February 1991

If You're Hot You're Hot

Julie Nilson

Indiana University Libraries

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Nilson, Julie (1991) "If You're Hot You're Hot," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 3: Iss. 1, Article 19.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1074>

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.

If You're Hot You're Hot

LITTLE NOTES FOR BIGHEADS

by Julie Nilson (Indiana University Libraries)

Editor's Note: When the Charleston Conference turned up on the agenda of the all-day Friday meeting of the Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries Discussion Group, I was shocked and also, as you might imagine, curious. Well, here it is, a report from Julie Nilson about what transpired.

"There seems to be a generally held opinion that we don't give as much attention to acquisitions affairs in our discussions as we should. In this regard, I have asked . . . to assist us by bringing to our attention matters of interest arising from the annual Charleston Conference." This is quoted from the cover memo which accompanied the Midwinter Agenda mailed to the members of the Technical Services Directors of Large Research Libraries Discussion Group otherwise known as the BIGHEADS. It was suggested that I should be prepared to cover my assignment in 5-10 minutes in a format suitable for a discussion group. I was to follow a presentation of a new acquisitions/collection development organizational model which had been established at Yale in which those acquisitions functions which occur prior to the receipt of the materials had been reorganized and assigned to the collection development branch of the organization.

When I approached this task, I was fairly well convinced that my appearance was, at best, a token gesture and that I had little information that would be new to this group. I was quickly dissuaded when I discovered that the "Charleston Conference"

represents a mysterious place where some key librarians (of the ARL persuasion) disappear each year in November and then reappear at their desks seemingly refreshed, with a somewhat smug, contented visage, and the ammunition to make pronouncements about crises in pricing, trends in publishing, and anticipated developments in acquisitions. As soon as I heard the introductory remarks made by Mike Bruer, I knew that my initial assessment was wrong.

Three Broad Areas

I had planned to report on three broad areas of the 1990 Charleston Conference that seemed particularly relevant to the large academic library: the acquisition of non-domestic material, seed projects for the 90s, and the acquisition/cataloging interface in libraries with integrated systems. I decided summarily (something I practice a lot in my day-to-day library survival strategies) to include a brief description of the "Charleston Conference" which I will repeat here for the benefit of those who have yet to participate in one.

Overview of the Charleston Conference

Under the benign direction and energetic leadership of Katina Strauch, the "Charleston Conference" is an annual gathering of the library, publishing, and vendor community to discuss issues in "book and serial acquisition." Because the meeting takes place on common ground, there is no pressure to make sales or commitments. It offers an opportunity for us to educate each other in the problems we face and to find ways to try to solve them. The Conference is international in scope. Each year, the

number of participants increases as do the number of special interest areas. Growth seems to have come largely through word of mouth. Although U.S. publishers have not been regular participants, several of the European publishers — particularly from the STM group are. Conference topics are largely initiated by the participants. If someone suggests an area of interest, that individual is usually provided with the opportunity to develop that topic for the next year's conference. Some conference papers are published in *LAPT (Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory)*. An additional publication *Against the Grain (ATG)* has grown out of this Conference. What doesn't get published is the extensive debate and commentary which takes place in response to presentations both in the meeting room and in the halls and byways of Charleston. The historical setting provides an ambiance which is particularly conducive to the scholarly connection of the past to the future — part of our mission.

The acquisition of non-domestic materials

The first topic I chose to share with the BIGHEADS discussion group related to the acquisition of non-domestic materials. My compilation of comments and observations extracted from different presentations included the use of multiple ISBNs by publishers seeking to put a "domestic" slipcover on European publications, the impact of the movement toward North American distribution of titles issued by the multinational publishers (ostensibly for the same reason), the state of publishing in the Eastern bloc countries, the former East

Germany, and the Soviet Union, and the challenges and unresolved issues presented by the move toward a single market in Europe. The use of multiple ISBNs was perceived as one way in which European publishers believed that they could compete for dollars during budget-cutting periods in which foreign publications might be among the first to go. The new multinational publication/distribution patterns have affected the mix of orders seen by those European vendors used by ARL libraries. The multinationals pursue the higher priced, easier, and heavily discounted titles. Pulling these from the mix of orders received by a standard European vendor then affects the pricing scale for those titles obtained through the vendor and, in turn, affects library spending patterns.

I reported on the general disarray of publishing in the Eastern/Soviet bloc countries focusing on the collapse of the infrastructure of state-supported publishing and the foreign nature of the idea of entrepreneurship.

Materials which were published earlier in 1990, before the Wall fell, weren't distributed widely. There is no business infrastructure for filling orders, responding to claims, writing invoices, or marketing. In the case of East Germany, approximately 50% of the journals which were previously available will no longer exist and surviving journals will cost more. Many of the state supported publications which were in the process of being distributed during the period of "the Wall" were gathered up by second hand dealers and will appear in future years at a price. Most manuscripts which are ready or waiting for publication are being published in the West. Access to the West is having some visible influence on publishing trends. Hot topics for publications include religious titles, sex manuals, Agatha Christie, and the repetition of many Western titles. It seems to portend a change from publishing the state supported point of view to attempting to respond to consumer demand. This will have

an effect on U.S. library collections which have anticipated a certain type of subject matter from this area of the world. Old contacts used by ARL libraries may pose problems because they may have been affiliated with a power structure which is now in disfavor.

Although it would appear that the emerging Economic Community would have little impact on the book trade, a number of unresolved issues which may affect the cost of materials to the U.S. were reported. Among the concerns and challenges in 1992 will be the VAT rates and the fair trade price for books and periodicals. At present, preferential treatment is given to printed materials so that most receive a reduced VAT rate in the EC countries. It is unclear if the book trade will be able to maintain this privileged position. It is also unclear whether the VAT of the exporting or importing country will prevail and how the concept of a "fair trade price" will be interpreted once materials cross a border. The manner in which these

Tested High Tech

To manage the information explosion, you need more than automation. You need a system that works for you.

