

1991

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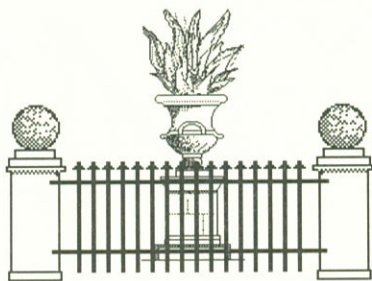


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Recommended Citation

Ogburn, Joyce L. (1991) "Acquisitions, Up, Up, and Away," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 3: Iss. 5, Article 16.
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1117>

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Acquisitions, Up, Up and Away

Yale University's New Acquisitions Department

By Joyce L. Ogburn

(Chief Acquisitions Librarian and Head, Acquisitions Dept.)

As of July 15, 1991 Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library began reconstituting an acquisition's department under Technical Services. In these days of bad news about closing departments, budget cuts and escalating serial prices, it's nice to be able to report some good news!

For many years Yale's main library had a more or less traditional acquisitions department, primarily responsible for monograph acquisitions. There was a separate serials department. In 1989 the decision was made to divide acquisitions and serials functions between Collection Development and Technical Services. Collection Development took over the ordering, claiming, and vendor relations functions. Technical Services created a department called Processing Services, which combined receiving and payment for approval plans, serials, firm orders, and continuations with the cataloging function under the team concept. Gifts and exchange operations moved around between Technical Services and Collection Development.

Reorganization in part was in response to bringing up an integrated automated system. NOTIS acquisitions was brought on board in July 1989, to coincide with the start of a new fiscal year. Advantages of the new organization included: (1) more understanding of the inter-relationships between acquisitions and cataloging, especially in a shared database environment; and (2) better bibliographic knowledge in the acquisitions functions, resulting in better bibliographic records.

Disadvantages included: (1) too many contacts for vendors, and unclear responsibilities for problem resolution; (2) cumbersome communication channels between Collection Development and Processing Services; (3) too many hands touching every acquisitions

transaction; (4) policy and problem resolution often were referred to personnel unfamiliar with the operations.

In short, the splitting of the traditional acquisitions function resulted in a lack of accountability for the smooth and effective processing of materials and payments. Too many players participated in many relatively simple decision-making processes.

A careful review of acquisitions processing suggested that the library would be best served by reviving the acquisitions department. Under one department, acquisitions decisions could be centralized, leadership could be exercised, and progress could be made toward utilizing automation and vendors to their fullest. More specifically, reuniting acquisitions would allow: (1) greater emphasis on financial management; (2) integration of the exchange operations into mainstream acquisitions work; (3) completion of the receiving process, including paying invoices and copy cataloging; (4) empowering staff to resolve problems; (5) centralized management of complex projects, such as vendor evaluation and implementing automation initiatives. The recommendation of reinstating the department was accepted by the Director of the Yale Library and the following organization was designed.

The new organization is divided partially by format, but primarily by function. Acquisitions has maintained the team concept and named its units appropriately. It contains the Order Support Team, Monograph Support Team, Serials Support Team, and Fiscal Support Team. Ordering and Fiscal are format blind, while Monographs and Serials handle the receipt of their respective formats. Monograph Support also incorporates the copy cataloging operations and binding and preparations.

Acquisitions has two librarians, a head of the department and an acquisitions librarian. In addition to leading the new department, the head serves as the Chief Acquisitions Librarian for the library system. The position of Chief is responsible for directing policy making and guiding projects for the system. The Acquisitions Librarian leads the Monograph Support Team, concentrating primarily on copy cataloging and complex monograph receipt problems, but serves as the assistant head of the department.

The librarians and staff were chosen from existing Yale staff, who were offered reassignment opportunities to the new department. A few vacant positions are being filled by applicants internal to the library.

The department will become fully operational on October 28, 1991. Questions about the reorganization can be addressed to me or Cindy Crooker, the Acquisitions Librarian, at Acquisitions Department, Sterling Memorial Library, P.O. Box 1603A Yale Station, New Haven CT 06520. We do not yet have a department phone number, so we can be reached at 203-432-1756 (Joyce) or 203-432-1727 (Cindy).

The author would like to thank the acquisitions librarians who have offered their help, support, and advice in this endeavor. Special thanks go to Christian Boissannas, Cornell University, for allowing us to scrutinize his acquisitions operation on our first site visit and in providing invaluable assistance in many different areas. Additional recognition should be given to Gerald Lowell, Associate University Librarian for Technical Services, Yale Library, for making the transition an enjoyable and fruitful process. Let's hear it for great colleagues and bosses! 🍷