

SPECIAL FEATURES/CONTRIBUTIONS SPÉCIALES

State-of-the-Art Review of Bibliographic Control of Higher Education in Canada

MARION T. WILBURN*, CHRISTOPHER K. KNAPPER**

ABSTRACT

During the last two decades the quantity and variety of materials providing information on higher education in Canada have increased greatly. Nevertheless, researchers, administrators, instructors and students find it difficult to identify and locate relevant items. The following article reports on a survey of Canadian agencies and institutions collecting higher education materials; identifies four problem areas – definitions, collection policies, accessibility, and collection co-ordination; and recommends further information exchange and the compilation of a more complete directory of collections in higher education.

RÉSUMÉ

Au cours des deux dernières décennies on a assisté à une augmentation considérable de la quantité et de la variété de l'information ayant trait à l'enseignement supérieur au Canada. Cependant, l'identification et la localisation de ces documents ne sont pas pour autant sans poser des problèmes aux chercheurs, administrateurs, enseignants, et étudiants. L'article suivant signale les résultats d'une enquête portant sur les organismes et établissements canadiens qui recueillent des documents relatifs à l'enseignement supérieur. Il identifie quatre catégories de problèmes – définitions, politiques de développement des fonds, accessibilité des documents, et coordination des collections – et recommande l'intensification des échanges d'information ainsi que la compilation d'un répertoire plus complet pour donner accès à ces collections.

The rapid expansion and increased maturity of higher education in Canada during the last two decades have brought about a substantial increase in the number and variety of written materials on all aspects of the field. These materials range from

* Wilburn Associates

** Teaching Resource Office, University of Waterloo

institutional reports and policy statements to journal articles and, on occasion, monographs. Researchers, administrators, instructors, and students seek out and rely on this literature to conduct analysis, inform decision-making, and further their understanding of higher education. However, many have noted the difficulty in identifying and locating relevant items when needed.

Against this background, a small group of faculty, librarians, and researchers with an interest in Canadian higher education literature met in January 1981 to identify the kinds of material presently being collected and to discuss different ways of accessing the material, gaps in current collecting practices, and possible future steps. Despite our interest in and collective knowledge of the area, we were all, to varying degrees, unaware of who was collecting what kinds of materials and whether interested persons could locate and gain access to the literature.

As a result, it was agreed to conduct a preliminary survey of organizations and/or institutions likely to be collecting higher education literature and to develop a comparative checklist of the types of materials each collected.

The following paper is based on the presentation and discussion of the results of the survey at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education (Halifax, June 1981).

Definitions

Canadian higher education materials are defined in many ways by many people. In order to be more inclusive than exclusive and allow for the fact that problems and issues facing higher education transcend discipline and national boundaries, it was felt that the general understanding conveyed through the survey questionnaire should serve as a definition. As such, Canadian higher education materials were defined to include:

1. material on or about higher education (particularly Canadian higher education),
2. produced by institutions, organizations, individuals, or governments,
3. through journals, newsletters, books, reports, audio-visual material, minutes, memoranda, policy statements, etc.,
4. including descriptions, analyses, theses, policy statements or research.

THE SURVEY

The questionnaire used in the survey grew out of an effort to describe three collections known to the authors. These three models and a set of guidelines were mailed to a sample group of forty-eight national, provincial, and local organizations (identified largely through the 1981 *CEA Handbook: le ki-es-ki*). Seventeen responses were returned in the short time available; when coupled with the original three models the total number of responses was twenty. It seems likely that those responding would have the most activities to report.

