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Collection Development for Non-traditional Resources: Apps and Podcasts

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Libraries have a duty to provide access to a variety of resources based on the needs of their users. This is especially important to libraries who serve medical students, faculty, doctors, nurses, and other professionals. McDonald and Hawcroft state that “the library has a responsibility to ensure clinicians are linked to information, and have access to the best available evidence and swiftest translation of bench-to-bedside research.” To make certain that the resources librarians select will accomplish this task they need to create and use collection development policies. As time moves forward, we have seen collection development policies shift from including print only resources, to electronic resources, to tablets. Now libraries are including apps and podcasts in their collections and it has proven that these resources are here to stay. As they are added to collections librarians need to be as careful with how they select and recommended these materials as they would traditional resources.

Librarians can use their current policies, update these policies, or create new ones to select apps, podcasts, and any other new forms of media that appear in the years to come. Regardless of whether or not a current policy is used or a new one is created, collection development policies need to be flexible to keep up with the changing environment of the medical field and education. Criteria can be used to evaluate apps and podcasts. One article suggested using the following criteria to evaluate apps: subject relevance, quality of content, reputation of producer or publisher, cost, access, legal issues, and copyright and fair use issues. For podcasts a different article had similar suggestions, which included authorship, sponsorship, content, collection relevance, and target audience. These criteria are great stepping stones to use when selecting apps and podcasts, especially if library staff are not familiar with these types of materials.

There are a variety of places one may search for podcasts that cover medicine and medical education. These include academic, publisher, continuing medical education or professional training, and patient education websites and podcasts. Examples of each are iTunes U and university websites for academic podcasts, New England Journal of Medicine for publisher podcasts, Audio-Digest Foundation for continuing medical education
podcasts, and the American Heart Association for patient education podcasts.\textsuperscript{4} Personal experience has showed that searching for podcasts can prove very difficult, even when using publisher websites or iTunes. This opinion is reiterated by Kraft who stated that no metadata standards and subjective topic lists make finding podcasts complicated and time consuming for librarians.\textsuperscript{4}

Organization of podcasts and apps also proves difficult. One institution thought cataloging podcasts as serials would work well; however, individual episodes would not be catalogued or searchable. RSS feeds could solve this problem, but this is not currently an option within catalogs. Other ways to organize apps and podcasts include listing them on the website of the library, an institutional intranet page, within a LibGuide, or creating a customized database.\textsuperscript{1,3-4}

As with many resources, libraries should promote and evaluate apps and podcasts to ensure use and measure effectiveness of having these resources in the library collection. To quote DeRosa and Jewell, creating an app or podcast "collection development policy is essential in today's increasingly digital world."\textsuperscript{3} Identifying selection criteria, searching for and finding apps and podcasts, choosing the best way to organize and promote these resources within your institution, and evaluating the use and success of these resources are the big picture steps that need to be used when considering and adding apps and podcasts to a library collection.

References