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Library Profile/ Montgomery County Public Library

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Library Profile

Montgomery County Public Library by Katherine White (Acquisitions Manager)

Column Editor, **Barbara Dean** (Fairfax County Public Library)

With this issue, we welcome Barbara Dean as our new Column Editor!

Community Profile

Montgomery County is a Maryland suburb of Washington, D. C. with a population of 757,000 people. The average per capita income is almost \$30,000, and the average household income is \$82,750. Many are long-term residents in retirement, but there is also a fast-growing proportion of young children. About 24 percent of the population are minority cultures, with a rather high number of Asians. The level of education is high -- 49 percent of adults over age 25 years are college graduates. The primary sources of employment in the area are in research and development, and in service industries, especially with the various levels of government.

Library Profile

The Public Libraries (MCDPL) are a department of County government, and include 24 agencies ranging from four large regional branches to storefronts and a detention center library. The operating budget is about \$19 million this year, of which approximately \$3 million is spent on materials. Circulation reached 8,300,000 in FY91, and over two million questions were answered at the Information Desks. Montgomery County, along with the University of Maryland, uses the CARL Systems network for circulation control, bibliographic maintenance, and for acquisitions.

Acquisitions Profile

The Acquisitions Office reports to the Chief of Technical Services, one of three divisions including Public Services, and Collection Development. Selection of materials and planning of the materials budget is done in the collection Development office, and forwarded to Acquisitions for placement of the orders.

County procurement regulations require that purchases for over \$7,000 (within

a fiscal year) be placed only with contract vendors. Thus, we maintain 28 contracts for library materials. Every three years we issue invitations for bids and set up detailed contract documents for the purchase of about 90 percent of our books, subscriptions, and non-print materials.

In 1988 MCDPL transferred its automated circulation system from SCICON to what is now called CARL Systems, Inc. bringing up all 20 branches and creating what was in effect an on-line catalog for the library staff. By 1990, CARL was ready to make its Acquisitions module available, and we began the planning process to end our use of Baker & Taylor's Libris order system, and to start "stand-alone" ordering on CARL terminals.

As we studied the new program, we realized how much we had relied on the Libris database for bibliographic confirmation of titles, and began to look for a means of tapping into another source. At about the same time, due to a series of problems on Libris, Baker & Taylor offered us access to BTLINK Interact, an electronic ordering system used by their commercial customers. At the ALA annual conference in Chicago, in an elevator in the Palmer House, Chris Larew from Baker & Taylor and Ann Friedman, our Associate Director, made the right connection and realized it would be possible to connect CARL Acquisitions with the bibliographic data available on BTLINK Interactive. This brainstorm was the beginning of a year-long project which has both complicated and revolutionized our acquisitions procedures.

Order entry starts with IBM pc's on which we dial up BTLINK, via the IBM network. Once in BTLINK it is possible to place an order, review orders placed that day, or simply search the database for titles. The outstanding advantage of using BTLINK is that the actual warehouse inventory shows on the screen, giving the user accurate information

regarding availability. When the order is placed, the inventory instantly changes and those copies are reserved for us. The process developed by CARL was to capture the order screen off BTLINK and download in onto a hard disk in the pc. All information on the screen, including author, title, ISBN, LCCN, price and quantity ordered is recorded for transfer to our CARL records. Baker & Taylor also provides fields on the screen for us to enter fund names and distribution grid names, which also carry over to CARL. Once the entire purchase order is completed and downloaded, the user exits BTLINK and returns to the CARL system. Using a TACL, the data on the hard disk is uploaded to the Tandem processors which support the CARL program. Then a "conversion" program is run from the TACL to translate the data into terms recognized by the CARL Acquisitions program. At this point, order records are created which include the in-house funds used, the branch distribution, and vendor information. In addition, a temporary title record is created in the on-line PAC so that branch staff and patrons know the status of an order and may place reserves immediately. The cataloging staff use this record to create a full catalog entry with SuperCat MARC records. When the materials arrive, the Acquisitions staff record the invoice data against the order, and the processing staff "attach" the copies to the MARC record—making them available for circulation and fulfillment of reserves. The single bibliographic record captured from BTLINK is used and adapted throughout the process, with no repetitive keying to reproduce identical information.