The survey was exploratory rather than comprehensive. Its principal purpose was to provide preliminary information as a basis for further discussion on the

nature and accessibility of higher education materials. The guidelines asked respondents to prepare a basic description of their collections using the following general categories:

- General Statement – on services and clientele
- Scope of Collection
- Size of Collection
- Access to Collection
- Services
- Publications – produced by the organization or its library
- Other

RESULTS BASED ON TWENTY RESPONSES

a. Organizations Collecting Materials

Respondents fell roughly into three groups:

- Those with collections where the *major* emphasis is higher education
- Those where higher education materials form a *minor* but *significant* portion of the collection
- Those which do *not* have collections but make use of other nearby sources

The first two categories were further subdivided according to the overall size of the collections:

- small – under 5,000 items;
- large – over 5,000 items. (See Table 1)

Most respondents indicated that their collections were established and maintained primarily for use by their organization or department within the organization. A few, for reasons of size or mandate, were primarily restricted to use by members:

- e.g.
- Canadian Association of University Business Officers
 - Bibliothèque Education, Psychologie, Communication
 - Council of Ontario Universities
 - Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

Others were receptive to a larger, more “public” audience.

- e.g.
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
 - Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
 - Centre de documentation, centre d’animation de développement et de recherche en éducation
 - Office of Teaching and Learning, Council of Ontario Universities
 - Alberta Advanced Education and Manpower
 - Information Centre, Ontario Ministry of Education and Ministry of Colleges and Universities

TABLE I: NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Categories	Small (under 5,000)	Large (over 5,000)
MAJOR COLLECTIONS	7	5
MINOR COLLECTIONS	2	3
NO COLLECTIONS	3	

b. Types of Materials Collected

Type may be identified by the content of the material (e.g., information on teaching) or by the general form of the material (e.g., institutional report). For purposes of the survey, information was requested on the forms of materials since they often reflect, in a general way, the content. It was found that the type of materials collected varied with the purpose of the parent organization. See Table II: Summary of Responses from Institutions with Major and Minor Collections in Higher Education.

1. *Monographs and Journals*

Coverage of standard resources such as monographs and scholarly journals is good. Guidance to the journal holdings of most large libraries is available through reference tools such as *Union List of Serials in Education and Sociology held by Canadian Libraries* (published by the National Library of Canada, current to 1974) or *New Serials Titles* (more current but principally American). However, access to information on the holdings of small, specialized collections is often available only by direct contact with the organization. Since these organizations frequently collect informal or irregular publications such as newsletters, in-house bulletins, and limited circulation monographs, much valuable information is therefore difficult to obtain.

2. *Briefs, Commissions, Government Documents*

The regular collection of briefs or commissions, government reports or documents, Statistics Canada materials and theses is also good but varied. Larger libraries with a broad focus (e.g., Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada) collect widely and in some cases quite comprehensively. Smaller libraries tend to select only those items pertinent to their particular needs. For example, the Centre de documentation, centre d'animation, de développement et de recherche en éducation (CADRE) has reports of *la Commission d'étude sur les universités* (1977-1979) for Quebec, while the Information Centre of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Ministry of Colleges and Universities has the universities' annual submissions to the Ontario Council on University Affairs (OCUA).

With the exception of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) library, we are not aware of any organization attempting to collect materials of this kind from across Canada.

3. *Institutional Reports, Annual Reports, Newsletters*

The collection of institutional reports (planning documents, collective bargaining agreements, financial information, curriculum guides), annual reports, press/news clippings, newsletters (student, faculty, and other), college and university calendars, unpublished articles (conference papers, working drafts, proposals) varies widely.

In general, the larger libraries collect broadly while the smaller libraries collect narrowly with the specific intent of gathering more ephemeral or fugitive materials, such as conference papers, internal reports, project proposals, news releases:

- e.g.
- the Office of Teaching and Learning, Council of Ontario Universities, collects all local and several non-local newsletters devoted to educational development issues;
 - the Information Centre of the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities collects multi-year plans of the colleges of Applied Arts and Technology;
 - the Canadian Association of University Business Officers maintains an Inventory of Skills – listing university administrators with skills in 87 areas of expertise.

