April 1994

Biz of Acq / Furthering the Goals of Preservation Through Acquisitions

Jack G. Montgomery
University of Missouri-Columbia

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

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

Recommended Citation

Montgomery, Jack G. (1994) "Biz of Acq / Furthering the Goals of Preservation Through Acquisitions," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 6: Iss. 2, Article 36.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1488>

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.

Biz of Acq

Furthering the Goals of Preservation Through Acquisitions

Column Editor: **Jack G. Montgomery**

(Technical Services Librarian, Law Library,
University of Missouri-Columbia)

Column editor's note: Preservation activities have been as one librarian characterized them "much lauded and seldom nourished" within the academic institutional environment. Only in recent years have preservation issues received the kind of attention they truly deserve. This new awareness has developed as the result of the efforts of a group of forward-thinking and dedicated people who would not let this issue be pushed under the table. One of these dedicated people is Patricia Denham, the Head of Preservation and Archives at the law library of the University of Cincinnati. For many years Pat has worked to increase the awareness of preservation issues within the law library community. This article illustrates the need for the integration of preservation issues into the acquisitions and collection development process.

Furthering the Goals of Preservation Through Acquisitions

by **Patricia Denham**

(Head of Preservation and Archives,
Law Library, University of Cincinnati)

The aim of this column is to discuss ways in which preservation goals can be enhanced by working closely with the acquisitions department. It may seem at first glance that these departments have little in common but that is not exactly the case. I am speaking from personal experience since I was the Acquisitions Librarian at the University of Cincinnati Law Library for ten years before my present position as Head of Preservation and Archives was created for me here six years ago. As I became more interested in and more involved in the preservation of library materials, I became aware of these areas where I could make a difference in preserving our materials through actions taken in the acquisitions processes:

1. pre-order searching; 2. receipt of materials; 3. handling of in-process materials; 4. gifts; 5. collection development, and; 6. contact with publishers and vendors.

Preservation is unique in that, in order for it to be fully effective in a library, its goals should be integrated throughout all departments. Preserving materials cannot be accomplished by the staff in only one department of a library; the job is too large and all encompassing. In order to integrate preservation goals through a library, therefore, regular workshops should be presented for all staff members, from student workers on up. The importance of educating the library's entire staff in the proper care and handling of materials cannot be overstated since each person has the potential to do good or harm to them. Damaging actions, whether done through ignorance or carelessness, have the same result: to shorten the lives of books. An educated staff, on the other hand, can have a positive effect on the materials. For instance, when the acquisitions staff sees the obvious differences between books of the same age with

alkaline paper and with yellowed, brittle acidic paper, the importance of acquiring titles printed with alkaline paper becomes very real. As a part of the workshops, explain the importance of preserving the materials. The books are added to the collection after a selection process and the expectation is that they will be in the collection for many years. It is the responsibility of the entire library staff to care for the materials so they can be used as long as possible.

These are some ways the staff in acquisitions can promote preservation goals:

1. **Pre-Order Searching** — Many book advertisements now indicate whether a book is printed with alkaline/permanent paper. This is an important consideration if the books are to be in the collection for thirty years or longer as it takes at least that long for acidic paper to start to become embrittled and difficult to use. Obviously, reference titles which are replaced every year or so need not come under such scrutiny but most monographs will be retained for that long. Also, it is not as important for libraries which deacidify their books, but since that is not most of us, then the quality of the paper should be considered. Of course, in most cases, a title will be ordered regardless of the type of paper because of the subject matter, author, or other reasons. A situation where this decision comes into play, though, is where a title is offered in both hardcover and paperback editions. Frequently, only the hardcover edition is printed on alkaline paper while the paperback has acidic paper. Librarians need to be aware that they are choosing a less permanent edition with the paperback. As tempting as it is to save money this way, the amount spent for replacements and reformatting costs in the future will probably far exceed the amount saved now. According to an article by **Joyce Ogburn** in the last issue of *Against the Grain*, "Cloth/Paper-Still an Issue," Yale University libraries are purchasing a larger percentage of papercover books than in 1980/81. If this is a trend, we all need to be aware of exactly what we are buying.

When ordering older titles, librarians should determine through *Guide to Reprints* or *Books in Print* if they are available as reprints printed on alkaline paper. Reprints are preferable to original editions which were printed on highly acidic paper, may be brittle, and may have structural problems as well.

2. **Receipt of Materials** — The number one maxim to remember in the receipt of materials is this: first do no harm. It can be quite easy to slice books with box openers when the books have not been packaged carefully. The books are then irrevocably damaged. A knife slit cannot be repaired. Staff who open parcels need to be taught the proper ways to open boxes so the contents are not put at danger. Books so damaged cannot be returned to the publisher for credit; the library

would have to purchase a replacement if it was decided the original could not be kept. While opening boxes of new materials, staff need to look out for books which were damaged in transit. When boxes are received which have a corner bashed in, staff need to examine the books inside for damage. These books could be returned to the publisher or vendor for credit since the damage occurred before it reached the library. It is the responsibility of the vendor to package books so they will not be damaged in shipment.

