June 2003

ATG Interviews Deanna Ramsay

Narda Tafuri
University of Scranton, tafurin1@scranton.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4113

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
Op Ed — IMHBCO
from page 47

- Because if we give our patrons carte blanche to order whatever they want, one patron (or a few patrons) might hog all the resources and not leave enough for the others. That’s another problem we have already. However, the solution is simple; just because we show our patrons the universe of information and ask them to select for themselves does not mean that we give them carte blanche to order whatever they want. We still have limited budgets. It just means that we expand the universe of options from which they may select, using a limited budget. Our message changes from “Here are the things we’ve selected for you” to “Here’s everything that’s available. We can’t afford everything, so what would you like?” Yes, some may overeat, leaving others hungry. But how is that different from the current situation, in which aggressive patrons can already submit more than their share of order requests? The solution remains the same: responsible allocation of the limited resources by library professionals.

- Because our patrons don’t have time to be library selectors. They have their own jobs; they’re paying us to find the good stuff. Under the model I’m suggesting, though, “library selection” would take no more time than the research we already expect our patrons to do. The difference, from their perspective, would only be that their options are much greater. When they look something up and find something that looks good, they would have the option of saying “Buy this,” and having an electronic copy delivered to them, under the current model of collection building, they would have gone looking for that thing and not found it, because we hadn’t anticipated that they would want it.

How serious is this suggestion? Admittedly, it’s only a set of preliminary thoughts and it ignores a whole host of practical issues. For example, what does it mean to “show patrons everything that is available,” and how could it be done in a coherent way? But what if we took the fundamental idea seriously and started actually working towards a reality that offers our patrons everything instead of offering them only a tiny subset of what’s actually available? What if we worked from a “Yes, of course you can have it” assumption instead of a “Wait, let’s see whether you thought you were going to want it” assumption?

In short, what if we allowed our users’ needs and the changing reality of the information environment to shape our practices, instead of trying to shape our users’ behavior to the practices we are comfortable with?
Ramsay Interview
from page 48

so many small dealers, book scouts, and eBay sellers scouring the library sales, estate sales, etc. that it's become quite difficult to find enough decent stock to make it worth your time on a bookbuying trip. I find that I'm paying more for good books, and finding fewer of them.

ATG: What are some important factors librarians should consider when buying used/out-of-print books online? Are there any special considerations when buying books from Canadian used/out-of-print booksellers?

DR: These days, since I've stopped buying outside of my specialty, I usually buy from other dealers. I don't think that the Canadian market is much different than the American market really. Prices actually tend to be a bit lower in Canada than the U.S., depending on what region you're in, and what the exchange rate is. I expect that the biggest challenge in Canada would be the distances you have to travel. I'm in one of the most heavily populated areas, so it's not such a concern here unless you want to buy or sell at book fairs (I don't). From most of our cities, it's closer to drive to a U.S. city than to another Canadian city.

ATG: What do you consider to be the best Canadian sources for OP books online?

DR: There are very few borders in the OP trade these days. ABE is a Canadian company, but has booksellers from around the world. I would think that the percentage of Canadian sellers on ABE is not much different than the percentage on Cheesefields (a U.S. database). The only truly Canadian online source that I can think of is the BooksCanada mailing list, which I run. You can subscribe to it for free at http://www.cheesefields.com/booksCanada/

ATG: Are there any used/out-of-print bookstores in Toronto that librarians should consider visiting while attending the American Library Association Conference?

DR: Toronto has some wonderful stores. Depending on your interests, try these:

Steven Temple Books, 489 Queen Street West — Wonderful stock of Canadian literature, among other things. Steven is tremendously knowledgeable (also a bit of a character depending on the mood you catch him in).

D & E Lake, 237 King Street East - For some truly rare items. Lake has handled some of the very best (and most expensive) items ever seen in this country.

Hugh Anson-Cartwright, 229 College Street - One of the very best known Canadian booksellers. Hugh is a gentleman, and has a great stock of Canadiana.

Jamie Fraser Books, 472A Queen Street West - Has some wonderful pulps and paperbacks. Particularly Science Fiction and Mystery.

Abelard Books, 519 Queen Street West - Philosophy, Theology.

