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And They Were There

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LACUNY Annual Institute

by **Julia Gelfand**
(University of California, Irvine)

The annual institute of the Library Association of the City University of New York (LACUNY) took place at the IBM Gallery of Art and Science in Manhattan on Friday, April 12, 1991. The theme of this year's conference, "Collection Development: Survival Tactics in an Age of Less" could not have been more appropriate since many libraries on CUNY campuses were closed that week due to student demonstrations over the proposed fee and tuition increases made by the Governor's office for the next academic year.

The Institute featured two keynote speakers who introduced different orientations and issues to the general agenda of cooperative access and sharing information and resources through various channels. Peter R. Young, Executive Director of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries & Information Science and chair of the upcoming White House Conference on Libraries and Information Science, delivered the first address on "Evolving Knowledge Resource Access Systems." He suggested a new paradigm for how different systems and processes may be incorporated and how academic libraries can determine the best matches to achieve goals in sharing resources. Ward Shaw, Chairman of CARL Systems, Inc., spoke on "Electronic Resources and Libraries in the 1990s: Issues and Opportunities," where he highlighted the current developments of online public access catalogs, specifically the evolution of CARL.

The afternoon session was a panel on "Cooperative and Collaborative Approaches to Collection Development

Coast to Coast" and featured four speakers, Julia Gelfand at UCI spoke about "Cooperative and Collaborative Collection Development: Planning and Outcomes to Date in the University of California Experience;" Susan Vaughn from Brooklyn College identified directions CUNY could take as they assess viable options for greater cooperation; Rhonna Goodman the Assistant Coordinator of Programs and Services for METRO identified coordinated collection development in the METRO region and Suzanne Fedunok, Assistant Director for Infor-

mation and Research Services at SUNY Binghamton shared several ongoing efforts in the SUNY PACLINK projects and described the status of work being supported by CLR research grants. Lots of information was exchanged and the Planning Committee distributed an annotated bibliography on related topics of cooperative collection development efforts by academic libraries and consortia in the past decade. Papers from this conference will be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Urban Academic Librarian*..

Professional Development Roundtable on Book Reviewing

by **Linda Carr**
(Boston University)

The Boston Library Consortium's Staff Development Committee sponsored a Professional Development Roundtable on Book Reviewing on March 26, 1991 at Boston University. More than thirty librarians from BLC member libraries attended. Many had experience in reviewing books — from a few months' duration to more than ten years. Several attendees were interested in becoming reviewers for professional journals. Others were interested in book reviews as selection tools. Both writers and readers of reviews agreed that the most important thing for one to remember about reviews is that they are opinions. Well-written reviews should impart a sense of the whole book, including information on the style and approach of the author. A major responsibility of a reviewer is to make known a book's limitations. Reviewers spoke about the

difficulty of writing a negative review and of the dilemma that arises when a poorly written book is the only available publication on a topic. Some attendees asked about the advisability of citing alternative titles in a review; one spoke about the repercussions that can result from the publication of a negative review. Aspiring reviewers heard how experienced reviewers entered the field, and how some journal editors select books and match them with reviewers. The place of reviews in the overall selection process also was discussed. Attendees spoke of the difficulties of assessing conflicting reviews and of the frustrations encountered when a reviewer fails to review the book while displaying his or her knowledge of its subject.

To be effective, reviews should be timely, informative, and honest. While not the sole source of information on potential acquisitions, reliable reviews can be useful tools in the collection development process.

ACQUISITIONS 91

by *Dora Biblarz*
(Arizona State University)

Acquisitions '91 - Acquisitions of Access? The changing Environment. Second National Conference on Acquisitions, Budgets, and Collections, was held April 10 and 11, 1991 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Conference was organized by Genaway & Associates, Inc., with Program Chair, Katina Strauch.

Approximately 140 people attended the Acquisitions 1991 Conference in Minneapolis. They were from all types and sizes of academic institutions, and also included participants from public and special libraries, in addition to vendors and one publisher.

Keynote speakers started off each of the two days of packed programming. On the first day, Marilyn Gell

Mason, Director, Cleveland Public Library, responded to the Conference theme question, "Acquisitions or Access?" by saying it is not a question of either/or, but "yes, both." Mason proposed that we need to reexamine our perspective these days, emphasizing a greater interdependence among libraries, which results from the changing expectations of patrons, and is fueled by the promotion by libraries of increased access to information. Mason also noted a trend toward a shift in format within our collections, as illustrated by her own library's recent growth in materials acquired in microform at a rate that exceeded the growth of book acquisitions. For librarians at many institutions, the decision has become not only what item to select, but also in what format.