These manufacturing defects can be detected before books have been processed: missing or folded pages; pages bound out of sequence, upside down or backwards; smeared ink; end sheets glued to the covers; insufficient glue or excessive glue in hinges; and bubbles between the covers and cover materials. If any of these defects are noticed, the books should be returned immediately to the publisher or vendor for replacements. Many times, however, these defects are not discovered until a patron brings them to a staff member's attention. The publisher or vendor should provide a replacement for a book with defects within a reasonable amount of time but if the book has gone out of print there are fewer options. This is why examining new books is so important.

3. Handling of In-Process Materials — It is important to treat items carefully while they are being processed in the acquisitions and cataloging areas of the library. Book trucks should be stable so they do not inadvertently topple dozens of books onto the floor. Even new books can be damaged when they fall onto each other from a height of two or three feet. Books should not be piled onto other books, such as on top of a book truck. The weight can be damaging to the book covers and the ones on top are liable to fall to the floor. An effort should be made to use bookends with all upright books to prevent the hinges from becoming prematurely loose. This is especially important with large books. Extra care should be taken with paperbacks so the covers are not torn or folded. Proper shelving methods which are used in the library's stacks should also be used in the technical services areas.

Paper clips and rubber bands should not be used to attach paperwork to books as they can make permanent, unsightly marks. Likewise, Post-it Notes should not be used extensively on books, especially on the print itself, as they can pull the ink off of paper and they can also tear paper when removed. As an alternative, libraries should use forms reproduced on alkaline paper and placed inside the books.

4. Gifts — Gifts received by a library need to be handled differently from new acquisitions since, in many cases, the donated books are older and not in optimum condition. Upon receipt, the books must be evaluated by the preservation librarian or the person best qualified to do condition evaluations. The following list includes some, but not all, of the physical problems which may be present: poor binding structure; boards or spine detached from the textblock; loose hinges; torn or loose paper covers; extremely brittle paper; loose, torn, or missing pages; text highlighted or marked with ink; damage from previous repairs, including yellowed adhesive tape; evidence of mold or mildew; and water damage. If the book or books have extensive physical problems, a decision will have to be made about retaining them in view of the cost and time for the necessary treatment.

5. Collection Development — Frequent communication between the preservation staff and those involved in collection development promotes the goals of preserving the collection by increasing awareness of preservation needs, options, and costs. For instance, collection development librarians should recommend purchasing titles in need of extensive treatment only after a discussion with the preservation staff about all available options. The direct and indirect costs of treatment should be considered in addition to the actual purchase price. In addition to purchasing decisions, preservation librarians should also work closely with collection development librarians in all decisions where subject expertise is needed, for instance in deciding if all copies of a title need to be retained when one or more need extensive treatment. Subject specialists have the expertise to know which titles are necessary to the collection and which are not and can offer suggestions on the best format for particular titles, such as microfilm vs. hardcopy. Collection development and preservation staff need to work closely when reformatting materials using preservation microfilming or when preservation photocopying is being considered. Decisions about which titles should be filmed or copied, if the originals will be retained in the collection after the filming or copying is complete, and the best methods to employ to have the work performed should be made cooperatively between the two departments. It is extremely important that accepted standards are adhered to in both filming and photocopying, whether the work is done in-house or by an outside firm. If the originals are to be retained, extra care must be taken in doing the work.

6. Contact with Publishers and Vendors — When books are returned to publishers or vendors due to damage caused by inadequate shipping containers or defects created in manufacturing, acquisitions librarians need to communicate the exact reasons for the returns and the results they expect, such as replacements or credit. If similar problems occur regularly with a publisher, librarians may need to communicate their dissatisfaction with those in authority and to band together with other libraries experiencing difficulties.

The condition of older books offered for sale through catalogs of booksellers needs to be accurately stated. Books should not be described as "good" or "excellent" if there are obvious physical problems. The condition descriptions may not be as relevant in cases of rare books which a library may acquire regardless of the condition, but libraries should always know what they are buying.

I hope I have provided those of you in acquisitions with some ideas about how you can enhance your library's preservation program. Those who succeed you in your positions will thank you for your foresight in acquiring materials which will last far into the future.

I referred to a 34-page pamphlet published by the American Library Association in 1993 in the preparation of this article. Entitled *Guide to Preservation in Acquisition Processing* by **Marsha J. Hamilton** (Acquisition Guidelines No. 8), it goes into much more detail than I could here, including a definition of terms, a listing of types of damage found in print and non-print materials, discussion of treatment options and copyright issues, and an annotated bibliography. ☛