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Library Profile / University of Cincinnati Law Library

Jack G. Montgomery
University of Cincinnati

Barbara Dean
Fairfax County Public Library

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Library Profile

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI LAW LIBRARY

by **Jack G. Montgomery** (Head of Acquisitions)

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

The University of Cincinnati, Robert S. Marx Law Library was founded in 1874 when it was officially created by the Board of Trustees of Cincinnati College. In 118 years, The Library has grown from a few thousand volumes and a budget of \$1,500 dollars to over 300,000 volumes and budget of over \$1,000,000. The Library is housed in a new building of over 49,000 square feet, half of which is occupied by library shelves. Our seating can accommodate 439 patrons. Currently the library is staffed by seven professional librarians, six support staff and numerous student assistants. The staff offers its patrons traditional library services as well as online searching through Lexis, Westlaw, UCLID (University of Cincinnati Information Database), CALI (Computer-Assisted Legal Instruction), word processing, and the University-wide Ethernet backbone which allows the patron access to University and Ohiolink resources as well as the Internet. In fact, last year over 9,000 hours were spent on online computer assisted legal research in the library's new computer lab.

In many ways our library is typical of the small academic law libraries. Yet, the Robert S. Marx Law Library occupies a rather interesting position within Cincinnati's law library community. Within a four-mile radius of the University are ten firm libraries, the Sixth Circuit Library, and the Cincinnati Law Library Association at the Hamilton County Courthouse. These libraries provide the legal community of Cincinnati with the majority of library resources and services necessary for the practice of law. Consequently, the Marx Law Library does not have to respond to the legal community in the same way it would if it were the only law library in this area. This allows the library to focus its energy and resources toward the College of Law Faculty and students' curriculum and research requirements. As an example, The Human Rights Collection which

supports the scholarship of the Urban Morgan Institute For Human Rights, is nationally recognized for its coverage of human rights from 1920 to the present. In addition to human rights, the library has developed a significant collection in international and comparative law as well as a collection in corporate law. Collection development at the law library is the responsibility of the acquisitions librarian and the director of the library. The acquisitions librarian coordinates the collection development process through a two-component library committee system. The first organizational component of the system is the Bibliographic Selection Committee. This committee meets monthly and makes all collection development and management decisions. The members of the committee are from all sections of the library including circulation, technical services, reference, and interlibrary loans. The second organizational component that supports this committee is the faculty liaison program. The liaison program assigns each public services librarian to a group of faculty members. The liaison supplies individualized reference and research assistance to those faculty members and are members of the Bibliographic Selection Committee. In this way the liaison becomes familiar with the faculty member's curriculum and research interests. This information is conveyed to the Acquisitions Librarian who in turn assists the liaison by keeping the faculty member informed of new publications and resources. Any resulting orders from the faculty are then funneled through the Acquisitions Librarian from the liaison.

Therefore it is the responsibility of the Acquisitions Librarian to solicit information activity from publishers and vendors. He then sifts through the volume of mail solicitations, catalogs, and other promotional material to be certain that the materials sent to the faculty through the liaison meet the interests criteria and any duplication

of the materials forwarded to the faculty can be avoided.

This organizational system was recently put to the test when the library was required to restructure its collection in response to budgetary restraints and changes in the faculty and curriculum. Due to the high level of communication achieved through this two-level system, only seven out of over 450 supplemented titles canceled, had to be reinstated as of this date. This type of organizational structure also provides much needed faculty support for major library projects and promotes overall good relations among librarians, faculty, and administration. Often faculty members, now conscious of the cost of legal publications for the first time, will request a price check or supplementation cost before placing an order.

The Technical Services Department at the Law Library is comprised of three professional and two full and one part-time staff member. The Acquisitions Librarian has one full-time assistant whose primary responsibility is accounts payable. Student assistants are responsible for title verification and the keying of bibliographic and order records. Printouts of OCLC/MARC records are used as a guide for online record creation. Catalogers use the OCLC number to identify the order record and overlay the keyed record with the full MARC record. The Acquisitions Librarian checks the orders, enters the various elements into the bibliographic and order records (location, vendor, fund, etc.) and keys the orders to print. The orders are printed at the main library and arrive the next morning in the internal mail system along with payment and fund activity reports.

As materials are received, the Acquisitions Librarian receives the material, updates the online records, and submits the titles with a printout of the online order record to cataloging

for final processing.

Serial records at the Law Library are currently in the process of conversion to online records. Several librarians and staff are participating in this project under the supervision of the Head of Technical Services who also serves as the Systems Librarian.

The Library has been employing the Innovative Interfaces (Innopac) system at various levels for several years. In 1992, however, the entire University of Cincinnati Library system brought up all elements of the Innopac system to operate in a multi-jurisdictional environment. This multi-jurisdictional environment has necessitated the development of a system of university-wide committees structured around each basic Innopac module. The committees meet regularly to develop standards, resolve issues, facilitate communication, and develop training programs for new elements within the system. As an example, the Acquisitions System Management Committee (ASMC) is charged with the evaluation and further development of the acquisitions and serials modules. The Committee has developed such online record standards as a minimal biblio-

graphic entry standard for records manually keyed into the system. Manually keying records into the system is employed by those jurisdictions that do not have the capacity to download records directly from OCLC into the Innopac database.

Most recently, the Acquisitions System Management Committee has been preparing the training program required to implement the new changes to online order records brought about by the inclusion of the University of Cincinnati into the statewide Ohiolink library system. These new standards for order record fields will eventually be used for statistical purposes and possibly collection development on a statewide level.

As the development of a university and statewide library system has evolved, so has the need for increased communication and cooperation within each of the individual components within an institution. Certainly the once-separated fields of technical and public services have been brought into closer interaction than previously existed. Patrons within the university community and now those employing the Ohiolink central catalog can view

our records as soon as they are created or downloaded. This creates the need for ongoing dialogue between cataloging, serials, and acquisitions subsystems. This level of communication has been achieved in the microcosm of the Marx Law Library and has resulted in a symbiotic relationship among the departments that has benefitted the work flow and the organization as a whole. In some way, automation may finally bring an end to the "little kingdom syndrome" now present in many institutions.

The Marx Law Library is about to enter a new phase of its evolution. We are currently developing an optical imaging system that has among its stated goals the ability to offer digitally imaged documents to the legal community and the online public. The project is in its early stages with many issues such as copyright and standards still to be resolved. We are, however, confident that we are moving toward an exciting and challenging future as information professionals and will be able to respond as an organization to whatever changes are required. ☛

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