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. Can't afford everything, so what would you like?" Yes, some may overtake, leaving others hungry. But how is that different from the current situation, in which aggressive patrons can already submit more than their share of orders? 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 right 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 I 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 e-Bay
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 advice do you give to getting used/out-of-
print books online and are there any special
challenges in finding OP books in Canada?

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 re-
ally. Prices actually tend to be a bit lower in
Canada than the U.S., depending on what re-
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 in a small book fair (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 sites 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
dealers on ABE is not much different than the
percentage on Cheesebooks (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.cheesebooks.com/bookscaanda/.

ATG: Are there any used/out-of-print book
stores in Toronto that librarians should con-
sider visiting when attending the American Li-
brary 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
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 Cana-
dian booksellers. Hugh is a gentleman, and
has a great stock of Canadian.

Jamie Fraser Books, 427A Queen Street
West - Has some wonderful pulps and pa-
perbacks. Particularly Science Fiction and
Mystery.

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

Acadian Books, 232 Queen Street West - Art

David Mason Books, 342 Queen Street West

McBurnie & Cutler, 698 Queen Street West

Joseph Patrick Books, by appointment
(416) 766-3357 - Canaadiana

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

DR: This really is the same market it's al-
ways 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 shabbily
purchased. 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 descrip-
tions 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, ABA, ABA,
ILAB, IOBA). All of them require that book-
sellers operate their businesses ethically. Most
require that booksellers demonstrate or acquire
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 industry 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 Biblio-
phile mailing list http://
www.bibliophilegroup.com/.

Many of the sellers coming into the busi-
ness 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 read-
ing. 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
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, Millsaps College, 1701 N. State
Street, Jackson, MS 39210; Phone: 601-974-1083) <maysap@millsaps.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 au-
thor 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 Con-
sumer 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 influen-
tial 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 let-
ter 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., cook-
books, children’s books, etc.) or that a larger,
mainstream publisher would likely do more jus-
tice to my novel than they could.

continued on page 51

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