

Overview and Purpose

Resources for College Libraries (RCL) and RCL: Career Resources together offer a bibliography of approximately 90,000 essential works for undergraduate collections, co-published by ACRL/Choice and ProQuest, part of Clarivate. RCL concentrates on the traditional liberal arts and sciences undergraduate curriculum and RCL: Career Resources covers those programs offered most frequently at community and two-year colleges. RCL is used by libraries for collection management (acquisition, retention, deselection), benchmarking, accreditation, strategic planning, liaison services, instruction, and more. RCL is available as a [subscription database](#) and is used as a qualitative data component in the Bowker Book Analysis System. This document outlines general RCL selection guidelines and best practices.

The RCL core title lists support collection services and provide an authoritative and credible guide to the subject literature. RCL subject bibliographies are dynamic—regularly updated, responsive to the changing curriculum, and reflective of scholarly shifts. While individual academic collections will vary in size, budget, user population, and strategic goals, the RCL and RCL: Career Resources title lists attempt to include those scholarly works that are **essential for undergraduate collections**.

Selection Responsibility

RCL subject editors are tasked with managing the core bibliography in the discipline through ongoing editorial revision, including selection, deselection, title review, and taxonomic organization. Selectors are deemed qualified by education, teaching background, and collection management experience; most subject editors are practicing academic librarians and/or faculty members. They may rely on reviews, course syllabi, liaison work, faculty partnerships, quantitative data, and subject expertise to inform bibliographic choices. Feedback from external reviewers helps to check potential biases and shape editorial development.

Guiding Considerations

RCL subject editors maintain a balanced and comprehensive collection of historical and current monographs in the academic discipline, along with important web resources. Journals and articles are not included.

RCL title selections are those deemed central to undergraduate study in the subject, including those:

- required or recommended for an undergraduate course;
- useful for undergraduate research;
- reflective of current scholarship;
- providing important historical context;
- considered classic or foundational in the field;
- offering critical viewpoints of historically underrepresented voices, research, and/or topics;
- higher-level works most necessary for teaching faculty or advanced undergraduate study;
- textbooks that provide important coverage and/or accessibility to a topic.

Annual editorial updates ensure currency through the inclusion of new works. Selectors incorporate emerging scholarship, but should also be cautious in addressing topics affected by contentious change or receiving unbalanced attention, which may or may not be long-lasting or representative of the curriculum.

Primary audience

Selections should be limited to those titles which can be profitably read and used by undergraduate students. Titles for faculty or graduate-level use may also be recommended if they are key to teaching undergraduate students or cover significant concepts. For RCL: Career Resources, the majority of selected titles should be appropriate for lower-level undergraduate students.

Language

Excepting for works included in the area studies or foreign languages and literatures subject areas, RCL primarily includes English-language resources.

Web resources

The content for web resources should meet the above considerations. However, web resources should be carefully evaluated for credibility, stability, and longevity. Editors regularly review and update web resources to ensure validity. Many of the web resources included are open access and/or freely available.

Additional considerations

RCL editorial selection is foremost at the work level, meaning the primary consideration is inclusion of a particular title based on its quality and importance to undergraduate study, teaching, and research. However, additional factors may be considered:

- *Edition:* If a work is available in several different editions, consider if a particular edition provides updated content, a superior translation, critical introductory material, etc.
- *Print status:* While out-of-print status does not exclude a work, consider whether another resource currently available in print has replaced the out-of-print work in the curriculum. Avoid adding titles which are forthcoming.
- *Format:* Because RCL data is linked to the bibliographic record by ISBN, the particular format included is not neutral and may be informed by factors such as availability, cost, and bibliographic information. Again, editorial consideration should focus on the work, followed by the best available edition. Academic institutions may select print or digital access based on user needs, preferred platforms or providers, etc.
- *Cost:* If a particular resource is cost-prohibitive for the average two or four-year college library, the editor should give special consideration before selecting it for inclusion.
- *Publisher:* If a particular publisher has produced the accepted scholarly edition of a work, refrain from adding a reprint version from nontraditional or reprint publishers. It is most critical that RCL recommend the correct edition of a work and the one that librarians and teaching faculty expect a library to retain, rather than including a reprint currently available from an alternate publisher.

Subject Scope Notes

Beyond the above general guidelines, collection priorities will vary amongst different RCL and RCL: Career Resources subjects, taking account of distinctions within academic fields such as the relative emphasis upon monographs, age of materials consulted, technological change, availability of electronic resources, and other factors. Subject scope notes help define the disciplinary approach to title selection, deselection, assessment, and taxonomic organization. See the [RCL](#) or [RCL: Career Resources](#) scope notes for more information.

Collection Diversity

RCL acknowledges the import of diversity—across topics, authors, experiences, and ideas—and subject editors are committed to developing diverse, equitable, and inclusive collections that support critical inquiry. There are many definitions of and dimensions to diversity; our goal is to improve editorial consideration and

representation of varied voices, scholarship, and publications in the core collection through judicious and comprehensive title selection, deselection, subject language, and classification schemes.

RCL subject editors operate within a broader ecosystem of academic publishing, higher education, bibliographic information, and classification practices with structural inequities and disparities that impact resource availability and knowledge organization. As such, our work will be ongoing and responsive, with recognition that disciplinary differences and systemic barriers will affect development. Subject editors may employ “aspirational selection” to help redefine and expand coverage of the core collection. Periodic editorial assessment and external review will also inform this effort. We are guided in this work by the American Library Association’s statement on [Diverse Collections: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#).

Collection Maintenance

As a core collection, RCL will retain foundational materials across time periods dependent on disciplinary needs; however, titles should be regularly reviewed and removed as needed to ensure collection utility and currency. Deaccessioning works is a critical part of ongoing collection maintenance—resulting in a stronger, more accessible, and valuable title list for users. Consideration for deselecting or weeding titles from an RCL or RCL: Career Resources subject area may include: outdated or superseded scholarship; print status; publication date; publication type; citation metrics; collection data; audience level; duplicative content and/or multiple editions; and referee feedback. Subject-specific deselection criteria can be found in the scope notes (see above).

RCL supports access to information, intellectual freedom, and a range of academic viewpoints. Material will not be excluded because of controversial language or subject matter or because of the political, religious, moral, sexual, social, economic, or scientific views expressed in the work or by the author.

External Review

Each RCL and RCL: Career Resources subject undergoes comprehensive peer review on a rotating three-year cycle. Reviewers are expected to provide an impartial, honest, and rigorous assessment of the work and how well it meets the aim for a balanced core bibliography with breadth, depth, and diversity. The revisions recommended by referees are vital to the work’s editorial integrity and help ensure project transparency and accountability.

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If you have additional questions or concerns about the RCL selection guidelines or editorial practices, please contact the [RCL Project Editor](#). *Last updated January 2024.*