

COLLECTION PLAN FOR BIOGRAPHY (SCATS 7 & 93)

I. COLLECTION DESCRIPTION.

A. Coverage.

Webster best describes what is in this collection: “an account of a person’s life, written, composed, or produced by another.” Biography can also be thought of as a branch of history—that is, a history of a particular life. Included in this collection is autobiography, which is literally a person’s recording of his or her own life. Autobiography can take several forms: memoirs, diaries, and letters.

Also included in this collection are the 920s, with sections of collected biography, genealogy, names, insignia, and heraldry. Items in the 920s are in scat 93.

B. Collection Purpose.

People use materials in the Biography collection for recreational reading and to support life-long learning. Readers often want to satisfy their curiosity about well-known individuals and/or someone they admire. Some want to experience historical events as though they were actually present. In addition, students at all grade levels are often assigned papers about currently popular or historical figures.

The 920s part of the collection serves to enhance cultural and leisure activities (genealogists doing research; parents-to-be in search of baby names.) Insignia books (flags of the world, state names, seals, flags and symbols) are used by life-long learners and students.

II. COLLECTION SCOPE/LEVEL.

A. Collection Scope.

Throughout the collection, emphasis is on breadth, with a few exceptions (an attempt is made to have a comprehensive collection of Iowa and Iowa City biographies).

Within the biography collection there are several categories:

- **Popular.** This is the most common form, and the area that accounts for a large percentage of circulation. Included here are life stories of popular culture figures, both current and historical, and people successful in all endeavors. Most biographies in this category are purchased even though reviews of some may not be good. Where interest and demand warrant, it is not uncommon for there to be several different titles on a given individual.

Also included in the popular category are pictorial or photographic treatments of some very popular subjects (the Kennedy family and the British royal family continue to be at the top of the list).

- **Historical/Literary.** Historical biographies portray the lives of well-known individuals and how they influenced past events. They also tell what life was like during certain periods of history. Literary biographies portray the lives and personalities of noted authors, painters, or other artists. They attempt to describe the talent and inspiration that enabled the subject to create great works. Although we have a strong collection in these two areas, the items in this category usually do not have the mass audience appeal of those in the popular category. We are unlikely to purchase more than one title on an individual in this category. Exceptions are: 1)

the person is extremely well known (presidents; noted artists or authors); 2) newly published titles appear on the scene, which add significantly to our knowledge of a person, without diminishing the importance of titles already in the collection.

- **Diaries/Letters.** Unless they were written by very famous people (Eleanor Roosevelt, Abraham Lincoln, Anne Morrow Lindbergh), we buy sparingly in this category. Limited interest is a factor. For most titles in this category we rely on interlibrary loan or refer patrons to the University of Iowa Library.

With the exception of books on baby names (almost all new titles are purchased), emphasis in the 920's is also on breadth. Because of the large collection and emphasis on genealogy at the Iowa State Historical Society, our genealogy collection is limited almost exclusively to a few basic introductions to the subject. However, specialized guides to research on specific nationalities and/or ethnic groups are popular, and a number of these have been purchased. (*Finding Your Hispanic Roots*, for example.) Also, much genealogical research is now done online and we purchase a variety of titles in this area.

Biographies of athletes, visual artists and musicians (unless they are extremely well known and the book covers their entire life story rather than just their job) are placed in the sports, art, and music areas. This is done in an attempt to place the material where it will be found easily by those most interested in the subject.

B. Collection Level.

The Biography collection must meet the needs of a variety of users. In order to do so, the collection includes material at both the basic and general interest/study levels.

III. AUDIENCE.

Browsers, hobbyists (genealogical research), independent learners, students.

IV. SIZE & DUPLICATION.

A. Current Collection Size.*

Call Number	Subject	Size*
Biography	Biography	4055
920-929	Collected biography; genealogy, insignia	387

***June 30, 2006**

Statistics for the collection indicate that the size has decreased. Collection size in 1999 was 5,181; collection size at the end of June, 2006 was 4,442, a decrease of 14%. Massive weeding occurred prior to moving into the new facility in May, 2004. Item purge schedules for these areas are three years.

The collection made up 2% of total adult print nonfiction and 0.8% of circulation of the same group. Annual turnover rates were 1.9 for scat 7 and 2.0 for scat 93.

B. Space Constraints.

No problems.

C. Duplication.

An initial purchase of one copy is usually the rule in this collection. However, if the subject of the biography is known to be of high interest, the initial purchase may be from five to eight copies (Bill Bryson's *Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*; Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope*). For longtime bestsellers like Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes*, it may be necessary to purchase even more copies over time. The recent addition of a "Nonfiction Express" leased collection will probably lessen the need for purchasing as many multiple copies.

V. SELECTION PLAN.

See "Introduction Collection Plans for Adult Nonfiction" for broad selection plan criteria.

A. Criteria.

- Demand/Popularity/Notable Authors--gossipy, "kiss and tell" biographies are popular, and make up a significant component of the collection (books by Kitty Kelley, for example). Multiple copies of these titles are purchased.

User demand is always an important factor.

- Currency—although they are not "definitive" biographies, it is important to have books about well-known individuals and people who are currently in the news. Often these titles will fall into the popular category.

Occasionally, research will bring to light new facts about a person's life or new theories about why an individual acted in certain ways will arise. New biographies of previously well-documented lives are often the result and are important acquisitions for the collection. Examples are *Jane Goodall: the Woman Who Redefined Man* by Dale Peterson and *American Prometheus: the Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* by Kai Bird.

Technology has revolutionized the field of genealogy, with the resulting need for up-to-date books on using the Internet to do research.

- Accuracy—as expected, accuracy is an important requirement for biographical material. A good biography will present the facts about a person's life and will be objective and balanced.
- Regional Interests—we purchase and nearly always retain indefinitely, biographies of people from Iowa City, Johnson County, and Iowa.
- Gifts—these are a significant factor in maintaining the collection. We receive many new, popular biographies. Other less popular titles are added, too, if they are out of print and/or we have had requests.

B. Selection Tools.

In addition to the standard selection tools, the selector checks specialized monthly sources such as *Current Biography* and *Biography Index*, both of which contain lists of collections/sources.

For keeping up with who's "hot" and who's not, reading popular magazines such as *People Weekly* and watching CNN and CSPAN are helpful.

To anticipate which titles are likely to be in demand, checking pre-publication lists such as *Library Journal's* "Prepub Alert," Ingram's *Advance*, and the *NextReads* newsletters can be helpful.

The University of Iowa Press is a good source for Iowa biographies. Book columns in local and regional newspapers often feature biographies about well known Iowans.

C. Maintenance Criteria.

The guidelines set forth in the Collection Plan for Adult Non-fiction apply here.

Some areas in this collection (baby name books, for example) receive very heavy use and require frequent replacement or binding.

Loss due to theft/mutilation is not a significant problem in this collection.

Item purge is the major method for withdrawal, but titles that have been purchased in quantity and then have dropped in popularity are reduced to several copies by attrition or through the mending process.

March, 2007