The greatest advantage of using the BTLINK screen-capture process has been the use of a single bibliographic record from the time of ordering until the book is on the shelf or in the patron's hand. Five years ago, it was necessary to create three independent records in Acquisitions, Cataloging, and in the

continued on page 41

literary methods. Realizing that the French court's action rendered the book irreplaceable, we put it in our locked cage collection to await the eager *thesard*.

As for Fast's category of books containing "erroneous and dangerous information," here again a case can be made for retention and protection. Georges Simenon won a court case for defamation against his ex-wife's fictionalized memoir about him titled *Le Phallus d'or* (need I translate?). Here

too the book was withdrawn from the trade because the court found that it contained information harmful to its subject. And here again we acted to protect the interests of our present and future researchers by placing the contentious title under lock and key.

With books at least, we have signed no licensing agreement with publishers, vendors or aggrieved third parties. When we bought the book, it became ours to deal with as we see fit. We must place the interests of our users first, and if

others have a superior claim, they can make it in a separate action. We must make our best defense and not prejudge the matter in favor of those who are not our clients. And if some librarians are focused on vendor relations, they should remember that they have colleagues with a different perspective that should not be pre-empted.

As for possible forgeries and other hoaxes (a category left out of Fast's and Webster's literary moralizing), we're still examining the *Vinland Map*. ☛

Counter - Response

Recalling A Book

Here is Barry's and Judy's response to Jeffry Larson.

Jeffry Larson has broadened the debate on this subject and raised some issues we had not covered. Part of the pleasure of writing for (and reading) *Against the Grain* is that complicated subjects can be raised and analyzed from a number of different viewpoints.

We agree with Larson that collection management librarians should be included in the decision making process. There is, as Larson points out, a legitimate viewpoint that they represent, and they should be consulted. The decision to keep a plagiarized book for the purpose of primary research is valid, and the value of the book in that context should be considered.

While Larson views this decision from the value-to-the-collection standpoint, certainly a legitimate perspective, we continue to disagree that the decision should be made by the "appropriate selector." Plagiarism is a legal issue. It is, by extension, a business issue, and the decision therefore rests ultimately with the acquisitions librarian. He or she should consult the selector, the library administration, the legal authorities and other appropriate people, but the final decision should reside within the acquisitions librarian. In fact, Judy did just that by discussing the book with a respected faculty member and the legal authority on campus. Judy did not participate in a "cover up" by reporting that the situation was embarrassing; she merely added this remark as further evidence that the book was plagiarized.

We fail to see how a legal opinion for or against returning a book makes for extra work on the part of university staff attorneys. They get these kinds of questions all the time, and we doubt they give advice based upon how much extra work it will make for them. This does not seem like a smart way to keep one's job.

Larson calls Barry "excessively moralistic," a sure sign that he has never met him. In discussing Barry's viewpoint Larson seems to move from plagiarism to censorship. We should make it clear that the **Protocols of the Elders of Zion**, as offensive and untruthful as it may be, should enjoy the same protection as any other book. When Larson introduces two court cases he muddies the argument. In neither of these cases did the publisher voluntarily state that they made a mistake in publishing the books and that they wanted the books returned. In both these cases the publishers fought to keep the books alive. As librarians and booksellers we should always be on the side of the book, even when it is hurtful, dangerous or unpopular. But not when the publisher tells us it is plagiarized, because plagiarism destroys the intellectual playing field.

To clarify Barry's view: Libraries should keep the book in cases of suspected, but unproven plagiarism. Even if a court finds that a book is plagiarized and orders its removal from distribution, there seems no compelling reason to return the book. In this case, the publisher is trying to protect its decision to publish.

and although it lost in court it has not asked libraries to return it. When in doubt (and we can certainly doubt the courts, especially these days), keep the book.

If, however, the publisher says that they have subsequently found the book to be plagiarized and want it returned we should comply. In this case the publisher is exercising its right, retroactively, not to publish a book, and we should respect that right.

Larson makes a strong case for keeping a book, even when the publisher has recalled it. There may be situations where the need to have primary sources of plagiarism outweighs the desire to cooperate with the publisher in protecting intellectual property. That is why this case is so interesting to us, and Larson's contribution to the debate is welcomed.

Do we appear inconsistent? A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. We made that up. Really. ☛

Library Profile

continued from page 30

circulation database. Now, the initial order record is simply edited as necessary by the Acquisitions and Cataloging staffs. In addition, the title records are in the public catalog within hours of order placement. We have embraced this new procedure with enthusiasm, and continue to search for similar opportunities with other materials vendors. ☛