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International Dateline

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Yankee Book Peddler, Inc.

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by Gita Gunatilleke  
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Wellington — FROM ACQUISITIONS TO COLLEcTION MANAGEMENT — At Victoria University Library, the Acquisitions Department has in the past four years undergone several changes, culminating early this year in the formation of the Collection Management Department. The automation of the Acquisitions Department with the Dynix Acq. module, and the air freighting of consignments from the northern hemisphere were remarkable changes that happened within a few months of each other. We were into the new technology, we were transparent, and the world seemed to have shrunk, all at once.

The Acquisitions Department had a staff of 4 professionals, 3.5 assistants, and part-time secretarial support. It was responsible for acquiring monographs, scores, LPs, CDs, videos, microforms, and software, while periodicals were handled by another department. Acquisitions was centralised with library staff monitoring the book budget, selecting, ordering, and coordinating academic selections together with the 3 subject librarians based in the faculties of Architecture, Commerce, and Law.

With automation and the decision to display ‘on order’ titles in the OPAC, we became transparent as users could check directly if a title was on order without contacting our Dept. Unfortunately our standing orders are not yet on the system. This causes some problems with duplications of titles, especially monographs in series. However we are confident it will not be too long before we resolve this problem.

At least 90% of our purchases are from overseas, and air freighting by most of our major vendors in the US, UK and Europe meant that the bulk of the orders were filled in a third of the time taken previously. Those in the northern hemisphere obviously would find it hard to imagine what this meant for us, when the turnaround time for orders was reduced from a minimum of 4-6 months to 3-6 weeks. It was wonderful!

Then came the Internet with all its wonderful benefits of email, FTP, user/news groups. For nearly two years, we have used email to communicate with our major vendors overseas. Recently, we have trialled the use of OCLC databases in this library and are convinced we would purchase at least some of the services. Electronic document delivery is also imminent. All this means that we are increasingly able to give better service to the staff and students.

Recurrent calls for “doing more with less,” and concepts of “acquisitions vs. access,” and “just-in-case vs. just-in-time” have become loud and clear. Users’ expectations have increased steadily while funding for libraries or their parent institutions have not. Although our library has in the past couple of years acquired more space than we have ever had before, we are aware this will be short-lived. The librarian’s proposal for a move towards a “steady state library” has become part of the university’s strategic plan.

“Rethinking” and attempting to accept the reality of these issues, we began to reorganise the Acquisitions and Catalogue Departments to form Collection Management and Technical Services Departments early this year. The technical aspects of the Acquisitions operation, e.g. inputting orders, receiving, invoicing, claiming were added to the Catalogue Dept. to form Technical Services with the transfer of one professional and two assistants.

The leaner Collection Management Dept. now has 3 professionals and 1.5 assistants while the secretarial support is at present shared between the two Departments. Managing the collection by concentrating on what we should have and not what we would like to have is the prime responsibility of the Department. The Conspicuous project has been on and off in the past couple of years, but we intend hopefully to complete it this year. We work closely with the subject librarians and liaison with the academic staff has increased intensely while at the same time developing a closer working relationship with the new Technical Services Department.

I have mixed feelings about the massive deacquisitions or weeding exercise we have in mind, but accept it has got to be done. We already have a full agenda for the years ahead with formulating Collection policies, developing specific areas to reflect and support the changing teaching and research emphasis, deacquisitions, review of standing orders, and coping with the increasing presence of electronic media in the collection.
There is an increasing workload of course but it all seems quite exciting even if my wish for a 48-hour day has become a daily prayer.

On the brighter side is the comfort of knowing we are no longer alone or far away with these problems and challenges.

We are after all now only an email away. The user/news groups have helped and continue to give a great deal of support — gripes, lamentations and stories or trials and tribulations on Coldev-l, Dynix-l, Acqnet and the like I really appreciate.

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Australia!

by Vicki Nicholson
(James Bennett Library Services)

Melbourne — 6TH INTERNATIONAL FEMINIST BOOK FAIR — After a shaky start, with resignations, infighting and initial disinterest in sponsorship, the IFBF held in Melbourne in July was publicly hailed as a success. The Fair attracted 23,000 paid participants, although including writers, publishers and other non-paying participants, the attendance figures were estimated at closer to 30,000. The Trade Fair was small but very well attended, although publishers reported that the public days were more successful than the trade-only days. Several overseas publishers in attendance have remarked on their success with sales of rights. Judging from the crowds blocking the stairs and doors after sessions, these seem to have been well attended.

Canberra — LIBRARIES TOP THE LIST — New Librarian also reports what many librarians have always known. A survey by the Federal Department of Communications and the Arts and the Australian Bureau of Statistics has found that Australia’s most popular cultural venue is the library. However, Australia’s number one cultural activity is — watching television! The survey’s analysis of Australian import and export of culture found that in 1992-3 we imported S4.7 billion of literature, music, television, film, radio and performing arts (with a great deal of it coming from the US, I suspect!). In this same period we exported only $1 billion of the Australian equivalent. The biggest import — and export — was literature. Keep buying those Australian books, guys.

Melbourne — ROMANCE ON THE INTERNET? — New Librarian, August 1994 reports that Lori from Seattle recently married Daniel, a student at Melbourne’s Monash University, after over 1000 hours correspondence over the Net. Lori was initially attracted to Daniel’s online Shakespearean spoofs. Lori flew to Australia for a visit, Daniel proposed, and they now live in a “one computer flat” in suburban Melbourne. This is not doing anything for the “great decent man shortage” that I am told of in Australia. Please leave our men to us!! But send us any spare you have . . .

Fiji — WORK RECOMMENDED ON THE NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY — I know it isn’t Australia, but … the Fiji National Bibliography, which was affected by the 1980s coups and unrest, is about to become available. No issue has appeared since the 1986 volume. The intention is to produce the 1993 volume before the end of the year, and to work retrospectively to fill missing volumes whilst producing current volumes. The Bibliography can be ordered from the Library Service of Fiji, P.O. Box 2526, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji. €

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The Charleston Conference: Once More, With Feeling

by Anne Jennings (Sinkler & Boyd)

This issue of Against the Grain is being distributed to attendees of the Fourteenth Charleston Conference (November 3-5, 1994). While preparing for the Conference, I decided to see if we could put together a bibliography of published materials from past meetings. Much to my amazement, research revealed over 140 citations of papers presented since 1984! The papers address a variety of issues by some of our most memorable participants. Here is just a smattering of them.

• Myth and Reality: Using the OCLC/Amigos Collection Analysis CD to Measure Collections Against Peer Collections and Against Institutional Priorities” (Wanda Dole, 1993)

• Electronic Book and Serial Acquisitions: The Medium is the Message” (Norman Desmarais, 1992)

• Desperately Seeking Status: Acquisitions Librarians in Academic Libraries” (Christian Boissonnas, 1990)

• Antitrust Issues in Publishing” (William M. Hannay, 1989)

• The Russian Peasant and the Bird: A Moral Keynote” (Richard M. Dougherty, 1988)

• Subscription Agents: Are They Worth Their Salt?” (John Merriman, 1988)

• What is the Value of Information?” (Sara Miller McCune, 1988)

• Publisher Policies and Their Impact on the Market” (Robert Mastejulic, 1986).

• Publisher Advertising: A Legitimate Complaint” (Margaret Maes Axtmann, 1985).

• Truth in Vending” (Panel Presentation, 1984).

We will have copies of the bibliography available at the conference if you are interested in any of the past issues which have been addressed in Charleston. Or if you want to request a copy, write Your Editor. €