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Hot Topics

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WHEN YOU'RE HOT YOU'RE HOT

hot topics in acquisitions and collection development...to be reported as appropriate . . . random, unfootnoted thoughts. . . contributions are welcome . . .

Doing Virginia's Bidding

Marcia Kingsley
George Mason University

Every time I run into a friend from Virginia these days, something specific seems to come up—bids and contracts. As I understand it, bidding is being required in several other states, including Texas, Ohio, New York, and Utah, but these states either require one bid for all libraries in the entire state or have a list of several vendors who can be used. No state, apparently, has implemented something like is described in Virginia and no state (except Virginia) has required the bid process for periodicals, only for books. Also, once a bid is accepted that's not necessarily the end of the process. A protest can be filed by any vendor who doesn't get the bid and feels that they should have. Read on!

Like many important movements, it started with rumors. Word passed among Virginia librarians that purchase of library materials by state-supported libraries could someday become subject to the competitive bidding process required by Virginia procurement rules. Those large dollar amounts spent on firm orders, approval plans, periodicals, continuations, and binding were being eyed "in Richmond." State college and university libraries might be required to draw up specifications and Requests for Proposals for all those services.

In two other state university systems in which I had worked, similar rumors had arisen periodically. We laughingly attributed any such stories to some new guy in the state purchasing office or someone in the central university system who clearly did not understand library acquisitions processes (and who did not have enough to do). In Virginia, we perhaps listened a bit more carefully to the rumblings because the reputation of

library purchasing had already been clouded by incidents in several libraries.

But even with those investigations considered, the very idea of small staffs at Virginia's smallest college libraries having to cope with RFPs as if they were NASA bidding for parts was incredible. The thought that the larger institutions with complex and fine-tuned acquisitions processes in place for foreign, out-of-print, obscure, and specialized materials would have to turn to the lowest bidder was ridiculous. The implications that libraries might have to switch thousands of periodical subscriptions to different vendors was overwhelming. And the possibility that libraries would have to ask vendors to bid on the publications that are only available directly from the publisher was preposterous.

Two years later, we find that reality, not rumor, is the major source of stress. Library administrators and acquisitions staff have stood knee-deep in copies of

forty-page requests-for-proposals begged from sister institutions within and outside the state. The Libraries are at different stages of implementing the state Council of Higher Education's directive to comply with the competitive bidding regulations and the Virginia Public Procurement act (Title 11, Sections 35-80) by June 30, 1989. Some library staffs have refined their specifications, written RFPs, advertised for bids, evaluated proposals, selected vendors, and signed contracts. Other libraries are desperately figuring out why some of their current vendors haven't responded with proposals by the deadlines set. Some libraries are almost hopelessly behind schedule.

One of the main support mechanisms provided by the state Council of Higher Education was the coordination of a Task Force of librarians and purchasing personnel which produced a written purchasing process that was approved -- in most respects -- by the state Division of Purchases and Supply: the process as described excluded most of the unreasonable practices we had feared. No, we do not have to bid out purchases that can only be purchased directly from the publisher! Material only available from abroad and most out-of-print purchases do not have to be bid out. The Task Force and the Division of Purchases and Supply are in agreement that provision needs to be developed for ordering other specialized materials. The Task Force also developed model proposals available on diskette. A list of proprietary, or sole source, publishers is to be made available (soon, we hope) by the Council of Higher Education.

The generous sympathy and sharing of proposals among libraries has been most helpful. In fact, for all the

Yes Virginia, There Are Vendors . . . Lots of Them.

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paper-shuffling, it is starting to look as if there's really just one big proposal that exists out there (sort of like the one fruitcake that keeps being handed off the someone else at Christmas) but with various changes and editing. Some vendors' reps have confirmed this perception -- they are exasperated with the same, seemingly arbitrary, requirements that crop up in every RFP - - such as vendor's duty to provide information on the educational background of the person who will service the account.

