housed in closed stacks.

8.2 Media resources should be cataloged in a timely fashion, with a sufficient level of support for catalogers, equipment, and training to ensure that the materials will not be backlogged.

Commentary: Generally media resources have complex cataloging routines and lengthy bibliographic descriptions. They have physical characteristics that require unique processing. Therefore, media resources take more time to catalog and process than most print resources. Trained professional catalogers with media expertise require access to appropriate cataloging and indexing tools, playback equipment in all formats represented in the collection, and the Web. When purchasing streaming media packages, libraries should consider whether

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MARC records are reasonably affordable in a nationally recognized standard bibliographic format to enable adequate access without the need for specialized cataloging experts.

8.3 Summary statements in bibliographic records should supply users with important information about the content and purpose of media resources.

Commentary: Summary statements and/or contents notes should provide the user with descriptive information about the content of media resources and their intended use, if available. This assists the users in determining whether the resource is likely to meet their needs. When the content requires subject expertise, the summary should be written with the assistance of appropriate subject specialists.

Preservation

9.0 Obsolete or damaged materials should systematically be removed from the collection and replaced, if necessary.

Commentary: Worn materials represent a hazard to equipment, particularly audio and videotape, which can shed magnetic particles clogging playback mechanisms. Optical disc formats should be cleaned as necessary to assure proper function. A budgetary allocation, appropriate to collection use, is necessary to assure timely replacement of media resources. Libraries should make use of the provisions in Section 108 of copyright law to replace materials in a timely fashion.

9.1 Libraries should maintain equipment for playback and transfer of legacy formats, in order to preserve access to content that is jeopardized by changing technologies.

Commentary: As playback equipment becomes obsolete and unavailable, the library should have a plan for preserving content of legacy media. Libraries need access to equipment for the purpose of digitizing analog formats and reformatting obsolete digital media formats. All applicable copyright laws and licensing agreements should be considered when reformatting—see (17 U.S.C. § 108).

9.2 Media resource collections require specialized storage and handling.

Commentary: All media collections require storage in a facility that maintains a constant, normal room temperature with low humidity. The storage area should not be exposed to direct sunlight. For archival collections, a fire suppression system may be desirable to guarantee safe preservation.

9.3 Media collections and services should have a defined preservation plan.

Commentary: Media librarians should work with the Preservation Department, if available, to define a preservation plan. Information is widely available from National Film Preservation Board and other organizations.

Background on audiovisual/media resources guidelines

The 2012 “Guidelines for Media Resources in Academic Libraries” is the fifth set of guidelines for audiovisual materials or media resources adopted by ACRL. The Audio-Visual Committee of ACRL published the first “Guidelines for Audio-Visual Services in Academic Libraries” as a 24-page monograph in 1968 (reprinted in 1969). The purpose of the guidelines was “to supply basic assistance to those academic libraries that will assume all or a major portion of an audiovisual program” (p. iv). Since few academic libraries had audiovisual collections at that time, the authors emphasized the demonstrated effectiveness of using audiovisual materials in instruction and provided practical suggestions for developing and maintaining these collections. Early audiovisual collections in academic libraries typically included 16mm films, slides, reel-to-reel audio recordings, and phonograph records.

Nearly 20 years later, the authors of the 1987 “Guidelines for Audiovisual Services in Academic Libraries” noted the extraordinary technological changes that had occurred since the adoption of the 1968 guidelines. By 1987 it was no longer necessary to convince
librarians that audiovisual materials are valuable resources for instruction. The forward to the 1987 guidelines noted the potential of audiovisual materials to support research, as well as instruction. The authors of this revision had seen the advent of new formats, such as VHS videocassettes, audiocassettes, laserdiscs, and audio compact discs, which had brought audiovisual materials into a majority of academic libraries. The emerging issues in 1987 were related to adopting new formats and providing equipment and technical support for them. Although CD-ROMs were becoming popular in academic libraries, they were text-only at this time and not a concern to media librarians; multimedia CD-ROMs made their debut around 1990.

The years between 1987 and 1999 marked a revolution in media resource collections and services. During this time media librarians grappled with a major technological development, the introduction of multimedia CD-ROMs. Until the early 1990s, media resource collections, both analog (magnetic tape and phonograph records) and digital (optical discs), were played on a single-use machine. Multimedia CD-ROMs introduced interactive media to the mix. Users required an expensive computer, equipped with a CD-ROM drive, a sound card, and a video card to use most software. Just as media librarians were beginning to grapple with questions regarding where these materials fit into library collections, the Web changed everything. CD-ROM development began waning because users wanted everything delivered on the Web. Despite the tremendous technological barriers to multimedia delivery via the Web, commercial and academic forces worked to bring networked digital multimedia to classrooms and desktops through online, on-demand services.

Bibliography


Olson, Nancy B. Update to Cataloging Motion Pictures and Videorecordings. Lake Crystal, Minn.: Soldier Creek Press, 1996.


Notes

1. Archival collections contain unique or rare materials and should be preserved as long as possible. Access collections containing materials needed for immediate use and for magnetic media usually have a functional lifetime of approximately ten years.