Acadind Books, 232 Queen Street West - Art

David Mason Books, 342 Queen Street West

McBurnie & Cutler, 698 Queen Street West

Joseph Patrick Books, by appointment

ATG: What are some important factors librarians should consider when buying used/out-of-print books online? Are there any special considerations when buying books from Canadian used/out-of-print booksellers?

DR: This really is the same market it’s always been. It’s just larger, faster moving, and as a consequence, sometimes less organized. You still get what you pay for. It’s much easier to compare by price than by quality, so it’s easier to find yourself with an inexpensive but shabby purchase. There are sellers out there who do not know the difference between a first edition, a second printing, and a facsimile reprint - as there have always been. There are even sellers who will sell books that are missing pages (because they don’t care), or have major damage that isn’t noted - though this is less common than edition errors. So while you certainly should look for the best price, be sure to read descriptions carefully. Pay attention to the sellers. Read the terms of sale. Most reputable booksellers with experience will ship with an invoice to libraries. All should offer a generous return policy. Look for affiliations (ABAC, ABAA, ABA, ILAB, IOBA). All of them require that booksellers operate their businesses ethically. Most require that booksellers demonstrate or achieve a particular level of knowledge. However, don’t be turned off if a bookseller is not affiliated. It’s just one clue to the level of service they offer.

ATG: What suggestions, advice, etc. would you give to someone wanting to get into the out-of-print book business today?

DR: Educate yourself. Find a mentor who is willing to teach you (and find a way to make it worthwhile for them). The traditional method of getting into this trade is to apprentice with an experienced and knowledgeable bookseller. Read books on the subject. Join mailing lists. A good starting place might be to join the Bibliophile mailing list http://www.bibliophilegroup.com/

Many of the sellers coming into the business today don’t have any background in the trade. I didn’t have any myself when I started. I didn’t even understand how much there was to know until I took that year off and started reading. The OP trade has a long history, and it’s more than just a retail business. The very best booksellers in the trade are scholars first, and retailers second. There is a tendency to write off this off to “elitism.” But that’s not fair to those people who have spent lifetimes accumulating knowledge. It’s an easy business to do badly, and a very difficult business to do well.

ATG Interviews Joe Lee
Manager, Dogwood Press, Brandon, MS
<dogwoodpress@bellsouth.net>

by Allison P. Mays (Acquisitions Librarian, Milikaps College, 1701 N. State Street, Jackson, MS 39210; Phone: 601-974-1083) <maysap@milikaps.edu>

A Word from the Underdog, or How I Created My Own Small Press

Column Editor’s Note: As chair of the Mississippi Library Association’s Author Awards Committee, I heard from Joe Lee when his book was nominated for the award in fiction. We got to talking about how it was published and the world of small presses, and I thought this would make a good article for ATG. Here is a chance to hear from an author who made the decision to go it alone in the publishing world. — APM

ATG: How did you get the idea for your novel?

JL: I began writing the original draft of On The Record in early 1997. The story was loosely based on my wife’s duties as Consumer Protection Director under Mike Moore (Mississippi Attorney General). It’s a work of fiction, since I have a corrupt Attorney General and a series of corrupt and influential people who greatly shape the plot.

ATG: How did you get started trying to have your book published? Describe the process.

JL: I have a background in radio, television and journalism, and I worked full-time in television through the end of 1999, so it was 2000 before I devoted full attention to the novel. I worked with an editor in Dallas that year, and I began looking for an agent and/or publisher in early 2001. I contacted literary agents with a proposal, which included a synopsis, cover letter and brief personal biography. Most of the agents were in New York City, although a few were sprinkled in different parts of the country. I wrote to between 75-100 in the first few months of 2001, and during this time I was also contacting small publishing houses in this part of the country. While all the agents ultimately said no, most (75% or more) turned me down because of full client lists. A considerable number were very encouraging, however, telling me that I was likely to find an agent. Of the smaller publishers, I was told by all that my subject matter either didn’t fit their niche (i.e., cookbooks, children’s books, etc.) or that a larger, mainstream publisher would likely do more justice to my novel than they could.

continued on page 51

<http://www.against-the-grain.com>