While some overlap exists in the collections of the various respondents, it would be necessary to conduct a more detailed survey to determine the extent to which holdings of particular items (e.g., annual reports, calendars, newspapers) are complete, comprehensive, retrospective and/or historical. Gaps in collecting also exist, particularly in the area of internal institutional reports.

c. **Accessibility**

Accessibility to the collections is governed by three factors:

1. availability of printed information about the existence and nature of individual items (e.g., journals and monographs) or collections of material
2. organization of the collection (e.g., arrangements for author/title/subject access, existence of indexes, availability of online access)
3. availability and sophistication of services (e.g., in-depth reference, online literature searching, selective dissemination of information).

1. *Printed Resources*

Attempts are regularly made to provide printed access to particular information on Canadian higher education. Most notable are the following:

a) *Inventory of Research into Higher Education*

The *Inventory*, published annually by the AUCC, contains descriptions of about 350 research, innovative and experimental projects concerned with post-secondary education in Canada, which are in progress or have been completed during the year. They represent work carried out by researchers in universities, community colleges, educational organizations, and government departments and agencies. Since the *Inventory* relies on voluntary submissions it is not comprehensive and occasionally reflects hopes more than realities. Nevertheless, it is a principal resource for information.

b) *Select Bibliography in Higher Education*

The *Select Bibliography*, a quarterly publication of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), provides current access to monographs (books, documents, reports, background papers, etc.) relevant to Canadian higher education. Items are organized by broad subject (e.g., collective bargaining, management, libraries) and by geographical location, where appropriate. All items identified are available from the AUCC library.

c) *An Index to Canadian University Newspapers*

Another quarterly publication of AUCC, the *Index*, is intended as a supplement to the *Select Bibliography* and includes "a selection of items of interest from newspapers published by Canadian university information offices." Items are organized according to the same broad subjects as the *Select Bibliography*.

d) *A Bibliography of Higher Education in Canada/Bibliographie de l'enseignement supérieur au Canada*, by Robin Harris

The *Bibliography*, originally published in 1960 with supplements in 1965 and 1971, has been updated to the end of 1980. The bibliography of monographs, journal articles, government documents, pamphlets, theses and dissertations is broadly organized first by topic and then by year of publication and includes material from both universities and colleges. Of particular use to researchers is the list of sources from which items were drawn.

e) *Educational Indexes*

There are several educational indexes which offer access to educational research at all levels.

- The *Canadian Education Index* and *CANADEX* (Canadian Monographs in Education) provide access to articles, books, and reports on all aspects and all levels of Canadian education. Both are available in most large libraries. Unfortunately, neither is available online and neither includes abstracts.
- *ONTERIS* (Ontario Educational Resources Information System) is an automated data base offering full bibliographic records and abstracts with

three specific sections, one of which, EDUC, contains material relevant to higher education. Its principal focus is report literature on Ontario.

- Recently the Quebec education ministry announced the creation of a data bank of research and development in education in Quebec. The service, which will complement, but not duplicate the services of ERIC (U.S.) and ONTERIS (Ontario), will produce copies of the documents listed or will give locations. Although the principal emphasis will be primary and secondary school materials, a small portion will be drawn from higher education.
- Finally, *ERIC* (Educational Resources Information Center) offers the greatest access to research literature on higher education both in printed and online form. Unfortunately, it is primarily American; retrieving specifically Canadian material, while not impossible, is not always easy.

f) *Bibliographies/Acquisitions Lists/General Publications*

A variety of publications are available from individual organizations reflecting the focus of that organization.

e.g. CADRE, *Le collège québécois, introduction bibliographique* (1976, épuisée)

Office of Teaching and Learning, Council of Ontario Universities,
Current Contents: Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, *OCUFA Acronyms*

2. *Organization of Collections*

The organization of the collections in large libraries is generally the standard LC or Dewey with author/title/subject access via a card catalogue. This is frequently supplemented by the availability of automated data bases and special catalogues (union, historical, etc.)

