September 1993

Library Profile / Virginia Commonwealth University

Diane Hollyfield

Virginia Commonwealth University

Barbara Dean

Fairfax County Public Library

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

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

Recommended Citation

Hollyfield, Diane and Dean, Barbara (1993) "Library Profile / Virginia Commonwealth University," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 5: Iss. 4, Article 26.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1419>

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.

Library Profile

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

by Diane Hollyfield

Column Editor, Barbara Dean (Fairfax County Public Library)

The two campuses of Virginia Commonwealth University are located in Richmond, Virginia. The academic campus is in an historic residential area called "The Fan." It inhabits both picturesque townhouses and modern buildings. Two miles away in the downtown business district are the Medical College of Virginia campus and the MCV Hospitals. VCU dates its founding from 1838 when the medical college was begun. The academic campus had its first incarnation in 1917. After attachments to other institutions, various name changes for each, and many years as neighboring state schools, the two combined in 1968 to become Virginia Commonwealth University. Today over 20,000 students study in 150 programs at VCU.

University Library Services (ULS) supports both campuses and MCV Hospitals through the Tompkins-McCaw and James Branch Cabell Libraries, hospital services, and media production services. Three divisions provide traditional library services: Health Sciences User Services, Academic User Services, and Network and Technical Services. Network and Technical Services Division includes departments for acquisitions, automation, collection management, cataloging and preservation. Acquisitions is organized to provide pre-order searching and ordering, firm order and approval receiving, open order receiving, accounting, and a current periodical and microforms service desk and reading room area for each library.

ULS celebrated the acquisition of its millionth volume in 1993, marking a period of rapid growth for the collections. The materials budget has increased almost 100% in two years, to slightly over \$5 million for 1993/94. Staff budgets have remained stable during this time and work procedures have had to be adapted to support the amount of processing necessitated by the increases. ULS utilizes extensive approval plans for academic and medical books and art exhibition catalogs. The library's goal has been to

direct as much of the new materials budget as possible toward the development of electronic resources. General indexes are available as MDAS databases on NOTIS wherever possible, and both campuses access a growing CD-ROM network in addition to titles housed independently in each location. Users have access to several full-text databases through cooperative arrangements with other Virginia institutions, utilizing the Text Center at the University of Virginia.

Acquisition of these new formats has been a time-consuming challenge to the acquisitions staff. Virginia has a highly regulated state procurement system. The libraries have delegated purchasing authority for library materials, within dollar limits. These regulations were originally written with primarily book purchases in mind, and provision was made for exceeding the dollar limits through aggregate purchases. These established routines for purchasing library materials were not designed for the acquisition of expensive databases.

Like many other academic libraries, ULS has "delegated purchasing authority," including the ability to issue purchase orders directly to suppliers, receive invoices directly and prepare accounting vouchers for forwarding to VCU's Invoice Processing for payment.

This is done within the context of the Virginia Public Procurement Act. Most printed books and serials and a limited number of CD-ROMs and other formats are purchased through contracted vendors. These contracts are awarded after competitive negotiation. ULS currently has eleven contracts, three for approval programs, four for firm orders and four for serials, standing orders and continuations. Of course, not all materials can be purchased through these vendors, and there are both dollar and procedural guidelines which are utilized for items which are foreign, sole source or out-of-print.

Purchases between \$1,000 and \$5,000 must be supported by complete documentation of three telephone price quotes with rationale for the selected vendor decision. Materials between \$5,000 and \$15,000 require a more elaborate procedure of involving four written quotes. Many of the electronic purchases are sole source, or available only from one distributor. If these are under \$10,000 we only need documentation of the sole source status from the vendor. Some CD-ROMs are in the mid range of pricing or available from more than one source, in which case we obtain the quotes. Purchases over \$10,000 can't be acquired on a library purchase order, but must go through University Purchasing.

Acquiring library material through University Purchasing takes the item outside the normal purchasing and accounting routines and causes several problems for Acquisitions and the library's Business Services Department. Although the purchase order will usually have the correct ship-to address as supplied by the library, it will have a bill-to address of VCU Invoice Processing, since that is the standard procedure. We must wait for the paperwork to cycle back around through the library's business office and adjust our accounts after the fact. If it is near the end of the fiscal year and we are trying to determine whether big-ticket items are going to be paid for in current year funds, we must repeatedly check the university's accounting system to determine whether these large invoices have been paid. The purchase order will often list the names of university officials outside of acquisitions as contact persons, which can cause a lot of confusion with vendors who already have quite a few names in their files for contact persons at VCU.

Sometimes we ask the vendor for a copy of the invoice so that we can verify receipt and forward it to Invoice Processing. This enables us to confirm the costs and track the payment process.

Another possible solution would be to notify the vendor that we have initiated a purchasing process, describe that process to them, and directly provide the information the library feels they need. There is some risk involved, however, since suppliers sometimes interpret this as an official order and ship at that point. Many of these issues surrounding purchase through University Purchasing are not completely resolved and need further work.

Sole source purchases over \$10,000 must go to the governor's office for approval. This adds time to an already lengthy process. Some purchases, e.g. full-text to be loaded locally, may require agreements with Academic Computing. The library's automation department works closely with Academic Computing and handles this liaison. Computer-related purchases may or may not require approval by the State Department of Information Technology, depending on the interpretation of the nature of the purchase. This adds even more time. Recently ULS acquired an MDAS database but had to wait many weeks

after the subscription began before it was made available to our users due to the fact that the loader, which was ordered at the same time, but as computer software, travels a different, much longer purchase and approval path.

This past year we've successfully reaffirmed that electronic formats are nevertheless library materials and should be purchased according to library materials purchasing guidelines. We've determined that any purchase being charged to the library's materials budget must always go through Acquisition Services Department. We've made contacts in University Purchasing, identified the flow of orders, and determined what data and forms to supply the Buyer in Purchasing.

In the coming year we plan to standardize, document and incorporate electronic purchases into existing procedures and policies, for example, lists of questions which need to be asked, lists of information to supply purchasing, or which forms are needed in each case. We will continue to struggle with issues

such as the lack of standard unit of purchase of parts of a multi-part index or of titles within a group of indexes marketed together. We will work with cataloging to standardize data elements utilized in creating the order records. The guiding principle is to make these purchases more like the ones Acquisition Services is accustomed to doing.

Each new format we have introduced, CD-ROMs, local tape-loaded databases, or remote access resources, has required extensive investigation into the purchasing system. New procedures are evolving as we educate ourselves and our colleagues in the Purchasing Department about the nature of these materials. Software, library materials, and hardware each have very separate purchasing and approval tracks, but sometimes it is difficult to separate these, since the purchase of one necessitates the purchase of the other. Also, the higher the cost, the more extensive the approval procedure, and therefore the longer the time between the decision and the implementation. Needless to say, quite a few forms must be filled out, too! ☹

COUTTS

WORKING AS PART OF YOUR TEAM

We can handle all your book acquisition needs.

W

hen you put Coutts on your team, you gain extensive knowledge of the book trade:

- bibliographic accuracy
- a single source to handle both the mainstream as well as esoteric publications
- personalized service
- book approval plans tailored to your specific and dynamic collection management requirements.

COUTTS

Library Services Inc.

We handle firm orders, book approval plans, new title programs (notification slip service), continuations/standing orders, book processing and provide electronic access to information and PC software for ordering. Let our professional selectors and knowledgeable customer service specialists provide you with our innovative cost-effective service.

*Please call or write for
more information.*

736 Cayuga Street, Lewiston, New York 14092-1797 (716) 754-4304 Fax: (416) 356-5064, 1-800-772-4304