At George Mason Law Library we are suffering at least as much as anyone from the new requirements, but we will probably benefit at least as much as any library. With our entire Technical Services staff of 3 full-time employees, a whopping 1.5 persons are available to expend a \$500,000 materials/binding budget, maintain serials records for and check in 3000 subscriptions, upgrade our computer systems to an integrated system, handle an approval plan and firm orders -- and write RFPs!! Our solution will be to confine our Director to his office for at least a week to write the proposals; he has no spare time either, but he does have a law degree which may be of help.

There **could** be some benefits to this process (only optimists survive in this environment). Selection of vendors had a haphazard history here; tradition was to order general (non-law) standing orders direct (in addition to many law serials which **must** be ordered direct); of course this results in hundreds of invoices from hundreds of vendors. We need to consolidate, and the pressure of the bid process is forcing us to take time from the frantic daily routine to examine our options. It may also be time to divide our periodical subscriptions between our law specialists and a vendor for general periodicals. We are now being required to analyze and articulate our needs, write specifications - - and slip them under the door of our Director's office.

If you want a copy of the Virginia law, drop Katina or Marcie a line and they'll send it to you.

- "Star gazing? No, we use it to keep an eye on rising Serials costs."

When You're Hot You're Hot continued . . . a triologue in the making?

Out of Print??? Not So Fast!!!

Gary Herald
Ambassador Book Service

Ever since the Thor Power Tool ruling, the common perception among librarians is that quality scholarly books are going out of print more quickly than in prior years. And this perception has been encouraged by both booksellers and publishers. Some booksellers offering approval programs have convinced librarians that unless they arrange to acquire a particular title immediately, they may be forfeiting the chance to purchase that book again or at the very least severely limit their opportunity to acquire it in the future. Publishers have contributed to this myth as well by emphasizing the small size of their initial print runs for many scholarly titles. This too has provided fairly persuasive evidence that books must be purchased as soon after publication as possible.

But what the facts show is something quite different. Indeed, the percent-

still listed in 1988 *BIP+* as available (books which were listed as out of stock were counted as out of print). While we realize the problems associated with relying on *Books in Print* as a basis for confirming the availability of these titles, we do not feel the potential inaccuracies are statistically significant enough to alter the resulting conclusions.

Additionally, due to the fact that *BIP* has been available online and through CD-ROM for the past few years, it is much more responsive to publication changes and therefore more accurate than it had been when it was available only in print form. While this in itself does not totally compensate for the inherent problems in using *BIP+* for this analysis, it may allay some criticism regarding the currency of its listings.

The results are highlighted in the tables on the following pages. Table 1 lists the percentage of 1983 imprints still available in 1988 by discipline. The average percentage of availability is 84.4%. Table 2 lists by discipline the percentage of 1979 imprints still available in 1989. As with the 1983 imprints, we randomly selected fifty titles in each of ten disciplines from over 100 publishers to determine how many 1979 imprints were still available in 1989. On average, 66.4% of these titles are still available ten years

later!

In absolute terms, the results of this survey should offer some comfort to those librarians who feel limited in their purchasing options. With discretionary material spending limited by serials commitments and blanket book order plans, librarians may now begin the process of reevaluating the benefits of their approval plans in light of the fact that the books they

require for their collection may still be available two, three, or more years later. In fact, a reduction in these book-gathering

plans and a curtailment in the purchase of books which are neither consistent with nor critical to their collections may significantly increase funds available for discretionary firm order spending.

While the Thor Power Tool ruling certainly has impacted the way the publishing industry manages its output, the latest technology in printing has made it more economical to reprint titles in small print runs, thereby permitting some publications to remain in print well beyond the expectations of most libraries.

And have you purchased your copy of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*?? (It may be out of print fast!)

age of orders reported out of print or out of stock indefinitely by our firm over the past five years offers no evidence to support the claim that publishers are declaring books out of print more rapidly in 1988 than they did in, for example, 1983. Quite to the contrary, most books appear to be in print far longer than most librarians would perhaps expect.