Access to the smaller collections varies considerably. At one extreme is the joint automated data base developed by the Office of Teaching and Learning, Council of Ontario Universities and the Teaching Resource Office, University of Waterloo, accessible by author, title, publisher, and subject. At the other extreme is the simple organization by issuer of publication with no subject access used by OCUFA.

Collection policies are rarely stated, thus maintenance and development of collections frequently reflects the immediate needs rather than long-term goals of the supporting organization. In addition, both large and small libraries frequently rely on the goodwill and cooperation of others for building certain portions of the collection (e.g., institutional reports, newsletters). If items are not voluntarily submitted they may easily be lost to those seeking information.

3. *Services*

The services available reflect the general purpose, size and scope of the library.

Comprehensive facilities including in-depth reference and individualized bibliographies (see Table II) are generally available from those organizations which utilize professional staff for maintaining the collection. Limited informal assistance is offered upon request (and with advance warning) by most other groups.

PROBLEMS

Based on the results of the survey and on the experience of the individuals who met in early January the following problem areas are evident:

1. *Definitions*

The nature and scope of higher education in Canada is extremely diversified. There is a need for clearer identification of and agreement upon: the distinction between research and other forms of information, the major and minor areas of concern and the various types of materials which address these concerns.

2. *Collection Policies*

There are few written policies for the collection of materials on higher education. In particular, this applies to records management and archives policies within organizations producing most of the baseline information (e.g., institutional records, planning documents). Where policies exist they are frequently altered to reflect changing financial support for the library or collecting group. At the provincial level there is little coordination of existing policies and all too often a practice of passive receptivity rather than active solicitation exists for fugitive but highly valuable material such as memoranda or unpublished papers.

3. *Accessibility*

There are innumerable obstacles to overcome for individuals seeking information on Canadian higher education — not the least of which is lack of readily available, comprehensive, and current sources (automated or otherwise) on where the information exists. Once the information's existence is determined the individual may still face problems in obtaining items because of the varying methods and quality of retrieval systems used by the collecting organizations.

4. *Collection Coordination*

It was obvious from respondents that each felt a need to ascertain which other organizations were collecting higher education materials. The lack of coordination reflects in part the general lack of communication among organizations in a geographically widespread situation and, in part, the lack of an organizing focal point for the very loose-knit and largely haphazard network that is developing.

CONCLUSION

Given the problems identified above, the question arises: what, if anything, can or should be done.

We have made a start by identifying some of the organizations collecting Canadian higher education materials, their respective roles and resources, and the main problems of bibliographic control.

Ideally, a national organization might take on the goal of becoming a repository of Canadian materials (research and other) on higher education.

There are, however, two factors that militate against such a solution at this time:

1. the materials are so wide-ranging in content and form that it is unlikely even a national organization would wish to expend the effort necessary to collect, organize, and make available all such items;
2. it is also unlikely that the financial and other resources exist in a single organization for such an endeavour.

In fact, one such national organization, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, seems unwilling to make it a priority.

A more workable alternative seems to involve cooperation among collecting agencies wherein each accepts responsibility for comprehensive collection-building in one or two areas relevant to the organization's own needs as well as the overall needs of the network. Such a system, however, would have to consider the problems of financial support available and resolve the arguments over standardization of collection organization and access wherein some libraries stress professional standards (LC, Dewey, etc.) and others stress pragmatism and convenience.

Until such a time as a more formal cooperative network develops, we would encourage the further growth of informal exchange of information, already begun in this review, by means of a project to create and circulate a complete *directory of organizations collecting higher education materials*.

There is clearly a need for greater cooperation and coordination among these groups at a national as well as local level. It is hoped that members of the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education will accept the challenge of establishing quality control of bibliographic materials on Canadian higher education.

FOOTNOTES

1. The above paper is based on a presentation given at the Society for the Study of Higher Education Conference, June 1981, at Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S.
2. For details of the survey, please contact: Teaching Resource Office, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G1, Tel. (519) 885-1211, ext. 3132.