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Group Therapy

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Group Therapy



Paying Invoices That Aren't There

Column Editor: **Rosann Bazirjian** (Florida State University)

Hey y'all out there! Do you have any gripes? Come to your therapist!
Try <rbazirji@mailers.fsu.edu> or FAX 904-644-5170.

GRYPE Submitted by **Joe Pettigrew** (Florida State University)

A minor irritant, but an irritant just the same, is the fact that some vendors insist on sending invoices separately from the items those invoices cover. Sometimes, the invoice and the item arrive in the same mail; more usually, not. This requires us to store either the invoice or the item and hope we can get them together when the other arrives. Since we are required to certify that we have "received the goods" when we pay an invoice, I can't just pay the bill and hope we get the items. One foreign vendor, for example, airmails the invoice at the same time they sea-mail the publications,

and it may be 8 or 9 months (sometimes never!) before we can pay the invoice. Some vendors seem to be on a particular billing cycle, and they're not about to bill with shipment. And then there are the vendors who not only mail the invoices separately, they crank out one invoice per title, then mail each invoice in separate envelopes. We've received as many as 10-12 invoices in one batch of incoming mail, each an individual mailing. A waste of paper, time, postage ... and my disposition.

VENDOR RESPONSE Submitted by **Roger Williams** (Managing Director, Input Culture Inc.)

As a representative of a library acquisition service dealing with thousands of information suppliers, this gripe certainly strikes a familiar chord. It seems that every publisher or supplier of materials has a different method of shipping and invoicing. I am sure that everyone also has plausible rationale for doing this and most, if not all, feel that their rationale is so strong that there is no room for flexibility in their daily operation.

The ultimate resolution to this problem would be an industry standard but, realistically speaking, if a supplier can't accede to a customer's seemingly simple request, how in the world could anyone implement and enforce an industry standard? This standard would also have to apply to the library's side of the equation. It helps to remember, too, that libraries are not the only customers that

the publisher has and that the requirements of different types of customers have to be met as well.

As a corollary to this, we find that many libraries pay their invoices with individual checks rather than consolidating around a monthly statement. Somehow, though, this waste of paper, time and postage is not so much of a problem to us since the check is welcome in any form!

All of these problems may become a relic of the past in the new world of electronic data interchange but the universal impact of this revolution is anybody's guess. Until then, we may all have to cope with our individual eccentricities. Of course, the selection of a responsive, customer-oriented acquisitions vendor can reduce these irritants and contribute to the efficiency of the library operation.

VENDOR RESPONSE Submitted by **Ineke Middeldorp-Crispijn** (Sales Manager North America, Martinus Nijhoff International)

The librarian who complains about the fact that some vendors ship the ordered material separate from the invoice, has, in my humble opinion, a good right to do so. Since books have to be checked before an invoice can be paid, it is by far the easiest way to just include the invoice, or at least a copy of it, with the shipment of the material.

It is Martinus Nijhoff International's policy to send the invoice with the book. However, there are a few exceptions:

1). There are some customers who do not want the invoice to be shipped with the material. They require a different ship-to and bill-to address. Some want us to include a copy of the invoice with the shipment and send the original to a different address. This third option is available also. One of our hallmarks is flexibility. True, it creates some extra work every now and then, but we are happy to oblige if this makes life easier for our customers.

2). All firm orders are sent from the headquarters and all three invoice options are available for firm orders. For continuations,

however, sending an invoice with the shipment is not always an option. Most continuations are sent from the headquarters in the Netherlands, but some continuations are drop-shipped. In the latter case, it is obvious that our invoices can't be sent with the books. Although, we still can send invoices to the ship-to and/or bill-to address. I am sure Joe is not complaining about the exception, but mostly about vendors who make it a rule to send the invoices separately.

As for the case of the "one invoice per envelope", I think Joe is right. Sending everything separately, and even sometimes in different envelopes, certainly is a waste of paper, time and postage. The check-in librarian will find all our books that are shipped in one box (a box up to 20 kilograms) represented on the same invoice. Unless the customer wants it any other way, the invoice is enclosed in that same box.

Last but not least, I am surprised to hear Joe say that there are still vendors who send books by sea-mail. We certainly don't. 🐉