Mason proposed a vision of the future, where a scholar may choose to work on research at midnight, from her/his home computer, first logging on to the local research li-

brary's catalog, identifying the materials needed the next day and placing requests for these. Then, turning to the gateway access, the scholar searches other OPACs for items not found. Finally, the scholar looks up full-text articles in yet another database and downloads needed information for use later.

In the not too distant future, we may see the redefinition of a library, Mason asserts, as a "virtual library," with the actual location of research materials distributed among various locations and accessible to anyone with the necessary technology. Service fees will dominate, but users may still seek out the materials themselves and thereby avoid fees.

The keynote speaker the second day was Richard M. Dougherty, President of ALA, Professor, School of Information and Library Studies, University of Michigan, and Editor, *Journal of Academic Librarianship*.

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Dougherty always has interesting things to say, whether orally or in print, in his own or other publications, but in this intimate setting, his style engaged the audience in an interactive dialogue. He began with a number of provocative questions that required the participants to raise their hands in response. Before long, he called on volunteers who provided their own observations (testimonials) to illustrate his points. By the time an hour and a half passed, everyone was excited and participating and forgot how long we had been sitting.

Among the most interesting observations brought up by Dougherty, were the "Two and one-half myths" that must be debunked before libraries can play a meaningful role as information providers:

- 1) Bigger libraries are better libraries.
- 2) Faculty and students can use the library effectively.
- 1/2) Libraries are easy to use.

He urged participants to mobilize their efforts toward recognizing the inevitability of the changing environment: that the days of the great, comprehensive research collections are gone and we must, instead, take the leadership role to focus on access and delivery as solutions, rather than being reluctantly dragged into other, less productive paths.

Following the keynote speaker each day, three breakout sessions were held with 2-3 speakers in each. It was impossible to attend each of the sessions and the papers were not repeated (the proceedings of this meeting will be published soon and will be available for purchase to those who were unable to attend). Topics covered various aspects of the acquisitions-access issue with a predominance of de-

scriptions of local circumstances. Speakers gave examples of strategies and adaptations developed to deal with increased demands for service in an atmosphere of shrinking resources and a proliferation of information formats. These perspectives illustrated the creative approaches and innovative solutions, both short and long-term, that characterize libraries' responses to the present situation.

In addition to sharing coping strategies, one afternoon session addressed the nuts and bolts issues of vendor selection and budgeting. Dana Alessi, Baker & Taylor, presented a list of criteria that should be considered in selecting and evaluating monographic firm order vendors. Edna Laughrey, Faxon, discussed the results of a survey and the conclusions drawn regarding the factors judged to be of greatest importance in selecting a serial vendor. She identified a list of factors that differentiate firm order monograph vendors from serial vendors, and concluded with a different approach to priority-setting in the process of serial review, with a graph of the results.

Murray Martin, Library Consultant, reacted to the two previous speakers and followed with a breathless presentation on how to prepare and monitor the acquisitions budget. He illustrated his remarks with very interesting graphs, particularly one which plotted the number of titles held with number of titles added in one year and number of titles circulated in one year, by broad LC classification. This graph was based on Martin's experience as University Librarian at Tufts.

Martin shared the wisdom of many years of experience with budgets and university administrators in a private institution, and concluded with the general observation that the

conservative political movement of the past decade has managed to separate payment of taxes from services received. Citizens still want the same, or more services, but are refusing to pay the necessary taxes to fund them.

During the final wrap-up session panel, members gave their personal summary of the two days and interacted in lively participation with members of the audience. Agreement was reached that libraries must define their core collections and that core titles need to be available for immediate use. The remaining "peripheral" or low use materials are the type that may be collected selectively, in certain libraries, and these are the titles that "access" so obliquely refers to.

The most stimulating aspect of this conference was the fact that logistics permitted so much interaction. A relatively small number of participants joined together to share ideas and provoke discussions on a timely topic over a two-day period. Speakers became participants from one hour to the next, and conversations could be carried on through lunch or breaks or during the evening social. The Conference theme, "Acquisitions or Access?" allowed ample room for topics ranging from cooperative collection development and resource sharing activities to document delivery, electronic formats and OPACs. The combination of participants and broad ranging discussions in this intimate setting made it one of the most enjoyable and refreshing conferences I have recently experienced.