To test our hypothesis further -- that a high percentage of books are remaining in print for many years after publication -- we decided to do a study. We randomly selected fifty titles in each of ten disciplines from over 100 publishers to determine how many 1983 imprints were

A book is what they make a movie out of for television.

attributed to
Leonard Louis Levinson

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continued . . .

Table 1

1983 Imprints
50 Titles Per Discipline

<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Available 1988</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Biology	41	82
Business	36	72
Chemistry	47	94
Economics	39	78
Education	42	84
History	44	88
Literature	47	94
Political Science	42	84
Psychology	42	84
Sociology	42	84

Table 2

1979 Imprints
50 Titles Per Discipline

<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Available 1989</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Biology	32	64
Business	32	64
Chemistry	44	88
Economics	34	68
Education	33	66
History	35	70
Literature	34	68
Political Science	29	58
Psychology	34	68
Sociology	25	50

Current Status of Books Published, 1979-1989

(Note: This chart is based
on figures available on April
3, 1989 from online *Books
in Print*, file 470, Dialog)

prepared by Ambassador
Book Service, Inc.; 42
Chasner Street;
Hempstead, NY 11550)

<u>Year of Publication</u>	<u>Total Books</u>	<u>In Print</u>	<u>Out of Print</u>
1979	58,085	27,278 (46.9%)	30,807 (53.0%)
1980	62,120	32,374 (52.1%)	29,746 (47.9%)
1981	62,042	36,070 (55.5%)	28,972 (44.5%)
1982	67,403	41,333 (61.3%)	26,070 (38.7%)
1983	69,086	47,055 (68.1%)	22,031 (31.9%)
1984	72,951	53,683 (73.6%)	19,268 (26.4%)
1985	80,391	65,037 (81.9%)	15,354 (19.0%)
1986	80,342	71,141 (88.5%)	9,201 (11.5%)
1987	86,060	81,715 (94.9%)	4,345 (05.0%)
1988	93,477	92,028 (98.4%)	1,449 (01.5%)
1989	33,475	33,228 (99.2%)	247 (.007%)

Send Us Books!

Janet L. Flowers
UNC-Chapel Hill

"Send us Books!" cried Audrey Eaglen of the Cuyahoga County Public library! This was Audrey's succinct way of describing librarians' needs and frustrations when attempting to purchase books no longer available. Her cry came as part of a panel about out of print books at the summer 1988 American Library Association conference.

Since that meeting, more than 199 people have joined the Task Force in Out of Print to explore the issues further. The Task Force members represent all types of libraries, a number of vendors, some antiquarian dealers, and a few publishers.

Librarians and library wholesalers, rightly or wrongly, perceive that titles are going out of print sooner than in previous years. They also find continuing problems with obtaining copies of classic works, such as childrens' favorites. They feel that they are receiving more O.P. and O.S.I. reports from their vendors/publishers than previously. The reports are sometimes confusing. What does "O.S.I." really mean?

This state of affairs results in much wasted effort by both libraries and vendors trying to obtain titles no longer available. It makes it more difficult to expend book budgets within the local deadlines. Users, of course, are losing access to materials they need. Finally, publishers may be cutting themselves out of a market which, although not always visible, is sizeable and loyal.

After identifying the various compo-

nents of this complex problem, the Task Force began thinking of possible solutions. The Task Force is making a multiple-pronged approach to research the implications of O.P./O.S.I. Obviously, there need to be more statistical studies by publishers, vendors, and librarians to document the dimensions of the problem. A good start was Jeff Selth's recent "My Say" column which went against the common wisdom. He proclaimed that books are actually going out of print less rapidly than 5 years ago! Is someone else also studying this issue? Are you finding different results? Just what impact has the Thor decision had on the life span of books?

Pondering solutions to the out of print problem -- whether it is larger or smaller than we think -- brings one to

the conclusion that we need a triologue. Librarians, publishers, and library wholesalers need to understand one another's perspectives and needs better before the situation can be improved.

