September 1993

Media Minder

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Recommended Citation

Crismond, Linda F. (1993) "Media Minder," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 5: Iss. 4, Article 22.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1415>

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New Feature — Media Minder

By **Linda F. Crismond**, Vice President for Public Relations, Professional Media Service Corp.

*With this issue, we welcome **Linda Crismond** as a regular contributor to **ATG**. Linda has kindly agreed to let us in on some of the workings of the Media Mind! Thank you, Linda. Welcome.*

The intent of this first column is to give the reader an overview of some of the major issues in the selection and acquisitions of audio and video materials. Further columns will discuss in greater depth these issues and those surrounding the emergence of multimedia materials.

The circulation of audio books is the fastest growing service in public libraries in the United States today, followed closely by the loan of educational videos. Academic libraries budget the most for videos, however, according to a study by ABC Clio which was published in the *Video Annual*, 1993. Academic video budgets averaged \$5,547, followed by public libraries at \$3,267 annually, and special libraries at \$1,614.

And, the demand by the public, students, and faculty is growing. The Audio Publishers Association reported that sales for audio publications were up 81% in the first quarter of 1993 as compared to one year earlier. Over half (51%) of the people questioned obtained the material from a library. The most popular subject was "inspirational," followed by childrens' titles. They preferred cassettes to CD's, listened most frequently in their car, and had at least some college education.

The library video profile from the ABC Clio survey showed that educational videos were the most frequently purchased (44% of the collection), followed by childrens' (26%), feature films (15%), and "how to's" (12%). The average cost per title showed that special libraries pay the highest price, \$60, compared to academic libraries at \$53 per video, school libraries, \$44 per video, and public libraries, \$33 per video.

There are a number of issues which challenge acquisitions and collection development librarians in their charge to purchase audio and video materials. Many result in different concerns from those surrounding book and serials acquisitions. First, a standard price is not often printed on the product, although they are now appearing more frequently

in the publishers' catalogs. This has caused retailers and others to create a list price based individual mark-up calculation and has resulted in different "list" prices being advertised. Further, video publishers tend to re-release titles and/or put materials on sale at lower prices in less than a year from their original publication.

The result is that some acquisitions librarians have tended to shop around for prices. As with most comparison surveys, the librarian should take a broad enough sample of both readily-available and harder-to-get materials to measure the vendor's prices, discounts, and ability to meet the full range of the library's needs. Speed should be balanced with fill rates, and extra service requirements should have a weighted factor. References from similar types of libraries can be requested.

Another complication is that AV materials do not have ISBN's, obviously, because they are not books. As this number becomes more prevalent as the key to accessing automated acquisitions systems, AV materials are either going to be handled as exceptions or pseudo-ISBN's are going to be created.

There is no definitive AV "books in print." There are a number of video and audio finding tools within categories of materials, such as feature films and closed captioned videos, and electronic vendor inventory systems, with the best providing on-line price and availability information. It is important to understand the comprehensiveness of the listing in evaluating which source to use.

New publishers, big and small, are emerging regularly. There are thousands of one-video publishers. Time Warner has re-entered the audio publishing field with a new line, Time Warner Audio Books, and they plan to publish eight to 10 titles a month. Simon and Schuster has joined the unabridged audio book field with cassettes priced at \$4.00, half that of the other major unabridged audio publishers, including Books on Tape. A number of publishers have created a low price line, the "paperbacks" of audio publishing. One of their shortcuts is to eliminate the plastic cassette box, which makes the material impossible for libraries to use without extra processing steps.

Cataloging and processing of AV materials are labor-consuming proce-

dures in a technical services department. Cataloging requires equipment to listen to or view the piece. It is an additional step to play a video to identify its running time; for a book, one only has to look for the last page number. The cataloging record has more coded fields and data elements. For example, a CD record often requires enhancement by academic librarians so that each selection on the recording is accessible by composer, title, and performer. In addition to Dewey and the Library of Congress classifications, ANSCR classification is also used by many for sound recordings.

The physical processing involves more steps than in-print materials. Many materials must be repackaged in more sturdy boxes. Multi-unit recordings and videos need to be placed in special boxes to keep the set together, because replacement tapes are very difficult to acquire. It is much harder to apply theft detection strips, and there are a variety of "rewind" and "keep out of heat" special labels to be affixed. Some vendors now offer both cataloging and processing services as an alternative to in-house operations.

The decisions on what to buy have become increasingly complicated as the AV publishers have followed the book publishers' lead and inundated collection development librarians with brochures and catalogs. And, the fuzzy lines in library collection development policies remain to be clarified. The hard decisions include whether to collect feature films or only educational materials, to buy first run or used videos, the fee vs free issues, the format choices of cassettes and/or CD's, and the emerging multimedia materials.

The next column will provide an overview of the different multimedia materials and the special challenges they present.

Linda F. Crismond is Vice President of Public Relations at Professional Media Service Corp., a supplier of audio visual materials with optional cataloging, processing, and other technical support services to libraries. She is the former Executive Director of the American Library Association and has spent most of her library career in technical service departments in public and academic libraries. ☛