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Budgets, Budgeting, and Books

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Budgets, Budgeting, and Books

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ike ocean tides rising and falling in response to phases of the moon, library budgets have their ups and downs. Unlike ocean tides, the rising and falling of library budgets are not as predictable as tides. Affected by both internal and external forces, increases or decreases in library budgets are often beyond the control of librarians. That portion of the total library budget allocated for the purchase of library materials, books in particular, is the focus of this issue of Against the Grain.

The library materials budget is the schooner navigating the rising, falling, undulating ocean waters of the budget. Rarely are the waters placid and calm, more often the seas are choppy and rough. The navigator, responding to shifting winds, must make decisions about directions — which route to take. (As I write, I am listening to Maurice Ravel’s Une barque sur l’océan which, without a doubt, inspires this metaphor.)

If Rumors Were Horses

Talk about a gaffe! Just as the September Against the Grain was hitting mailboxes announcing the splendidiferous Bob Schatz’ presidency of Franklin Book Company, news reached us that Franklin Book had closed its doors abruptly on Monday, September 27! All employees of Franklin were told that their jobs were ended and that the company was closing immediately. But, just as we were going to press, Against the Grain received the news from Stephen Wilson (Group Managing Director, Coutts Information Services) that Coutts Information Services has been in communication with the attorney(s) for Mr. Manny Dekter, Franklin’s former CEO, Mr. Michael Hynes, Cozen, O’Connor Attorneys, 1900 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Within the last few days, Coutts Information Services has come to an agreement that allows Coutts to have access to Franklin’s systems and customer lists, including their approval plan profiles, open firm orders and standing orders. Coutts is prepared, and fully capable, to fill all orders placed with Franklin Book, both firm and standing, and to maintain FBC approval plan profiles. As such, Coutts will be in direct contact with former Franklin Book Company customers in the coming days and weeks to describe how Coutts can assist them in their current dilemma. Coutts is a $100 million company concentrated solely on bookselling and library supply, with offices in North America and Europe. The North American office is staffed by over one hundred thirty people, comprised into experienced work teams concentrating on firm orders, standing orders, comprehensive approval plans, cataloging and technical services, IT, management, and sales. As a result of discussions separate from Franklin Book’s legal issues, Coutts made an offer to Bob Schatz to become Coutts’ Director of New Business Development for academic libraries in the U.S. Bob will work with Coutts’ continued on page 6

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The LMBS tracks data for the prior year’s expenditures (i.e., LMBS 2000/2001 reports data from fy 1999/2000). The Survey endeavors to document library materials expenditures for monographs and serials as a ratio and in dollars. The LMBS does not always succeed in precise reporting of monographs/serials data, a result of some libraries reporting the ratio of the two formats together for a total of 100% while other libraries reported percentages for the two categories as part of the overall total budget. Electronic resources are reported as both a dollar figure and a percentage of the total library budget. Gathering of data is not easy; some figures are “best estimates”.

In his concluding comments to the 2000/2001 LMBS, compiler Robert G. Sewell makes these observations. “Budgeting is the art of bringing policy to life by putting your money where your mouth is. From the data compiled here, there are some clear reflections of institutional policies and local exigencies. Libraries have been positioning themselves with their materials budgets in regard to the access vs ownership debate: how much to spend on mechanism for getting access to materials not owned or leased (through ILL, document delivery, bibliographic utilities) and how much to spend on acquiring and maintaining materials (print and electronic purchases, binding, etc.). These materials budget decisions do not necessarily translate into experimental vs traditional library practices. Each strategy has elements of both.”

In the tables below, the percentages are derived from Narrative Summary Reports for several LMBS years. Note: The url for the LMBS data is given in the column for fiscal year. The year of data source and fy being reported may or may not match (i.e., data for fy 1996/1997 in Table 1 is reported from LMBS 1998/1999). It is possible that updates reported in subsequent years were printed in later LMBS Narrative Summary Reports.

**TABLE 1: Electronic Resources: Average Percentage of Total Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>% of Total Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995/1996¹</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/1997²</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998²</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999²</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000³</td>
<td>No report available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001⁴</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**TABLE 2: Serials and Monographs: Average Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Serials</th>
<th>Monographs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995/1996¹</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/1997²</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/1998³</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/1999³</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000³</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/2001⁴</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


What is clear from Table 1 is that expenditures for electronic resources, both serials and monographs, have steadily increased. Drawing conclusions from Table 2 is less clear. Mr. Sewell observed, “There is a distinct change in the trend toward increasing the amount devoted to serials at the expense of monographs.”

If students and faculty members turn to online library materials before printed ones, as Scott Carlson reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education,¹ would we worry about how much money is spent on books? “Do Libraries Really Need Books?” was asked by the same author in an earlier Chronicle article. Some institutions building new libraries — the College of Charleston, Duke University, and the Georgia Institute of Technology named in the article-planned libraries where online resources were a top priority “to the distress of librarians and faculty members who find printed materials crucial to learning.”²

In this issue of Against the Grain, writers explore budgets, budgeting, and the book. The articles follow the book from a publishing house (Oxford University Press) to a book vendor (Blackwell’s Book Services) to librarians representing a diverse group of institutions in Canada, Guam, Hong Kong, Oregon, and Washington State.

Endnotes