Perhaps this triologue could lead to a better understanding of the decision-making processes used by publishers. Librarians would then be a more informed consumer group. It might also alert publishers to the demand for their titles from the library community. Finally, it could even lead to new mechanisms for addressing some of the concerns raised.

The Task Force is in its beginning stages. We are brainstorming possible solutions and attempting to understand the economics of publishing or not publishing titles. We welcome more members. If you want to join the Task Force on Out of Print, please contact Sandy Paul (SKP Associates, 160 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010).

This article is an adaptation of one being submitted to Publishers Weekly for a "My Say" column.

And the beat goes on!! Out of Print Statistics

Peter Simon
R.R. Bowker

Several studies have been done in the past few months to analyze whether perception of the rise in the out-of-print declarations from publishers is in fact based on real information. From the point of view of the editorial preparation of the *Books In Print* database, which is supported by year-round mailings to thousands of publishers, and

the monthly updating of status information by the computer tapes of major publishers, here are some observations:

•In absolute terms, the number of titles reported to be out of print has increased (as well as the percentage to the total number of books in print in those years) during the past five years:

1984	35,500	(5.9%)
1985	38,450	(5.9%)
1986	54,000	(7.8%)
1987	76,800	(10.2%)
1988	81,800	(10.4%)

(These numbers do include as out of print both books that come out in annual editions and older editions of

"My Say: OP Books: A Popular Delusion," by Jefferson P. Selth, *Publishers Weekly*, January 6, 1989, pg. 78. Selth did a study using the *Cumulative Book Index*, *Books in Print* and *British Books in Print* and found that "the out-of-print picture has improved slightly in spite of the Thor decision."

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revised editions of the same work.)

Because *Books in Print* is now being updated via the tapes of major publishers, it is probable that more out of print declarations are being picked up than in years past. Nevertheless, the overall number cannot be ignored.

- As shown in the sample study done with *Books in Print*, it is likely that certain fields of publishing are greater contributors to the "OP universe" than others, particularly mass market paperbacks, childrens' books, and scholarly research materials, with particularly small original print runs.
- The distribution among publishers of OP declarations, on an annual basis, is fairly even. With thousands of publishers listed in *Books in Print* (in

fact close to 25,000), it only takes 3 or 4 titles per publisher (or 10 to 12 from some of the larger ones) to work up to the large counts which are reflected in the overall picture.

After the AAP/ALA RTSD Joint Committee completed its well-publicized survey of the library market (which was presented at the ALA Annual Conference in 1987), a subsequent program was set up on out-of-print acquisition problems. This meeting, held in the Summer of 1988, focused on many of the key problems. This included a desire on the part of librarians to know of out of print declarations in advance, for books that may shortly be unavailable. The result of this meeting was the creation of a Task Force which currently has over 100 actively participating volunteers. One of these subcommittees, chaired by Kerry Kresse (University of Wisconsin-Madison), is

starting out work to focus on the keeping or collecting of statistics on the various issues associated with out of print books. This includes trying to pinpoint the rate at which materials go out of print, with the clarification by type of material and by type of target audience.

In addition, this subcommittee will study what statistical information is available in the hands of book vendors, libraries, and organizations such as R.R. Bowker. Lastly, the subcommittee will study the cost to libraries of ordering materials that are found to be out of print (i.e., staff time, data processing charges, etc.)

The work of this group is just beginning, but it is hoped that over a period of time, the detailed picture relative to the demographics of what is being declared out of print will come into better focus.

Charleston Conference — 1989 -- FYI --

The Charleston Conference is listed in the Ballen Booksellers calendar incorrectly! It will be held November 9-11 and not the dates that are listed in the Ballen calendar (I'm not even going to tell you those dates so you can't get even more confused!)! The dates had to be changed when we had to change hotels and it was too late to update the Ballen calendar!! *Plus ça change* !

Thanks to all of you who sent in paper ideas. We got quite a few. Now comes the job of deciding what goes where. We have made one decision. The fee for next year will be \$95. That's 3% for inflation over 4 years. Really.

Prelim program will be mailed early summer . . .