At Majors, before we introduce technology to help you, we test it, challenge it — prove it will *work*. MORE* is Majors' advanced database solution with ordering capabilities for librarians who need information quickly. It's fast, efficient and reliable. Better yet, it works for you, the way you work. And to back it all up, your own highly trained Account Specialist is always ready to hear from you.

With the industry's largest inventory of medical and scientific books of all publishers, journals and continuations, Majors is a time-tested resource with proven technology for the various system interfaces beyond the development stage. Tell us your program needs; we want to work with you.

*Majors' On-line REsource

MAJORS SCIENTIFIC BOOKS, INC.
MAJORS SCIENTIFIC SUBSCRIPTIONS

Serving Libraries For Over 80 Years

DALLAS 1851 Diplomat Dallas, Texas 75234
214/247-2929 800/633-1851 FAX: 214/241-7003

ATLANTA 3770-A Zip Industrial Blvd. Atlanta, Georgia 30354
404/768-4956 800/241-6551 FAX: 404/768-4942

HOUSTON 8723 Knight Road Houston, Texas 77054
713/795-5599 800/458-9077 FAX: 713/795-0221

issues are settled will have a direct effect on the price that U.S. libraries pay for materials from these countries.

Seed projects

At this point, I realized that I had lost eye contact with many members of the discussion group. They were as busily engaged in taking notes as I had been while at Charleston. So, I moved ahead to a brief outline of some of the seed projects that are likely to have a dramatic effect on publishing, collecting, and library services during the decade of the 1990s. The trends and comments which had captured my attention were based on the electronic creation and transmittal of information. The growing trend among scholars and researchers towards using the Internet and electronic mail systems as the primary source or supplier of information will go directly to end users, by-passing library bureaucracies (collection development, acquisitions, cataloging, mediated reference services) and the evidence that users will pay (presumably within reason) for the product seemed to predict serious changes in our organizations. It was suggested that we should take this as an opportunity to civilize the electronic future.

Other challenging statements emerged from some of these sessions. Electronic publishing should not be viewed as a product, but as a channel. It is expected that many high-end journals will quintuple in price by the end of this decade. The current distribution system is inefficient and reflects the past. A distribution system which delivers the text to the end user at a rate of five to ten cents per page needs to be found. Librarians and publishers alike need to recognize that print journals are not a good way to distribute information. They represent a flawed and obsolete system. There are two essential components in scholarly communication — authors and readers. All the rest are middlemen. (Ah, the endangered middleman.)

We can anticipate seeing the distribution of full-text of journal articles, for a fee, directly to end users via FAX or computer file. We can anticipate having access to an extremely large database of articles which have been stored electronically, the Indexes for which can be accessed through our online catalogs. (Did I say placed on the endangered list or already vanished?)

The acquisitions/cataloging interface

At this point, I had far exceeded the time I had been allotted, but was faced with reporting on the remaining topic — the acquisitions/cataloging interface in libraries with integrated systems. I was reduced to a few observations and questions each of which were raised in Charleston. Integrated systems, particularly those which use a single bibliographic record as a core from which all the library functions stem, ride roughshod over traditional library boundaries. Is the importing or keying of a record for order purposes the beginning of cataloging? Should authority work be done on these records in order to make them fit into the OPAC in a logical and accessible place? Who does this work? Where does the responsibility lie for withdrawing a record for materials which are not received? The list is endless.

Conclusion?

The end of my comments brought forth some discussion about the relation of this presentation to the divided acquisitions model which had been presented by the previous speaker. A few members of the discussion group noted that the Charleston Conference sounded exciting and informative. At least one member reflected nostalgically about past days as an acquisitions librarian. I expect that Katina will have some new requests for subscriptions to *ATG*. I also suspect that we may see a broader audience at future conferences. 🐘

And They Were There

continued from page 14

of Non-Official Publications" since these are problems that cut across international boundaries and involve cooperation among countries within IFLA. Apparently, in the future the Professional Board will allow only two projects per Section and new financial guidelines are forthcoming.

Susan Tarr will speak regarding new media at the Moscow IFLA in 1991.

There was discussion regarding the project on differential pricing by Griebel and Montag. "Will the Chain Break?" the workshop on August 23, was lauded as the beginning of real dialogue with publishers to hopefully improve things. A professional resolution regarding differential pricing was discussed and a draft was distributed. Apparently, the Professional Board will act on the resolution when it meets in November, 1990. Leonhard hopes to affect the publication of papers of the workshop by IFLA.

The exchange project was discussed by Ulla Hojsgaard. A workshop will be held in Moscow at IFLA in 1991.

Discussion next moved to the Medium Term Programme covering 1992-1997. Judy McDermott (Library of Congress) is to prepare a draft. Sieglinde Rooney (Canada) is to prepare an evaluation of the old MTP (1986-1991).

Regarding the Moscow IFLA 1991 conference, the Open Session will deal with "New Media in Collection Development" (Susan Tarr, Judy McDermott). A preliminary report on the project is also planned for IFLA in New Delhi (1992) and a final workshop in Barcelona in 1993. Also to be covered in Moscow is "Acquisition Policy and Collection Management in Eastern Countries, especially the USSR" with Zoja Sorokina as the tentative speaker; "Acquisition Policies in Developing Countries," tentative speaker Bart Nwafor, Nigeria; a workshop regarding "International Exchange of Non-Official Publications," coordinated by Ulla Hojsgaard