II. F.  Services to Users

In addition to building collections, Collection Specialists provide a wide array of services to users of the General Library’s collections, ranging from individual and group orientation sessions to selective dissemination of information regarding the Library’s holdings and new acquisitions. Although the principal clientele for these services are UCB faculty and students, other groups—staff, visitors to the Library and persons who have entered into correspondence about particular aspects of the collections—often have recourse to selectors’ expertise. As a publicity supported research resource, the General Library is committed to making its collections accessible to the general public, insofar as staffing permits and the services are not available through other agencies or public libraries. Selectors are encouraged to take the initiative in providing services to users as part of their responsibilities for stewardship of the collections. Some specific examples of these services are mentioned below.

II. F. 1.  Tours, Bibliographic Instruction, Orientations

Collection Specialists, as the experts concerning specific parts of the General Library’s collections, are in an authoritative position to provide information to specialized user groups or individual scholars. Offers to teach sessions on specialized bibliography for specific courses should be made to teaching faculty through departmental meetings, letters to department chairs or other appropriate faculty, and personal contact. Orientations to the Library and to specific collections should be offered for new graduate students in a given discipline at the beginning of the academic year. More substantial teaching commitments require the prior approval of the selector’s department head.

II. F. 2.  Individual Bibliographic Assistance

Similarly, Collections Specialists should communicate to faculty their willingness to provide specialized bibliographic assistance for individuals, particularly graduate students working on theses. Additionally, they are expected to provide assistance for specialized reference questions, even if their duties do not regularly include reference service.

II. F. 3.  Selective Dissemination of Information

Selectors, by virtue of their close contacts with teaching faculty and their extensive knowledge of collections and new acquisitions, can provide individual users with timely information concerning the Library’s holdings or the appearance of new publications. Insofar as possible, selectors should anticipate faculty interest in the Library’s holdings and attempt to communicate new titles and other publication information in their fields. Since fund managers receive a monthly list of all newly-cataloged titles acquired on their funds, distribution of this list to interested faculty and other users is a useful way of publicizing the collections. Selectors are encouraged to produce selected and annotated accessories lists, another effective link to specific research programs and departments.
II. F. 4.

These are an effective way of promoting use of specialized resources or new books. Therefore Collection Specialists are expected to participate in the Library’s exhibits program.

II. F. 5.

One useful method of communication with users regarding new materials, Library policies, general information relative to the discipline, and other Library-related matters of interest, is to produce brief occasional newsletter directed to specific user groups or information to be included in the newsletter of a department of organized research unit. An example of such a newsletter is reproduced in Section VIII of this manual.

II. F. 6.

The Library is in a period of rapid change as electronic storage and retrieval of information increasingly alter the nature of catalogs and services and begin to affect collections. Collection Specialists must be informed about the Library’s developing systems and services and must be prepared to help their clients use the appropriate new technologies for their research and instructional needs. It is particularly important that all public service librarians learn to use the Library’s online catalogs and other files efficiently and contribute to continuing programs of user education in this area. While not all collection Specialists will themselves be skilled in searching the wider array of electronic data available through commercial vendors and special files, all must be alert to the development of databases in their fields of responsibility and able to advise users regarding possible sources on information.

The proliferation of widely available textual and numeric databases poses a variety of problems for the Collection Specialist. The Collection Development Policy Statement, Preliminary Edition, January 1980, states in part: “Recorded information that meets the instructional and research needs of the Berkeley academic community is by policy appropriate for inclusion in the collections, regardless of form or language. Policies as encompassing as this one, however, are subject to pragmatic adaptations…” (p. 7) It later (p. 10) adds: “The collections has not yet been addressed by the Library. The relevance of these materials to the Library’s mission must be explored with campus office of Computing Affairs and other concerned departments. The question of Library support for computer-assisted instruction also remains to be considered.” At the time of writing of this present Guide (Fall 1986), the Collection Management and Development committee has appointed a subcommittee to draft a policy statement for machine-readable data files, instructional software, etc. This statement will be incorporated in the projected revision of the Collection Development Policy Statement.

Whatever the policy adopted, it is clear that Collection Specialists will have to identify sources of information regarding available databases in their fields, to consult regularly with faculty and student users to determine the needs of Berkeley scholars for electronic information sources, and to decide what level of access (e.g., whether to own a data file or to obtain access to a vendor’s file) is required to meet those needs.